



Hot, Cold or Lukewarm?

The Visual Arts Climate in Mid-sized Dutch Cities

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Master Thesis

September 2021

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ABSTRACT

In this research project several aspects are covered that together make up the climate for visual arts in mid-sized Dutch cities. The research design entails to different research stages, with a quantitative exploratory research making up part one of the project and qualitative semi-structured interviews shaping the results of the second research stage. Object of study in part I are visual artists with an active practice in one of ten municipalities in the Netherlands that house between 90,000 and 110,000 inhabitants. An online survey is conducted to gather information about the importance of several factors when selecting a location for artistic practice. Information provided by respondents is analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Results from this survey also form the basis of the second stage of the study, in which arts organizations named by respondents of part I are approached for a semi-structured interview. Members of these organizations are interviewed through videocalls and results of these interviews are analyzed according to several different themes. Conclusion and discussion are presented to synthesize an approximation of the temperature for visual arts in mid-sized Dutch cities.

KEYWORDS: *Visual Arts, Mid-sized Cities, Cultural Economics, Locality, Motivation*

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Preface

The research process that is presented in this paper can best be described as a steady car, being driven over a bumpy road. Although there of course have been moments of doubt and reflection, the aim of this research process has remained clear: to map the climate for visual arts in cities often neglected in research. As the driver, it was not always easy to switch between the different roles I have taken up in my life. Besides a master student I am an artist, project initiator, volunteers coordinator and creative entrepreneur. This project has its roots in my personal experience and the stories told around me. My hope is that this master's thesis will not just find a place on my external hard-drive, but in the real world of arts and this mix of academic and practical motivations seeps through in the different segments of this research project.

My gratitude goes out to my thesis supervisor Dr. J (Hans) Roscam Abbing who provided me with guidance throughout this long thesis process and not only this, but supported me as a human living through the consequences of a global pandemic. With one foot in the world of arts and the other in the world of academia, I could not have wished for a more understanding and knowledgeable tutor.

I would also like to thank my friends and family, who have been so patient with me every time when I once again was too busy to join them at social occasions or was absent-minded, impatient and short with them. I am looking forward to re-joining you.

Lastly I want to express my gratitude to all participants of this extensive research project. Your openness, honesty and enthusiasm have been such an inspiration throughout the entire process and I sincerely hope that this paper does justice to the experiences you have shared with me.

1. Introduction

The data for this research is gathered during a very peculiar moment, namely during the covid-19 pandemic of 2020/2021. Many possibilities for visual artists to obtain both monetary rewards or visibility for their practice have suddenly disappeared due to general governmental restrictions. Venues had to (temporarily) close their doors, physical museum visits were rendered impossible and gatherings to build new networks had to be cancelled. Still there are many artistic entrepreneurs who do continue to develop ways to bring their artistic and economic practice to fruition. Especially in cities where there does not seem to be a strongly visible artistic infrastructure, artists might be used to relying on self-initiative, collaborative action and innovative practices. In this paper a mixed methods research project is undertaken to map the current situation of visual arts practices in mid-sized Dutch cities and answer the following research question: What is the current state of the climate for visual arts in mid-sized Dutch cities? This study explores several facets which play a role in the climate for visual arts in these locations, such as individual artistic practices and the role of organizations aimed at visual arts. Much research has been conducted on vast urban areas or more rural sites, while the area between the two has been largely neglected in research thus far. This is despite the fact that there undeniably are visual artists with active practices and artistic communities that have formed outside of this range.

This research project contains two different parts, part I containing quantitative exploratory survey and part II in which qualitative interview research is conducted. The first step in the process of mapping artistic activities in the cities under scrutiny has been to conduct quantitative survey research amongst a sample of visual artists. Through online research a sample of 321 artists has been selected with an active practice in either one of ten Dutch cities with an inhabitant range between 90,000 and 110,000. This survey provides a clear image of both general descriptive demographic characteristics of the sample of artists and indications of their relation to the location where their practice is based. Respondents are confronted with several push and pull factors and requested to indicate whether and to which degree these factors are present at their location. Another concept in this questionnaire is the change that the covid-19 pandemic has brought along. While some might argue that for many the work environment has shifted to an online space, others might consider their location of increased importance. Due to travel restrictions, the focus of a practice may have shifted from international goals to local possibilities.

After analysing survey responses, a qualitative semi-structured research is conducted during part II of the project to provide a clearer understanding of the role that several arts-related organizations play in the local artistic ecology. The analysis of qualitative data provides important contextual information to complete the picture of the artistic practices under scrutiny. Due to the close connection that binds themes of both methodological stages of this mixed methods research project, the theoretical framework is built while not distinguishing between both parts of the research. In the first section of the methodological chapter, sub questions are presented and connected to the theoretical framework. All of the before mentioned analyses are aimed at developing a clearer image of the current situation for visual arts practices in mid-sized Dutch cities. Especially during a time that so many had to change and revise both our personal and professional practices, this exploratory and motivational study shows how different artists sustain their practice. Not only does this study add to existing theory about artistic labour, entrepreneurial motivation and place-making, it also could serve as a useful tool for practitioners themselves.

2. Theoretical Framework

The following theoretical framework contains a literature review of earlier research in the field of artistic labour and its characteristics, the social aspects of creative entrepreneurship, the importance of online activities, the experience of place and locality and the role of organizations and wider contextual elements.

2.1 Arts Labour Market Characteristics and Demographics

To properly conduct this research it is important to map earlier studies of creativity, visual arts, entrepreneurship and locality or place-making. Starting off this theoretical framework is the position of visual artists in a wider economic spectrum. The characteristics of artistic products that are on offer in the world of visual arts, make the position in the marketplace of their producers a rather complicated one. Instead of aiming for economic gain only, visual artists and artists in general strive for high symbolic value as well. Symbolic value in this context is to be understood as the value of an artwork in its social and artistic context (Throsby, 2008). As is affirmed by Throsby (2008), there is no clear measurement of symbolic value. Nevertheless Throsby (2008) does propose a model to organize the cultural industries where the balance between symbolic and economic value determines the position of industries within the model. The proposed model is a collection of several concentric circles with activities that strive mainly for artistic value at the inner circles and sectors that are more focused on economic value at the borders of the model. At the core of these concentric circles are the visual arts (Throsby, 2008, p. 149) where artists almost seem to neglect economic value of their product and focus mainly on the symbolic or artistic value. This makes their economic position a precarious one, pushing them to look for other sources of income instead of relying solely on their artistic production. Many artists take up a side-job, or maybe even more than one and guard their freedom of artistic production by not having to make too many concessions based on economic considerations.

How exactly artists choose to distribute their labour, is further scrutinized by Throsby (1994) in his work-preference model of artist behaviour. Instead of assuming that, like most workers, artists have a negative attitude towards work and a positive attitude towards leisure, this model proposes that instead artists have a positive attitude towards artistic work, making them more inclined to perform artistic labour despite low wages and a general lack of monetary rewards. Where Throsby (1994) only distinguishes between work within the arts and outside of the arts, others like Abbing (2002) and Casacuberta & Gandelman (2012) nuance this distinction. The latter add leisure to the utility function and

include time constraint, proposing that artists might be more like anyone else and do make a distinction between social life, pastime activities and art (Casacuberta & Gandelman, 2012, p. 324). How clear these distinctions are though, remains to be seen.

Another reason not to consider artists as normal workers (Cornwell, 1979) is that most of them are self-employed, thus making it a more accurate approach to regard them as micro-businesses instead of normal workers. Especially in the case of visual arts, where the primary source of income is the creation of artistic products (as opposed to the performing arts which may be more dependent on external job opportunities), the artists themselves enjoy high levels of responsibility in creating job opportunities. In a labour market that is project-based and therefore characterized by discontinuity of activity, reputation is an important factor to get selected for participation in specific projects (Benhamou, 2011). Instead of the strong signalling function of diplomas and education that is common in other labour markets, the artistic labour market is more interested in practical experience and networks. Building a strong network of contacts within the industry, diminishes search costs for employers (or in this context: project managers, curators etc.). Due to the important practical nature of artistic work, collaborations can be intense, demanding but also very fruitful through increasing each other's competitive advantage as an artistic producer. This competitive advantage comes with the experiences that both parties gain during this collaboration. The accumulation of experience is one of the rare ways to prove one's value within a field dominated by the nobody-knows property (Caves, 2000).

Most of the above mentioned scholars conclude that within the cultural industries and more specifically the world of visual arts, many of the factors determining success or failure are opaque and ill-defined. For the purpose of this research therefore there will be no narrow definition adopted of visual artists, but instead the research is conducted with a sample which consists of self-defined visual artists. These respondents are subsequently requested to provide more detailed information about the economic characteristics of their practice. Besides economic factors such as *average time spent on artistic production* and *percentage of total income accrued by artistic income*, artistic characteristics such as *preferred medium* are also investigated to gather a more complete picture of possible factors that might contribute to displayed choice or preference. Adding to existing information about arts labour markets, such as mentioned by Benhamou (2011) and Abbing (2002), general demographic questions are included in the measuring instrument used during the first, quantitative stage of this research to build an overview of participating artists.

2.2 Social Life vs. Work Life. Online vs. offline.

As solitary micro-businesses, it is to be expected that visual artists are often confronted with some sort of lack of expertise. As Gundolf, Jaouen & Gast (2015) mention in their research on alliances in the cultural industries, micro-firms are typically characterized by structural simplicity, not enough resources and a strong presence of the head of the organization, the so-called "owner-manager" (p. 148). To deal with shortages in the most efficient way, alliances are built between organizations or firms to exchange resources and expertise. Within the cultural industries, such alliances do not always come natural to collaborating partners. Because of the omni-present importance of originality and creativity, artists might decide to be (even) more secretive about their process than other creative entrepreneurs. In a quasi-experimental study, Loots, Cnossen & Van Witteloostuijn (2018) dive into the motivations of cultural and creative entrepreneurs to decide whether to compete or collaborate with partners within the industry. Through measuring self-perceived creative competency and entrepreneurial competency, Loots et al. (2018) find a positive relationship between cooperation and self-perceived creativity. This finding aligns with the expectation that artists need to be quite sure of their practice and the quality of their work when joining a collaboration with others. To exploit such collaborations, an artist would have to be in the know about both quality and specific activities of others within the field.

This self-perceived creativity can be compared to another important factor to make certain collaborations turn into a success: the need for shared values as described by Poettschacher (2005). Poettschacher (2005) states that creative firms are value-based organizations (p. 178) that share an infrastructure of values about individuality, meritocracy and diversity (Florida, 2002). To determine the workings of this invisible network of shared values, Poettschacher's (2005) research consists of qualitative interviews with creative entrepreneurs. The sharing of meaningful stories plays an important role within the continuation of the business and three different types of scripts are identified within this research. Firstly a business can be formed as a side project by friends who already know each other well. The second script is one where an initial big success forms the basis for further business development and the last option is that of entrepreneurs starting their own business to gain more autonomy over their work life (Poettschacher, 2005). In all these potential business-development stories, personal preferences and identity play an important role. Many of these stories are based on the dichotomy between money and meaning and where the owner places him- or herself along a scale between these two

concepts (Poetttschacher, 2005). Here one can clearly see an overlap with the work by Throsby (2008) and his distinction between economic and symbolic value.

Also important to note when considering research on shared values, is the role of social ties. In the aforementioned script in which several friends start a business together, social life and work life are expected to be mixed on a daily basis. The emphasis on social relations is omnipresent in the artistic world, where networks and reputation play a strong role in the selection of work-opportunities (Benhamou, 2011). Not only within the world of arts, but also in other labour markets the importance of face-to-face connections is considered to play a strong role. Clare (2013) starts her research paper by directing attention to the importance of face-to-face communication during an age of digitization. Instead of developing a clear definition of a space and place, this active defining is left to participants, reaching their own definitions of place and its impact (Clare, 2013). Opposed to scholars like Dale (1992), who predicted an ever-diminishing importance of geographical locality, Clare (2013) finds indications that blurring boundaries between work and social life increase the importance of place. One would expect visual artists to increase their social ties, especially during difficult times such as this global pandemic, to increase their competitive advantage relating to others within the field. This strengthening of social ties is expected to happen mainly in close proximity, since travel restrictions and lockdowns have diminished possibilities for physical meetings.

In the research by Clare from 2013 and others, such as Glaeser in 2011, the impact of technological developments is noted but considered no replacement for actual face-to-face social connections. Now, almost ten years later we are all confronted with the consequences of a global pandemic that shifted much of our social connections from offline to online. Especially in the field of cultural economics and visual arts, online possibilities have been causing big shifts in demand and distribution of products (Waldfogel, 2020). Recently the rise of NFT's and crypto-art have also contributed to an increasing interest in digital visual arts. To map the importance of such developments for the practice of Dutch visual artists in mid-sized cities, the measurement of tool of research part I includes a question concerning respondents' preferred medium as well as a statement about the increased importance of locality since the covid-19 pandemic.

2.3 Space, Place and Individual Experience

Not only to researchers, but also in practice it is known that the exchange of information and ideas may enhance the success of creative practices. It is no surprise that many entrepreneurs within the cultural sector decide to co-locate and form clusters

(Belussi, 2018). Belussi's (2018) shows three important developmental stages of clusters: i) origin, ii) development and iii) maturity (p. 1803). There are substantial differences noticeable between different clusters and between clusters in different stages. Most clusters are formed in urban or specifically dedicated areas, such as around universities or at empty industrial sites. In the context of this research, the importance of co-location is scrutinized to determine whether other selection factors simply are more important to visual artists, or if they see cluster-possibilities in places where an outsider might not expect them to be present.

Some still consider artists to be lone geniuses, who have turned their back to society and live a secluded life of observation. This view though is absolutely not applicable to most visual arts practices, where many individuals are artists as well as entrepreneurs (Abbing, 2002). Myths such as the hermit-like character of artists, can contribute to the meaning-making process in the artistic world, but do not seem to stroke with current artistic or economic realities. The research at hand is conducted with a sample of visual artists who live in between densely populated urban areas and rural sites. The mid-sized Dutch cities that together form the area of research are not specifically well-known for an omnipresent cultural atmosphere, so during this research other factors are scrutinized that may play a significant role in location selection of visual arts practices (Hitters & Richards, 2002, p. 241). The research project of Hitters & Richards (2002) focussed on creative clusters in two Dutch cities to consider how cultural and economic development may go hand in hand. In their research respondents are requested to name which push and pull factors are important to their location-selection, such as accessibility, collaboration, lack of space and more.

Other push and pull factors lie more along the lines of individual experience. Drake (2003) states that instead of creativity being a mainly social and collaborative process, personal experience of space is not to be neglected as an element of importance during creative processes. Individuals construct place through their own vision of their surroundings and by doing so, contribute to the characteristics of locality (Drake, 2003). Locality and creative practices influence one another, where creative practices may alter the general atmosphere in a certain area and the area itself may inspire makers during their creative production process. A globally famous example is a painting by Van Gogh, who captured an idyllic terrace in Arles which is now a highly attractive tourist destination. Because the painting was painted in the light of a few gas lamps, Van Gogh's painted terrace is constructed in different shades of yellow. By now, many years later, the same

terrace is yellow during the day as well, decorated to be recognisable as its famous painted twin.

2.4 Organizing Shared Knowledge

The impact that artists have on their environment is of course not unidirectional but an exchange between artists, other creative entrepreneurs and their wider context. How creative ideas come to be is a complicated, intuitive and opaque process similar to the processes taking place within innovation commons as described by Allen & Potts (2016). In their article Allen & Potts (2016) suggest a different view on the process of innovation, in which not firms, markets or governments are at the root of innovations, but groups which pool their knowledge and arrive at new findings through the combination of such knowledge. Innovation commons as described by Allen & Potts (2016) as a species of cultural and knowledge commons. The collaborations within innovation commons usually do not last long after the initial, exploratory phase but are transient in nature. When new developments are adopted by the market, the need for the innovation commons to last disappears. This process can be compared to the fleeting collaborations that exist with the world of contemporary art. One could argue that a group exhibition is a moment to pool one's knowledge, share ideas, exchange experiences and use all these elements to create new artistic innovations.

To make such common experiences possible in the field of visual arts, physical spaces and organizations are a necessity. Galleries, shared workspaces, project spaces and museums are facilities where people from the same sector meet up and ideas catch fire. Of course there are also possibilities in public space or by using digital platforms to facilitate such exchanges, but the clustering creative initiatives in a city functions as an indication of the importance of proximity and physicality. As stated in the research of Wijngaarden, Hitters & Bhansing (2019), co-location is a much researched concept, but one which has mostly been researched in big urban areas. Of course there might be more creative clustering in such bigger cities, but this does not mean that co-location, clustering and the development of creative places can only flourish in such environments. In their research (Wijngaarden et al., 2019) focus on image and reputation as possible pull factors in smaller cities and describe how respondents consider their creative location to be part of a global imagined network of creative hubs. Meanwhile respondents are mostly negative about the other creative spaces in their city. This might be an indication that collaborative practices still remain much within separated social circles.

In a field where demand is as uncertain (Lévy-Garboua & Montmarguette, 2011) as in the visual arts sector many look to policymakers and governmental bodies to create some system of support (Baumol, 1964). During an extensive research project Nijzink, Van den Hoogen & Gielen (2017) scrutinized the different perspectives of policymakers and art organizations which direct their decision making processes. The discrepancies between the perspective of policymakers and the needs felt by the creative industries are highlighted in this study by combining a survey, in-depth interviews and the analysis of policy documents. Using a system with several worlds containing different orders of worth based on theory developed by Boltanski & Thévenot (2006) the results of this study are analyzed. In each world, priorities are shifted in contrast to the other worlds. There are substantial differences between values deemed important in the process of policy development of the three cities researched by Nijzink et al. Where some policy includes values that fit the so called 'inspired world', most policy is mainly instrumental. For artists and creative entrepreneurs, the 'inspired world' instead is the most important and creatives wish to focus on flexibility, creativity and freedom (Nijzink et al., 2017). A smooth cooperation between funding bodies and arts organizations can be considered an important factor to determine the temperature of the climate for artistic entrepreneurs in a certain area. During the course of this research, this relationship is examined through semi-structured interviews in part II of the research project.

3. Methodology

In the following chapter the methodological approach of the research project at hand is outlined. Since this study contains two different stages with different research designs, most sub-chapters are presented twice, once for part I (quantitative) and secondly for part II (qualitative) of the study after first introducing the general outlines of the research design.

3.1 General Methodology and Sub Questions Research Part I and Part II

During the first stage of this research, several sub questions based on explicated theory are addressed by developing an online questionnaire as a research tool. The first part of the questionnaire concerns general descriptive information and questions for respondents to determine how their work practice is shaped. Since the earlier mentioned research of Throsby (1994), Abbing (2002) and others shows that artists do not necessarily aim for monetary gain, this section of the survey looks into the hours spent on artistic production as well the portion of respondents total income earned with artistic work. Other variables, such as preferred medium and target groups are aimed at building a better picture of artistic characteristics of respondents practices. During the second stage of the project factors that determine success, or professionalism are discussed with interviewees which, because of their more opaque nature, are better suited for nuance through qualitative discussion.

To determine how embedded the practices of respondents in their artistic context are, some questions in the survey are presented about whether respondents collaborate with others and where these others are usually from, either from the same area or not, mainly based on the research by Loots et al. (2018). The same research and that conducted by Poettschacher (2005) also forms a basis for items discussed during the second stage of the research project when respondents are asked to consider which factors might be important for a vivid visual arts climate in their city and how members or participants are involved in the organization. Questions concerning the composition of the team, board and possible committees connect to the theory of necessity of shared values as developed by Poettschacher (2005).

The importance of online activities is approached in both the quantitative part of this study and the qualitative stage. In the survey respondents are questioned about their preferred medium and during the interviews conducted in part II of this study, interviewees are asked about the online activities developed since covid-19 and whether these activities in their opinion seem to provide new possibilities for the future.

What are possible motivations for artists to locate their practice in a certain location? This question is discussed with interviewees, as well as pressed during the first stage of the project by presenting survey respondents with possible push and pull factors. The presented factors are based on the earlier mentioned research by Hitters & Richards (2002) and Drake (2003) and respondents are requested to rate the degree to which these factors are present in their location to answer the questions: which factors are of importance to visual artists when selecting a location for their practice?

A sub question that is developed with a focus on the broader social, artistic and economic context in the research area, lies at the basis of the qualitative part II of this research project. This question considers the role of arts organizations within the context of the city where they are located. This role is scrutinized by looking into collaborations, local perspectives, experiences of place and the sharing of knowledge, building on research by Wijngaarden et al. (2019) and Allen & Potts (2016). By conducting interviews with employees, members or board members of such organizations, several aspects of this role and of the approaches to the local environment as applied by organizations are carefully explored and scrutinized.

The study at hand aims to provide insights into the current state of the climate for visual arts in several mid-sized Dutch cities. The exploratory nature of this study demands a both broad and in depth cross-sectional research design to create the most accurate picture possible within the realms of a master's thesis research project. A mixed methods approach is hence selected which constitutes of two clearly different stages of research. During the first stage a cross-sectional quantitative research was conducted by selecting a sample of 321 visual artists in 10 Dutch cities and sending them an invitation by email to participate in an online survey. In the second part of this research project a cross-sectional qualitative approach was adopted to deepen the understanding of the role of visual arts organizations in these cities. In the following sections of this methodology chapter firstly the quantitative research approach is addressed, after which the setup of the qualitative part of the study is explained.

3.2 Part I: Quantitative Exploratory Survey Research

A sample of 321 visual artists active in ten Dutch mid-sized cities was selected through online research. All email addresses that were used during the study were publicly available. When inviting artists to participate by filling out a survey, the researcher identified herself as an artist to approach respondents as colleagues. This decision was made in the hope to increase willingness to respond, since it did not just concern some far

away research in the field of academics, but someone from the field interested in better understanding the workings of the climate for visual arts. When interested, respondents could request a copy of the final research project. To thank respondents for completing the survey a digital drawing (Appendix B) was sent through email. Instead of offering a monetary reward, this could still be considered a reward but does not create unpleasant nudges. Especially during a study that amongst other things maps the economic situation of artists, a monetary reward would be an unfit incentive.

Before starting the first question of the survey, respondents were shown a message about the characteristics of a survey. Some artists might feel that when filling out a survey provided answers do not fully cover their experience and to acknowledge this they were told of this possibility and requested to still fill out the questionnaire as truthfully as possible. Also there were many questions where free text entry by respondents was an option. As noted by Bryman (2016, p. 223) online questionnaires bare the risk of respondents getting bored of questions, so during this research an attempt was made to keep questions interesting by adding variation to the question type and theme. The final online questionnaire was built using Qualtrics software.

3.3 Research Part II: Qualitative Semi-structured Interview Research

During the second part of this study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with individuals who are active in organizations for visual arts in any one of the 10 cities under scrutiny. The sample used during this second stage of research was based on the answers that respondents provided in their survey questionnaires. Respondents of the questionnaire were asked whether there are organizations for visual arts in their location that they feel connected to and provided with the possibility to name a maximum of five institutions. Semi-structured interviews were conducted using an interview guide (Appendix C) based on theory and results of part I of the study at hand and aligned with the guidelines for development of questions as stated by Bryman (2016, p.253). Interviews were conducted online through digital video calls and recorded for personal use. All interviewees were asked for consent to record the conversation and use the information provided by them for this research project. At the start of the interview, the researcher introduced herself and the research project. The opportunity was raised for interviewees to ask questions, either personal or related to the context of the research project.

3.4 Sampling Research Part I (quantitative)

The sampling method adopted for the first part of this research project is a purposive snowball sampling method (Bryman, 2016, p. 415) since there is no clear database of visual artists. The cities selected as areas of research were based on the amount of residents within the municipality. 10 cities with inhabitant numbers between 90,000 and 110,000 (Wikipedia, 2020) were selected as research areas. Research was conducted in the following cities (in order of inhabitant number): Hilversum, Amstelveen, Oss, Helmond, Sittard-Geleen, Deventer, Venlo, Delft, Emmen and Alkmaar. In some of these cities there are organizations that aim to increase visibility of visual artists, some of which provide public lists of artists affiliated with the organization, which increased the number of possible respondents from Hilversum, Amstelveen, Oss, Delft and Sittard. Main research channels used for the first purposive sample were the web pages of www.kunstinbeeld.nl, www.exto.nl and www.google.com. All of the artists who were approached had a public online email address and when respondents contacted the researcher with concerns about how they had been selected for this research they all received a polite response as soon as possible. In the email invitation, possible respondents were requested to contact other visual artists from their city to join the project as well. Since respondents remained anonymous during the filling out of the survey, it is not possible to determine how many respondents were part of this first snowball sample and how many were contacted by colleagues.

3.5 Sampling Research Part II (qualitative)

For selecting the sample used during the second part of this research project the data provided by respondents of the cross-sectional quantitative survey research in part I of the project served as a starting point. This generic purposive sampling method (Bryman, 2016, p. 414) is considered by the researcher to be the method that connects both parts of the study closely and thus serves as a way to enhance practical value of the study both to respondents of both research stages. Respondents provided around 40 names of institutions that they feel a relation to in the city of their practice. Of these organizations, 13 that were named by more than one respondent were approached for an interview, 10 responded and interviews were conducted with 9 of them. The type of organizations ranged from museums, exhibitions spaces or associations for artists. The final sample consists of 3 professional artists associations who do not run an exhibition space, 2 professional artists associations that do run an exhibition space, 1 amateur artists

association, 1 museum, 1 organization that employs varied activities in the field of visual arts and 1 exhibition space.

Considering the geographical aspects of these organizations, there are two that do not fit the sample area of research part I. Despite this fact, the two organizations were included in the research since they were named by respondents from the first part of this research project and fall within a distance of 25 kilometres of the initial areas of research. Organizations were approached through general contact information stated on their website with a message that introduced the focus of the study and the request to conduct an interview. People inside the organization then selected the person they considered most fit to join the conversation about the topics at hand. This method created a sample of 6 board members of which 5 hold an artistic personal practice. The other 3 interviewees hold crucial position within the organization when it comes to the development of artistic projects. The interview was conducted along the guidelines stated by Bryman (2016, p. 207). Starting the interview the interviewer firstly introduced herself, the research project and explained how the sample of organizations was selected. Naturally interviewees were made aware of the confidential nature of the conversation and provided with the opportunities to ask the interviewer any question they felt the need to.

3.6 Operationalization & Variables Research Part I (quantitative)

Firstly respondents were requested to provide some general descriptive variables that can be considered useful information to this research. The descriptive variables in this case were gender, age, whether or not they had completed an arts education and if so what the year of graduation has been. Another variable to characterize their artistic practice was the preferred medium that respondents work with. After this initial more general part of the survey, respondents were asked about their economic situation as an artist. Since the completion of an artistic education does not have to form an important indication of professionalism, variables such as the amount of hours during an average week that are devoted to the production of arts or the percentage of total income earned by artistic work provide a clearer image of the professional and economic position of the artists. To add to this economic picture, respondents were also asked which audiences are their main target audiences.

After gathering information on general and artistic descriptive variables, some questions about the degree of embeddedness within the social environments of respondents were posed, such as whether they collaborate with others, possibly from the same region. Also they were asked whether they share their workspace with others or not.

One could imagine artists in need solitude and calm to build enough focus to produce their work, but in contemporary society social relations can be considered an important medium for visual artists (Bishop, 2012).

The third part of the survey contained questions about the specific characteristics of the location where respondents base their practice. They were asked to state the name of the city where their practice is based, whether or not this is also their residential city and if this is not the case to state the name of the city where they do live. Following these descriptive questions, respondents were provided with possible push and pull factors, based on earlier research (Hitters & Richards, 2002; Drake, 2003) and asked to rate them in order of their presence in the location where they are based. Pull factors in this survey were: *accessibility, collaborative possibilities/presence of colleagues, cultural profile of the city, cultural atmosphere, challenging environment, visually inspiring environment, tranquillity/peace, quality of buildings/real estate, availability of buildings/real estate, social care facilities, rent prices, proximity of family and friends* and lastly *coincidence*. The pull factors were presented in a matrix question format, not to bore the respondent with too many similarly typed questions. To make the questions as interesting as possible, different types of pull factors, such as personal, social, artistic or practical factors, were mixed. Push factors in the survey are: *lonely/isolated, poor accessibility, lack of space, high costs* and *lack of inspiration*.

The next part of the survey was developed to gather information on a possible sample for the second part of the research project, the qualitative interviews with people active in organizations for visual arts in the research area. Respondents were asked if they feel connected to organizations for visual arts in their area, in which way and to name this organization or these organizations. The possibility was provided to name up to five organizations. Respondents could select more than one way in which they feel connected to the organization: as an employee, as a member/participant, as a visitor, as an inhabitant of the city. The answers provided in this section of the survey form the basis for the second part of this research project: the qualitative research stage.

The last part of the survey contained some statements to check the reliability of earlier answers and ask respondents if their relationship to their location had changed since the covid-19 pandemic hit. Finally there was some space for respondents to add anything they deemed important or missing. Also they could leave their email address to receive a digital drawing as a gift and indicate whether or not one wished to receive the final research paper.

3.7 Operationalization & Variables Part II (qualitative)

Semi-structured interviews were conducted using an interview guide (Appendix C) containing a list of questions, starting with general descriptive questions about the organization and the role of the interviewee. The foremost research question would be what the position of these organizations is in the context of the city where they are located. The interview guide concerns several different themes: *general descriptive information, mission & target groups, motivation, collaboration & context, covid changes and growth factors*. These themes are used as a guideline, but the order of questions may have varied according to the context of the interview. For the sake of making the conversation flow as comfortable as possible for respondents, this possibility to switch up questions was important (Bryman, 2016).

Interviewees were firstly requested to describe their role within the organization and how long they are part of this organization. After this initial part of the interview, more in depth information is gathered about the organization itself, such as target participants and visitors, mission and role within the city. The contextual situation is scrutinized by questioning the relationships between the organization and other organizations in the city, both with arts related organizations and non-arts related organizations. Relationships with the local, provincial and national authorities and governmental bodies were discussed as well, leading up to the second next part of the interview.

During the second stage of the interview, interviewees were asked which factors they would name as important for a vivid climate for visual arts in a city, specifically the city in which they are active. When struggling with this question, some of the push and pull factors used during part I of the research project were named as examples of possible importance. Respondents were requested to provide examples and personal experiences regarding these factors and share their view on the current situation for visual arts in their city. Lastly interviewees were asked to speculate on their expectations for the future, connecting problems that organizations currently experience with policy wishes. During this part of the interview the consequences of covid-19 for the organization as well as interviewees personal practice was discussed, also relating this information to possible changes that might endure or that respondents would like to see returned to normal as soon as possible.

3.8 Data Analysis Part I (quantitative)

In the data analysis stage of the quantitative part of the research at hand, firstly descriptive statistics are presented, followed by inferential statistics. Statistical analysis of

survey data is conducted using IBM SPSS software. Firstly the descriptive characteristics of the sample are analysed and reviewed, such as the age mean, gender distribution and artistic income share of total income. Also the importance of push and pull factors as indicated by respondents is weighed by recoding responses to ratings between 1 and 4 and subsequently analysed. After presenting these descriptive statistics, three hypothesis are tested to consider the significance of findings in the sample for the wider population of visual artists in mid-sized Dutch cities.

Hypothesis 1: The age mean of visual artists active in mid-sized Dutch cities is the same in the population as in the sample.

Hypothesis 2: Visual artists active in mid-sized Dutch cities earn more than 50% of their total income with artistic production.

Hypothesis 3: The distribution of visual artists who feel connected to at least one visual arts organization as observed in the sample is representative for the population.

Hypothesis 1 is based on the news that about a quarter of the working population in the Netherlands passed the retirement age (67 years in the Netherlands) is active as an artist (Kamphuis, 2021). This knowledge, combined with research that shows an ageing tendency in the population outside of big urban regions such as the Randstand (PBL/CBS, 2019), leads to the hypothesis of the mean in the sample being the same in the population being formulated. This mean is lower than 67 ($M = 58$), but still much above the average age mean in the general Dutch population of 42.2 in 2020. This hypothesis is tested by running a one-sample t test with the level of significance set at 0.05.

The second hypothesis is also tested by running a one-sample t test using IBM SPSS with a level of significance set at 0.05. This hypothesis is formulated based on research of Abbing (2002) and others as mentioned in the theoretical framework chapter of this research project, which shows that many artists are multiple job holders. To prevent the questionnaire from becoming too complicated and to make sure respondents experienced as low a threshold as possible, quartiles are presented as an estimation of the percentage of their total income earned by artistic work. Since many artists are thus expected to earn a minority share of their income from artistic work, hypothesis 2 is expected to be rejected.

Lastly, the third hypothesis is developed to connect both part I and part II of this research project. Since the responses during the this exploratory survey research were used as a basis to form the sample in part II of the project, it is important to consider

whether the provided answers could be significant for the population. It may be the case that artists in the sample are more active than other artists and feel more connected to their surrounding artistic context than others. This active attitude might lead them to be extra willing to fill out the questionnaire as well as to being active in their direct surroundings. To test whether or not the same distribution of visual artists in the population feel connected to at least one arts organization in their city, hypothesis 3 is tested by running a chi-square goodness of fit test in IBM SPSS. Results of all three hypotheses are presented in the results chapter.

3.9 Data Analysis Part II (qualitative)

After conducting a total number of 9 interviews over a period of 8 days, recordings of gathered data were processed, structured and summarized (Appendix D). Results were compared to answer the following research question: What position do visual arts organizations hold in mid-sized Dutch cities? While the first part of the interviews provide general descriptive information on respondents and the type of organizations, later parts of the conversation are more concerned with the role of the organization within the city and closely surrounding areas. Results regarding collaborations with different parties and the several functions that are taken up by the organization are analysed by comparing several examples. Lastly some more speculative issues are discussed, such as expectations for the future and circumstances that are not realized but which might improve the visual arts climate according to respondents. Results are organized under the following themes: *general descriptive information, mission & target groups, motivation, collaboration & context and growth factors.*

3.10 Validity & Reliability Part I (quantitative)

There are several factors that could have impacted validity and reliability of the first, quantitative part of this study. Firstly the snowball sampling method has to be addressed since when applying this method in combination with anonymous surveys it is unclear how many of the initial sample have responded. Also the initial sample did not contain an equal number of visual artists from the ten cities forming the research area. This was mainly due to the limited information that is available from online resources when it comes to certain cities, mainly Emmen was not particularly well-represented within the initial sample, with only 6 artists who were approached and zero who responded. This may impact the reliability of this study when it comes to the results of the study applying to all mid-sized Dutch cities. Of course different locations have different characteristics and not all results

apply to every location. Finally, considering possible reliability issues due to locational differences, it has to be noted that not all provinces were represented within the sample, no locations in Groningen, Flevoland, Zeeland and Friesland were researched. These provinces were not included because there are no cities that fulfil the set requirements (having between 90.000 and 100.000 inhabitants) in these provinces.

Another factor that might have influenced the validity of responses is the fact that the researcher identified herself as a visual artist, or a colleague. While this decision was made hoping to increase the willingness of respondents to fill in the survey it may have contributed to respondents presenting a more positive image of their situation than it is in reality, a social reliability bias (2016, Bryman, p. 217). On the other hand one could argue that it is easier to open up to someone who might understand your situation, is part of a similar situation and thus will be less judgemental. This approach was the reason to address respondents with the familiar "je" instead of "u" in the Dutch version of the survey. Lastly the covid-19 pandemic influences both reliability and validity. Lockdown periods and other restrictive measures have hit everyone and changed the cultural sector, especially when considering events related activities. To reproduce this study in a different era will undoubtedly change some of its outcomes. Despite these issues of reliability and validity especially during a time such as this, exploring different strategies and coping mechanisms

3.11 Validity & Reliability Part II (qualitative)

Instead of only evaluating validity and reliability of the second part of this research project, other factors that could be considered as more suitable for the evaluation of qualitative research are analysed in this chapter. The research project at hand has a tendency towards action research (Bryman, 2016, p. 387) which makes it more appropriate to adopt other alternative criteria for evaluation as developed by Lincoln & Guba (1994). Although there is no single type of action research, this term mainly covers research that aims for a collaboration between researcher and research subjects to achieve practical and useful solutions for real world problems. The particular research project at hand is more exploratory in nature and less embedded in practice than most action research, but it is heavily embedded in practical experience.

Many interviewees gave the impression to be very open about their experiences and possible problems that occur when working for sampled organizations. Hoping to increase eagerness to have an open conversation, the interviewer identified herself as a visual artist, which may have caused a social desirability bias (Bryman, 2016, p. 217), decreasing validity of information provided by interviewees. Despite this possible

decrease, it may have increased credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1994) of the study, making sure that the researcher is highly familiar with the social context in which the research took place ensuring the correct understanding of meaning.

External validity (Bryman, 2016) or transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1994) of the second part of this research project could be questioned due to the differences in character between the organizations that made up the sample. Different types of organizations may differ in their areas of interest and priorities. One could also argue that the variety of organizations represented in the sample mainly provide a more complete image of the climate for visual arts in mid-sized Dutch cities. Similar reliability issues apply to part II of the research project as those that may apply to part I, such as the earlier mentioned local or geographical differences and consequences of the covid-19 pandemic.

Other criteria that are important when evaluating this research project are the authenticity criteria suggested by Lincoln & Guba (1994). Two of these criteria, ontological authenticity and educative authenticity are important for the evaluation of this research, since one of the motivations as mentioned in the introduction is the aim to provide an understanding of the working of the visual arts climate in an area that has not yet been heavily researched. Ontological authenticity concerns the improvement of the understanding that member of a certain social group, in this case visual artists and visual arts organizations, have of their social context. Educative authenticity is defined as a criterion that is used to evaluate whether members appreciate the perspectives of others within their social group after the research has been conducted (Bryman, 2016, p.387).

4. Results

In the following chapter results from part I and II of the research project are presented. The first chapter will explore data and hypotheses from the first part of the study, the quantitative exploratory survey research. After discussing the descriptive statistics concerning the sample, hypotheses will be tested using IBM SPSS Statistics software. The second part of this chapter the results of the qualitative semi-structured research will be scrutinized, organized by theme of discussion.

4.1 Results Research Part I: Quantitative Exploratory Survey Research

4.1.1 General Descriptive Statistics

The final sample of visual artists that completed the survey consisted of 86 respondents ($N = 86$) who were requested to first provide some descriptive information about themselves and their artistic and economic situation. Of the 86 respondents ($N = 86$) 65% is female, 34% is male and 1% selected the option "other". None of the respondents indicated preferring not to say which gender they identify with. Not all respondents graduated from an official arts program but a modest majority of 56% did. The age range of respondents spans 54 years, with the youngest respondent being 25 years of age and the oldest 79. With a mean of 58 years ($SD = 12.516$) respondents are older than the general population of in the Netherlands (CBS, 2020). This aligns with finding of the Dutch CBS (2021) that about 25% of working individuals over the age of 65 are artists. The finding that the year of graduation in the sample is on average 1994 ($SD = 16.550$).

Considering the economic position of their artistic practice, a majority of the artists in the sample ($N = 86$) work on their artistic work part time, with 28% of respondents working 10-20 hours in an average week and also 28% working 20-30 hours. Only about one fifth of the sample (19%) spends more than 30 hours on their artistic practice in an average week. This seems understandable when comparing these statistics on working hours with the unsurprising little percentile of respondent's total income earned by artistic work. Only 15% of respondents earns over 50% of their total income from artistic activities. A vast majority of 77% instead earns only between 0% and 25% of their total income by activities within the realm of arts. This hints at an approach that is not aimed at commercial success, which is corroborated by the finding that only 2% of the sample selected gallery owners and art dealers as their most important target group. Instead some 55% of the sample ($N = 86$) aims to reach art lovers and donators first and foremost. Second in the selection of target audiences come audiences outside of the arts world, with 35% of respondents putting these audiences second in line of importance.

To give an impression of the level of embeddedness in the surrounding creative context, the next part of the questionnaire some questions were posed about collaborative practices of respondents. A majority of 62% of the sample indicated to sometimes collaborate with other artists and 24% said they never do. A small percentage (12%) indicated that these collaborations always take place with artists from the same region and a substantial part (33%) of the sample ($N = 86$) never collaborates with people from other disciplines than their own. Collaborations with people who are not artists are even less popular amongst artists in the sample, with 49% indicating that they never collaborate with people who are not artists, 43% saying they do so sometimes and a mere 4% always doing so. The level of coworking by sharing a studio space is also quite low, with one fifth of respondents sharing their work space with others.

Some geographical areas of research are better represented in the sample than others, with 14% of respondents working in Hilversum, 10% in Deventer and 10% in Delft. All other cities are less represented and unfortunately no artists from Emmen responded to the invitation to join the research project. Respondents working in an area of 25 kilometres around the determined cities of research, are included in the research project. Most visual artists in the sample live in the same city as where they hold their practice, with only 14% living in a different location.

4.1.2 Push and Pull Factors

Of the several pull factors suggested in the questionnaire, the highest rating of importance was given to *calmness* with 2.93 ($SD = 1.015$) and *rental prices* with a rating of 2.84 ($SD = 1.216$). Respondents could rate the importance of factors by selecting four options: not at all, a little bit important, important or very important. These options were coded as ratings from one to four. Since these categories are ordinal but not an even scale, ratings provide an indication but not an exact measurement. Least important to respondents ($N = 86$) are possibilities for collaboration and the presence of colleagues with a rating of only 1.98 ($SD = .826$). For other ratings, see table 5.1.2. This table also includes Median (*Mdn*), the middle of provided answers, the mode (*Mdn*) i.e. the most selected answer and the standard deviation (*SD*).

Table 4.1.2 - Frequencies of pull factors

	Pull Factors										
	Accessibility	Presence of colleagues	Cultural profile city	Challenging environment	Visually inspiring environment	Peace / tranquillity	Quality buildings	Social care facilities	Rent prices	Proximity of family / friends	Coincidence
Mean (M)	2.49	1.98	2.30	2.26	2.59	2.93	2.23	2.38	2.84	2.12	2.30
Median (Mdn)	3	2	2	2	3	3	2	2	3	2	2
Mode (Mo)	3	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	4	1	1
SD	1.003	.826	.971	.910	.963	1.015	.966	.984	1.216	1.056	1.075

Based on earlier research (Drake, 2003), four different push factors were presented to respondents of which only one was rated on average with a 2 ($SD = .920$). This was the push factor that characterized the location of the artist's practice as lonely and isolated. This aligns partially with earlier mentioned results of respondents not usually engaging in collaboration. Other push factors such as locations being not easy to reach, not having enough space, high costs or lack of inspiration were all a little bit present with between 23% and 30% of respondents selecting this answer.

4.1.3 Organizational and Contextual Descriptive Statistics

The next stage of the questionnaire forms the basis of the second part of this research project, the qualitative part. The sample selected for qualitative research is determined by the answers provided by respondents to the questions in this part of the questionnaire. 74% of the sample ($N = 86$) does feel connected to one or more organizations focussed on visual arts in their city. Some organizations are mentioned once, but 13 organizations are named by one or more respondents, with ART Hilversum, VAK and Museum Jan Cunen making up the top three with respectively nine, eight and seven respondents listing these organizations. During the next stage of the research project, representatives from all three of these organizations have been interviewed to gather more knowledge on the role and mission of these organization within the artistic landscape.

In the last part of the questionnaire, respondents are confronted with six statements and asked to which extent they agree with these statements. Although earlier results show that their location does hold some lonely and isolated characteristics, most respondents state that they do know a lot of artists in the city where they work, with a rating of 2.95 ($SD = .981$). This although does not mean that they feel part of an artistic community in their city, with only 38% agreeing with this statement. Despite this fact some do like collaborating a little with artists from the same city (28%) and 6% really liking such collaborations. Although respondents do deem their city as a positive and stimulating environment with a rating of

2.28 ($SD = .890$) to say that their city serves as an inspiration for their artistic practice is a step too far. This statement instead is disagreed with the most of all six statements with a rating of only 1.77 ($SD = .903$). One of the statements concerns the changes in the connection that respondents feel to their location since the start of the covid-19 pandemic, by asking respondents to agree with the statement that they feel more connected. A total of 73% of respondents either fully disagrees (40%) or answered to be neutral about this statement (34%).

4.1.4 Results Hypothesis Testing

In the following section the test results of three hypotheses, as formulated in the methodological chapter are tested by using IBM SPSS software. Firstly the hypothesis that the age mean in the sample (M) is a significant representative for the age mean in the wider population of visual artists in mid-sized Dutch cities (μ) is tested. To perform this test a null hypothesis is formulated as follows: $M=\mu$. The alternative hypothesis in this case is $M\neq\mu$ (non-directional). To reject or accept the stated null hypothesis, a one-sample t-test is performed with the level of significance (α) set at 0.05. The age mean in the sample is 58 years of age, so the test value is set at 58. The obtained p-value (two-tailed) is .917 which indicates that the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. It is hence not possible to state that the mean in the population (μ) differs substantially from the mean in the sample ($M = 58$).

The second hypothesis is tested by running a one-sample t test as well with a level of significance set at 0.05 ($\alpha = 0.05$). The test value is computed by taking the middle value higher of the 4 possible responses, rated from 1 to 4 (1 = 0%-25%, 2 = 25%-50%, 3 = 50%-75%, 4 = 75%-100% of total income), creating a test value of 3.5. The obtained p-value of this test is .000 so significant for the population. In other words this result means that the null hypothesis is indeed rejected and instead an indication is found that in the population visual artists earn a significantly smaller percentage of their total income from artistic work (table 4.1.4).

Table 4.1.4 - Results one-sample t test hypothesis 2.

One-Sample Test						
test value = 3.5						
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Artistic income	-18,280	85	0.000	-2.000	-2.22	-1.78

The last hypothesis tested is the hypothesis that distribution of visual artists in mid-sized Dutch cities who feel connected to at least one arts organization in their location is similar in the population as in the sample. To test the significance of results observed in the sample for the population, a Chi-square goodness of fit test is performed with a level of significance set at 0.05 ($\alpha = 0.05$). The distribution observed in the sample is as follows: 74% of visual artists do feel connected to at least one arts organization and 26% does not. When entering these values as a distribution suggestion in the Chi-square goodness of fit test, a p-value of .929 is obtained with 1 degree of freedom. This p-value is higher than α so the null hypothesis in this case cannot be rejected, leading to the conclusion that it cannot be determined that the distribution in the population is different from the distribution in the sample. It hence cannot be stated that the distribution in the population is not 74% of visual artists feeling connected to at least one arts organization in their city and 26% who do not feel connected to any arts organization in their location.

4.2 Results Research Part II: Qualitative Semi-structured Interview Research

In this second part of the results chapter, data gathered during stage II of this research project is scrutinized. It concerns the information provided by a sample of individuals active for different organizations aimed at visual arts. During the interviews, several themes were discussed and scrutinized in a semi-structured manner. For the complete interview guide, please see Appendix C. Organizations that were included in this sample are ART Hilversum, K26 (Oss), Kadmium (Delft), Artes Bussum, VAK (Amstelveen), Kunstenlab (Deventer), GBK Oss, Museum Jan Cunen (Oss) and Marres (Maastricht).

4.2.1 General Descriptive Information

Not all organizations within the sample employ the same type of activities and share the same characteristics. While all organizations are active in the field of visual arts, activities and approaches naturally differ when considering an association for artists or a museum. Some of the examined organizations have a very long history, such as Museum Jan Cunen which exists since 1935 (Museum Jan Cunen, n.d.), while other organizations are initiated only a few years ago. These differences bring along some variety in experience, but make it all the more interesting to find that despite these differences, much overlap can be observed. The organizations that make up the sample of this part of the research, are all located within the research area of the earlier mentioned 10 mid-sized Dutch cities except for two. Since both of these organizations do lie in an area less than 25 kilometres from the original, they are included in this research.

Another geographical difference is found in the proximity of other, possibly bigger neighbouring cities which may compete directly with the organizations in this sample. Amstelveen, where VAK is active, is located approximately 20 kilometres from Amsterdam whereas Deventer is located right between three cities that all host an art academy (Zwolle, Enschede and Arnhem). Most respondents are also aware of these differences, mentioning possible collaborations with other organizations when close to a bigger city, or underlining the effort it takes to find new members or participants.

Besides the differences in the character of the organizations in the sample, differences exist as well in the individuals selected for an interview. Interviews were conducted with participants selected by the organization itself after introducing the research topics. This selection process resulted in a very open and enthusiastic atmosphere, since all participants agreed beforehand to talk about their experience. Of the nine interviewees, five were visual artists with an active practice, who hold a position in the board of the organization next to their artistic activities. One respondent did study arts education so does hold some practical experience but is not active as a visual artist. The last two interviewees either have a lot of experience in the administrative or organizational field.

There are a few different types of activities developed by the organizations at hand. Main activities concern the development of exhibitions, creating a platform for information exchange, conducting projects in public space, representing the artistic field in communications with third parties. Where some organizations have established a strong and stable position in one or more of these fields of activity, others are (re)defining which activities are prioritized. Many of these decisions seem to be dependent on personal input and motivation. Because many of the interviewees commit to the organization as an honorary function, the intensity of activities is very dependent on free time available to the individuals active for such an organization. The reason given by subjects for this approach is a general lack of monetary means, mainly a lack of subsidies.

4.2.2 Mission & Target Groups

Not only do organizations differ in their activities, these activities are naturally based on a different missions as framed by the organization. Organizations such as ART Hilversum, K26, VAK, Kadmium and Artes Bussum state as a main priority to increase visibility and possibilities for their own members. Individuals need a reason to become a member, meaning that there has to be some personal benefit to the people who join the organization. Responden connected to Artes Bussum explains that the outdoor arts market

previously organized by Artes, has changed in character. With an aging group of member, the energy to join an outdoor activity declined over the years, making it more and more difficult to fill up all the stands with quality art. To keep the market, which is one of the main activities of the organization, alive, membership of Artes is now no longer a requirement to join the market. By making this decision, the organization has erased one of its unique selling points and according to the interviewee "...the added value of an Artes membership has to be reinvented, I think."¹ (interviewee Artes)

Besides this mission of visibility of member or participants present in most organizations there also exists a commitment to the visibility of art in general. Not only do these organizations aim to develop several platforms for the artists who joined, but to bring art to the general public in the city where they are located. Artists do not only enjoy their work in solitude but do wish for neighbors, friends and many others to participate. This proves to be a complicate task for many, with several interviewees mentioning the lack of active participation of members and outsiders.

Many organizations split their activities between the local visual arts scene and the national visual arts scene. Where most artists associations are targeting very local members and audiences, organizations with a broader range of activities seem to experience a lower threshold between themselves and the national field. An exception to this is K26, where artists are invited according to theme and do not necessarily come from or work in Oss. *Kunstenlab* holds an interesting position when considering this local versus national work field. As an organization they are heavily embedded in the arts sector in Deventer and are in close contact with both the municipality and the province. At the same time, they organize exhibitions with an experimental character which include a big number of national or international artists.

4.2.3 Motivation

The personal motivation of subjects as brought forward during interviews was mainly focused on necessity. Although there naturally comes some enjoyment with achieving successful activities within the artistic and social context, many respondents stress the fact that it takes a lot of time and effort to make things happen. This finding makes it even more important that individuals do not feel as if they are the only one carrying the weight of the organization's activities. This feeling of solitude does seem to be the case in more than one occasion. When asked about certain activities such as online

¹ "...de toegevoegde waarde van het lidmaatschap van Artes moet worden heruitgevonden, vind ik."

promotion, one of the interviewees mentioned wanting to do more, but not being able to all by herself. Several interviewees mention that it is very difficult to motivate others to actively participate in the organizational side of the association.

Most associations have developed a participatory model revolving around different committees. Some committees are much more active than others, but it does seem to be a successful way of involving members in the organization. "A few years ago we have started a lot of committees: a technical committee, a pr-committee, a newsletter committee, a exhibition committee, a for-better-or-worse-woman, a balloting committee. The intention is that each member joins a committee. This way you are involved and take up some of the workload."² (interviewee VAK)

In other organizations this model seems to be less effective. At Kadmium (Delft) there is only one member of the ballot committee, who is simultaneously active as the chairman of the organization. This does not have to cause any direct problems, when judgments are deemed objective enough by other members of the organization, but it does cause a situation that is less than desirable.

All interviewees holding an artistic practice and being involved in organizations, either as a board member or employee, stress that these organizational activities are not directly connected to their personal artistic practice. Instead, they consider it beneficial to how they operate within the organization since they know how to communicate about art and with artists. In some organizations it has been an issue that the different roles, that of artist and board member, have proved difficult to combine. A certain impartiality can be needed to bring an organization's mission to fruition. This is the reason why some organizations, such as ART Hilversum decided to form a board without artists. Other organizations chose a strategy where some artists are involved in the board, but definitely not only artists. To find suitable candidates can be difficult, especially when the accretion of new members is not taking place at high speed. After a few years, most artists who are part of a board would like to focus more on their art again. Like in the following example of a board member of K26. "I find it important that such an organization exists. I have not been a board member for a while, which was also nice. I do not feel the need to be in the board, since I quickly tend to feel very responsible. This is difficult for me. After some board issues, they asked

² "We hebben een paar jaar geleden heel veel commissies opgezet: een techniekcommissie, een pr-commissie, een nieuwsbriefcommissie, een tentoonstellingscommissie, een lief-en-leed-vrouw, een ballotagecommissie. Het is het idee dat iedereen die lid is, deel wordt van een commissie. Dat je ergens bij betrokken bent en ook wat werk op je neemt"

me to return because I do have a lot of connecting qualities. And eventually it is fun, but I do hope that sometime in the future someone else will rise to the occasion.”³ (interviewee K26)

4.2.4 Collaboration & Context

Most organizations are heavily embedded in their social and artistic context by organizing events, collaborating with different parties inside and outside of the art world and by being a discussion partner for local authorities and funding bodies. It might be a lot easier for a municipality to contact one organization when needing something in the artistic realm, than looking for individual artists who might be able to help out. In Deventer the municipality shows much appreciation for Kunstenlab in this regard by supplying them with a basic subsidy to keep the organization afloat. In return Kunstenlab is expected to take the lead in several arts related projects in Deventer and to guide smaller initiatives in their development. By providing a stable and long-lasting structure, other initiatives know that there is fertile ground in Deventer to develop projects related to visual arts.

Other municipalities are much less active in creating such a stable infrastructure. ART Hilversum for example feels that the municipality is very active in branding the city as “media city” and seems to be less interested in other cultural fields. According to ART Hilversum’s chairwoman this is cause for a slow rising mono-culture. Another municipality which has been put forward during this research as difficult to communicate with is that of Maastricht. Spokesperson for Marres mentioned during the interview that even putting up a sign to mark their location as museum seems impossible due to the esthetical priorities of the current municipality. She mentions the difference between Maastricht and a city like Rotterdam, where it is fine to close a street for a short while if a truck with art has to unload. In Maastricht they are immediately warned by law enforcement to move whatever they are doing.

Differences in location of researched organizations can also be considered to cause differences when it comes to collaborative strategies. In cities like Hilversum (ART Hilversum) and Bussum (Artes Bussum) the close proximity of bigger urban regions such as Amsterdam or Utrecht might cause less fertile ground for local activities. Possible visitors

³ “Ik vind het belangrijk dat zo’n organisatie er is. Ik ben een tijd uit het bestuur geweest, dat vond ik ook fijn. Ik hoef niet zo nodig in het bestuur, dan voel ik me meteen weer heel verantwoordelijk. Dat vind ik wel heel erg lastig. Na wat bestuursproblemen vroegen ze me terug omdat ik toch veel verbindende kwaliteiten heb. En eigenlijk is het ook wel leuk, maar ik hoop wel dat er weer eens iemand anders opstaat.”

might be drawn to events outside of these smaller cities, whereas Deventer might experience less competition in this regard. Amstelveen is of course very close to Amsterdam, and VAK is very aware of having to renew itself as an organization to withstand competition and an aging member base. Possible options for the future as mentioned by interviewees could be to increase the scale of activities and release the focus on local artists. With more activities moving online due to covid-19, this step might be smaller than before. On the other hand this might decrease social cohesion, only endangering the continuation of the organization's activities.

There are big differences in organizations who do run their own space, for example to organize exhibitions and organizations who are nomadic in character. Both types of organizations consider their own position as an advantage. Where organizations that do run their own space, such as K26, stress the importance of the space being a hub to meet one another other organizations are happy about the freedom that comes with not having a set space. Organizations such as GBK Oss, Artes Bussum and ART Hilversum do make use of temporary possibilities, either with artistic partners such as artists or exhibitions spaces or commercial partners. According to some respondents, a space does not only function as a hub for the organization itself, but can also be used as some sort of bargaining tool to facilitate exchanges with other organizations. When functioning without a set space, it might be more difficult for initiatives to show what they have got to offer.

4.2.5 Covid Changes

Just like in most sector, visual arts organizations did experience changes due to the covid-19 pandemic. These changes mainly concerned the aspects of income, social possibilities and online activity. Considering the income of organizations, some received governmental support, but other fell between the cracks because of strict regulations. Also the artists active for these organizations experienced a drop in monetary income. As one of the interviewees mentioned, it would not have been possible for him to survive as an artist during this pandemic if he was not support by his wife who has a well-paid job.

In several interviews there were negative as well as positive effects of the pandemic brought to light. One of the positive effects of the pandemic was the time and calmness that some people experienced during the first lockdown period. During this period the people active for Museum Jan Cunen, including a new director had the time to develop a new strategic approach and as its spokesperson said: "citation Jan Cunen about new plans". This opportunity for evaluation and repositing is noticed by more organizations, but is not in all cases a choice. Instead some organizations experienced disagreements

amongst the board or other leading people within the organization. Whether this was caused by the covid-19 pandemic or only became more visible is not agreed upon. Where in one interview the shift from offline communication to online communication is blamed for the spike in disagreement and misunderstanding, another makes sure that this struggles existed long before covid-19.

The difference between online strategies of organizations is significant. Many artist associations have a member base that is in general not very young. Since many members feel into the demographic group more vulnerable to covid-19 infections, most were hesitant to organize meetings and other activities. Some organizations tried out new online strategies like selling work of artists online or placing QR-codes that redirected window-shoppers to an online sales page. In most cases this was not a success. "Well, we had one artist who offered his work for only 5 euros and nobody noticed this."⁴ (interviewee Kadmium)

In organizations with a strong and well-developed organizational structure such as *Kunstenlab* (Deventer) and *Museum Jan Cunen* (Oss), there were some positive experiences with online activities, making it possible to extend outreach further than physically possible. In a project where artists are asked to invite curators they find interesting to join a debate, online means give rise to the possibility to host a much more international discussion and this might remain in a covid-free future.

As is corroborated by research of *Karenjit Clare* (2013) and *Glaeser* (2011), many participant do not consider online activities to have a similar value as offline activities. To meet colleagues in person and experience art works first hand is a different activity than sitting behind a screen and focussing only on pixels and sound. Of interviewees that do consider continuing online activities, all of them agree that this must be an addition to other activities and not a substitution.

4.2.6 Growth Factors

Many organizations studied during this process are struggling with an aging group of members or participants. There are several strategies used by the organizations which make up the sample to find new people who would like to join the initiative. Some try to increase the area in which they are active, such as *VAK*. *VAK* is mainly based in *Amstelveen*, but does have some members from surrounding communities and is weighing its options

⁴ "Nou, we hadden één kunstenaar die had zijn werk voor €5 aangeboden en niemand heeft dat gezien."

to extend their reach to a more national area. Some organizations also suggest the possibilities of a merger with other organizations. Since many of them encounter similar problems, mergers might prove to be an option to keep the organization afloat. Not everyone is very enthusiastic about this, fearing the loss of specific identities. As stated by a member who is attached to two similar organizations in close proximity: "Maybe we should collaborate more after all. All the associations having a hard time surviving. (...) Sint Lucas is even older and has even less young members. At a certain point this is not sustainable anymore. Maybe we should even fully merge, but then no one wants to give up their own identity of course." (interviewee VAK).⁵

One might also consider a less intrusive strategy, not a merger but close cooperation such as already taking place in Deventer. As mentioned earlier, Kunstenlab collaborates closely with other initiatives in the city as well profiling themselves with projects outside of the city borders. Although it proves to be important to the cohesion within the organization to create a strong and clear profile of the intended mission, this may cause issues when developing collaborative projects. When every organization involved in such a collaboration needs to fit activities within their profile, concessions may become difficult. An example of this issue can be observed in Oss, where the activities of GBK Oss, which as an organization is aimed at amateur artists, does no longer fit the plans of Museum Jan Cunen despite their long history together. GBK Oss was founded in the attic of Museum Jan Cunen, but after the considerations that have taken place in the museum organization, amateur art at this moment does not relate enough to their broader target audiences.

When asked about the future of the grey population that is the driving force behind several artists associations and related organizations, some were in doubt. As stated by a board member of GBK Oss the new generation of retirees are raised with such a wide range of possibilities, that they may no longer be interested in joining a club. This may hold true for amateur organizations, but organizations that involve mainly professional artists could be less impacted by this. Considering the finding that many artists are multiple job holders throughout most of their career, retirement seems like a good opportunity to focus more on art and less on other activities according to respondents.

⁵ "Misschien moeten we toch meer gaan samenwerken. Al die verenigingen hebben moeite om overeind te blijven. (...) Sint Lucas is nog ouder en hebben nog minder jonge leden. Op een gegeven moment sterft dat uit natuurlijk. Misschien moeten we wel helemaal samengaan, maar niemand wil dan natuurlijk zijn eigen identiteit opgeven."

As important factors to create a thriving visual arts climate, several options are mentioned but most important is deemed by many interviewees to have good connections with local funding parties, especially the municipality. Local arts organizations host an enormous amount of expertise and are very willing to share their knowledge and experience with others. A relatively structural support system as is in place in Deventer, makes it possible for organizations to develop both experimental and social projects. To many organizations it is very clear that they have to give back to the community in return for subsidies and are very willing to do so. This does not always seem to be possible, due to path-dependency and lack of input from other parties.

Lastly the importance of exchange is emphasized during the conversations that make up this research. There is some collaboration within cities, some collaboration on a regional level, but there does not seem to be a national umbrella organization that could facilitate exchange between different organizations in the realm of visual arts. Even when there are differences between missions, as is the case with the organizations that make up the sample for this study, there is still much to be learned from one another.

5. Conclusion & Discussion

Both part I and part II of this research have been developed to map the current climate for visual arts in mid-sized Dutch cities as thoroughly as possible in a master's thesis. While the first part of the research project did provide interesting quantitative data, part II of the project definitely deepened the understanding of the broader climate in these cities by opening up the collective perspective instead of that of the individual artist. During the first stage of the research project, the quantitative exploratory stage, an impression of visual artists in mid-sized cities, their practice and their priorities was built through gathering survey data. These data affirmed some of the prior knowledge that exists in the field of cultural economics, such as the reality of visual artists holding multiple jobs (Abbing, 2002; Throsby, 2000) and not living off artistic income. Instead a majority of artists in our sample earns less than half of their total income from their artistic practice, probably making them dependent on either other jobs, social benefits, family members or pensions for their livelihood. It hence is not surprising that the artists who participated in this study, are on average about 14 years older than the general population. One could imagine that at a later stage in life, monetary income could be already secured, for example by receiving a state pension and other priorities, such as family life, take up a smaller portion of individual's time.

This does not have to mean that these individuals do not take their artistic seriously. On the contrary, a majority of them feels connected to arts organizations in their city and think carefully about their target groups. The fact that there is a group of active visual artists present in these mid-sized Dutch cities is an indication of the active nature of the sector. Simultaneously it cannot be denied that some cities are no hosts for a vivid group of visual artists. When considering the first sample of artists containing only 6 artists from Emmen of which none has responded to the survey invitation, it is impossible to state that all participating cities have similar characteristics when it comes to the climate of visual arts. Possible reasons for these differences are potentially found in present push and pull factors in these different cities. The broad scope of this research project, could also be considered one of its limitations. To add new and in-depth knowledge to the body of research existing so far, a study in cities with more similarities than only number of inhabitants would be a valuable addition.

The cities that were under scrutiny during this research project, turn out to have two pull factors deemed important by respondents: *rent prices* and *tranquillity*. When considering the outcome that many visual artists do not earn a firm monetary income from their artistic work, but do need a space to live and possibly a studio to produce their work,

rent prices are an important factor in the location selection process. At this moment in time, the real estate market in the Netherlands is extremely stressed, with protests and wide news coverage as a result. This pull factor can be expected to start pulling even harder in the future, possibly luring more artistic entrepreneurs to cities where they did not expect to ever settle. Interestingly this movement could cause a clash between this and the other important pull factor: *tranquillity*. Especially older artists might enjoy this tranquillity and peaceful environment. During interviews in the second stage of the research project, this is suggested by several interviewees as a reason for young artists to re-locate to busier and more vibrant cities. By the time they have built a strong reputation in the artistic world, they might consider moving to these calmer cities. To further deepen the understanding of artists motivations to locate their practice in a specific location, qualitative research would be a useful tool to expand the understanding of slight differences observed during quantitative research. Although an interesting overview of data about the current practices of visual artists is presented during this study, motivational factors need more in-depth research to come to a fuller understanding of the artist's perspective.

Many respondents, especially those who were part the second stage of the research process, do appreciate the force to work together that comes with a visual arts landscape that might be experienced as a bit bare. Especially in cities a further from large urban areas the need to cooperate with others to create an innovative, strong and attractive environment for visual arts is strongly felt. Unfortunately, these collaborative movements are not always well-supported by local funding bodies and municipalities. Where some municipalities create policy programs aimed at fostering existing organizations and supporting new initiatives, others hold a different set of priorities. All throughout the interviews undertaken during this research, the need for collective support is underlined. Whether this is support from inside the organization, from participating members or artists of rather from outside of the organization, both are elemental in the creation of successful projects. This wish for collaboration does not seem to be as strongly felt by artists themselves, noting that collaborative possibilities are not of great importance during the location selection process. Where this possible discrepancy originates could prove an interesting line of further research.

Especially amongst arts associations, strong differences in level of involvement from members or participants are observed. Where some associations have a history of strong involvement of many members, others have instigated this process only recently or have not at all. Artists who are active for arts organizations mention that it is not always easy to bear the responsibility for one's personal practice and a large part of the activities of an

organization. Being part of a committee, comes with a different level of involvement than being a board member and all board members state that it does take up a lot of time and effort. Again in this context it is not surprising that mainly older members or participants have the time to fulfil such positions, also since most of these positions are voluntary so do not receive payment. Still the motivation to make something happen in a city where not a lot is going on, drives respondents to get involved, motivate others and exchange their experiences.

These connections sometimes happen less smoothly than expected or hoped for, since artists may carry strong ideas about their practice and their wishes. Another obstacle for smooth collaboration is a factor that can be an obstacle as well as a tool: shared histories. When an artist is active in a mid-sized or smaller city, he or she does know quite some colleagues in the area. People may have worked together before, building up experiences that can be either good or bad and priorities can naturally shift over time. When a new team prefers a new approach to projects, this can cause friction with earlier partners. In general it seems very useful and important to remain transparent and critical of the policy within an organization, but preserving a lasting identity. This identity lower the threshold for external partners to approach an organization, since it is clear what their mission is and how this connects to the goals of possible external partners.

In this context, communication is key. Communication within organizations to formulate a clear mission that suits the team, communication with other organizations and governmental bodies to bundle strengths and successfully collaborate and communication with target groups such as artists and visitors. Even when not all values of different parties align, fruitful collaborations are possible and will increase the attractiveness of mid-sized cities to younger artists. This is essential to keep arts organizations in these areas alive, and help them in the struggle with the question of how to find new members and participants. When young artists are invited to the city, they do not feel the wish to stay and get involved in organizations. Since it is usually important for these younger artists to build a reputation, visibility in the field is important. While smaller cities may provide less opportunity for visibility, the freedom to experiment is much larger without feeling the hot breath of trend watchers and talent scouts. At this moment in time, with all the digital and online possibilities to connect, one would expect young artists to be less dependent on physical proximity.

Online is no does seem to provide no substitution for offline though. While some organizations do consider the need to move activities online due to COVID-19 related restrictions something to keep going in the future, other organization did not unfold any

online activity. Of course, when considering an artists association with mainly older members, not all members are equally digitally experienced and savvy. Digital activity does provide possibilities to increase the organization's area of reach, making it possible to organize talks and exchanges between people in the artistic field living further away. Also the experience that has been gathered during the lockdown periods of COVID-19 did increase the familiarity that even smaller organizations feel with digital means. The combination of enhanced appreciation for offline activities and the forced shift of some activities to online, does outline a possible future in which the strengths of both worlds are appreciated and used to the benefit of organizations as well as individual artists.

To successfully expand on these experiences and benefits, exchange is necessary and this is exactly one of the reasons that lays at the root of the research at hand. While policymakers, organizations and artists usually have the best intentions, the sharing of knowledge is limited due to a lack of time, lack of resources and lack of broader platforms. Where some municipalities build a strong and lasting infrastructure for visual arts, others have different priorities and focus mainly on a fleeting and project based climate. Both approaches of course have pros and cons, but one of the findings during this study is that many organizations feel as if a lot depends on them, and more specifically on the few people that are very active within the organization. When there would be a nationally oriented organ that could advise and support such organizations, feelings of fighting lonely battles could be diminished, increasing the influx of positive energy in visual arts organizations.

To properly nourish such an organ, more research into the visual arts climate in different regions should be conducted. An important limitation of the research at hand are the wide-ranging characteristics of the cities under scrutiny. The factor of selection in this project was the number of inhabitants, but there are many other characteristics in which these cities differ strongly. Important factors of influence seem to be the proximity of other creative cities, the presence of educational institutions in the creative field and the presence of arts organizations. Some cities have very active artists associations, making the population of artists in such a city more visible than in other locations. To deepen the understanding of the attractiveness of a city for visual artists, comparative research should be conducted in areas with more similar characteristics. This could provide useful insights to the practical field, but also to policy research, urban research, place-making and the field of creative entrepreneurship.

By adopting a mixed methods approach, this research project is conducted with the hope of building a full image of the visual arts climate in mid-sized Dutch cities. This

approach does bring along limitations, such as a possible tendency to look into many aspects of the situation while remaining at the surface, not diving deep enough. Since this study is not a comparative project, more context for the gathered data could be added by comparing different cities of a different scale. With this approach a clearer comparative image could be created entailing interesting findings for both the world of academics and the world of artistic practice. Not only artists or organizations could benefit from such a study, policy makers could just as well. By adding a policy angle to a similar study as the one at hand would provide a valuable mapping of the landscape for visual arts, but would have made this project too extensive to undertake as a master's thesis.

After conducting this research project, an estimation can be made of today's temperature of the climate for visual arts in mid-sized Dutch cities. Things are going on, artists are active and projects are initiated in such cities so the climate is definitely not cold. It cannot be denied though that the intensity of activities in these cities is lower than in areas who profile themselves as artistic or creative hubs. To state that the climate in these mid-sized cities is hot and happening, does not fit the results as presented in this study either. This however is absolutely no reason to neglect existing and new initiatives in these areas and instead developed activity should be considered all the more reason to foster the freedom that accompanies the slightly lower social pressure observed in these areas. More research, exchange of experiences and thorough, structural policy would most definitely increase the temperature of the visual arts climate under scrutiny during this research project, but the lukewarm atmosphere that is currently present absolutely has many heart-warming and comfortable qualities.

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Appendix A – Questionnaire Research Part I

Thank you so much for taking the time to fill out this questionnaire!

*Filling out this questionnaire will take about **10 minutes**. All the information you provide is **anonymous**, and will only be used for the purpose of this particular thesis research.*

*My name is Rosalie van Oorschot and I am conducting this research on **the importance of locality for artistic production** for my master thesis. I am a student at the Master Cultural Economics & Entrepreneurship at Erasmus University in Rotterdam. If you have any questions or comments you can **contact me** at rosalie.van.oorschot.research@gmail.com*

Thank you!

*As an **artist** myself, I know that an artistic practice is flexible and creative. As a **researcher** though, I know that survey data can reveal highly interesting results. Please fill out the survey as realistic as possible. If you feel like the provided answers do not fully cover your reality, please select the closest option. There will be space at the end of the survey to elaborate or share any general remarks.*

*Firstly I would like to ask you some **general** questions.*

1. How **old** are you? [text entry]

2. With which **gender** do you identify?

- Male
- Female
- Other
- Prefer not to answer

3. Did you graduate from an **arts related program**?

YES / NO

If YES:

3.1 What **year** did you graduate? [text entry]

*Now I would like to ask you some questions about your **artistic work** and **economic situation**.*

4. What **medium** do you use most?

It is possible to select more than one.

- sculpture
- painting
- drawing
- installation
- performance
- video
- photography
- digital
- other, namely:

5. How many hours do you spend on **artistic work** in an average week? [text entry]
*Artistic work means the work you do that you consider to be part of your **artistic practice**.*

- 0 - 5 hours
- 5 - 10 hours
- 10 - 20 hours
- 20 - 30 hours
- 30 - 40 hours
- more than 40 hours

6. What percentage of your income is raised by **artistic work**?

- 0-25%
- 25-50%
- 50-75%
- 75-100%

7. **Who** do you want to reach with your art works?
Please order according to importance, with 1 being the most important. You can drag and drop the different items.

- Art lovers / donors
- Critics / curators
- Other artists / friends
- Gallery owners / art dealers
- Non-arts people

*The next few questions are about **collaboration**.*

8.1 Do you **collaborate** with other artists?

never / sometimes / often / always

8.2 Do you work together with artists from the **same region**?

never / sometimes / often / always

8.3 Do you collaborate with artists from **other disciplines** than your own?

never / sometimes / often / always

8.4 Do you work with people who are **not artists** during your artistic process?

never / sometimes / often / always

8.5 Do you share your **workspace** with other artists?

yes / no

*Now I would like to ask you some questions about **locality / your location**.*

9. What is the name of the **city** where your practice is located?

[free text entry]

Municipality: [free text entry]

10. Do you live in the same city?

YES / NO

If NO:

10.1 In which city do you live?

11. Please indicate how **important** the following factors are for choosing the location of your current practice:

[Likert-scale] not important at all / a little bit important / important / very important

- accessibility
- collaborative possibilities / presence of colleagues
- cultural profile of the city
- cultural atmosphere
- challenging environment
- visually inspiring environment
- tranquillity / peace
- the quality of buildings / real estate
- availability of buildings / real estate
- social care facilities
- rent prices
- family and friends nearby
- coincidence

11.1 Are there **other factors** you find very important for selecting this location?
*This question is **optional**, so you do not have to answer to continue the survey.*

[optional text entry]

12. Please indicate to which degree you find your location to have the following **characteristics**:

[Likert-scale] not at all / a little bit / present / very much

- lonely / isolated
- poor accessibility
- lack of space
- costs
- lack of inspiration

13. Are there one or more arts-related organizations in your area that you feel **connected** to?

YES / NO

If YES:

13.1 What is the **name** of this organization?

Organization 1: [free text entry]

Organization 2: [free text entry]

Organization 3: [free text entry]

Organization 4: [free text entry]

Organization 5: [free text entry]

13.2 In what way do you feel connected to this organization?

It is possible to select multiple answers.

Organization 1:

as a participant | as a member | as an employee | as a visitor | as an inhabitant of the city

Organization 2:

as a participant | as a member | as an employee | as a visitor | as an inhabitant of the city

Organization 3:

as a participant | as a member | as an employee | as a visitor | as an inhabitant of the city

Organization 4:

as a participant | as a member | as an employee | as a visitor | as an inhabitant of the city

Organization 5:

as a participant | as a member | as an employee | as a visitor | as an inhabitant of the city

14. Please indicate whether you agree with the following **6 statements**:

[Likert-scale] not at all / neutral / a little / very much

- "I know a lot of artists in the city where I am located."
- "I like collaborating with other artists from my city."
- "The city where I live is a positive and stimulating arts environment."
- "I feel part of an artistic community in my city."
- "Since the covid-19 pandemic, I feel more connected to my location."
- "I consider the city where I am based as an inspiration for my artistic work."

15. Is there anything you would like to add?

[optional free text entry]

That was very helpful!

*If you leave your email address in the box below you will receive a digital copy of a hand drawn **artwork** about locality. (The address will not be used for any other purpose than sending you this drawing.)*

Would you like to receive the final version of this research? Send me a message at rosalie.van.oorschot.research@protonmail.com

Appendix B - Drawing Received by Respondents of Research Part I



Appendix C – Interview Guide Research Part II

general descriptive information

- What is the name of the organization that you are active in?
- Hoe heet de organisatie waar u actief voor bent?

- What is your role within this organization?
- Wat is uw rol binnen deze organisatie?

- How long have you been active within this organization?
- Hoe lang ben je actief binnen de organisatie?

mission & target groups

- How would you describe the mission of this organization?
- Hoe zou u de missie van deze organisatie omschrijven?

- Is your organization mostly aimed at professional or amateur artists?
- Is uw organisatie vooral gericht op professionele of amateurkunstenaars?

- What would you consider the motivation for this choice?
- Wat is de onderliggende motivatie voor deze keuze?

- Do you aim to reach artists or visitors from other cities?
- Richt u zich op het bereiken van kunstenaars of bezoekers van buiten de stad?
- Outreach / Werving

collaboration & context

- Could you please describe the role of your organization within the city?
- Zou u de rol van uw organisatie binnen de stad kunnen omschrijven?

- Are you closely connected to other organizations within the city?
- Werkt uw organisatie samen met andere instellingen in de stad?

- How important is the location of your organization?
- Hoe belangrijk is de locatie van uw organisatie?

- What changes have you noticed regarding your organization since covid-19?
- Welke veranderingen heeft u opgemerkt met betrekking tot uw organisatie sinds de coronapandemie?

growth factors

- Which factors do you consider to be important for a thriving visual arts climate?
- Welke factoren beschouwt u als belangrijk voor een vruchtbaar klimaat voor beeldende kunst?

- What do you lack in your town concerning visual arts?
- Wat mist u binnen uw stad op het gebied van beeldende kunst?

- How do you see the future of your organization?
- Hoe ziet u de toekomst van uw organisatie?

motivation

- Could I ask you what your personal motivation is for working for this organization?
- Zou ik u mogen vragen wat uw persoonlijke motivatie is om voor deze organisatie te werken?

- In the case of visual artists: How does your work for the organization relate to your personal practice?
- In het geval van kunstenaars: Hoe verhoudt het werk voor deze organisatie zich tot uw persoonlijke praktijk?

Appendix D - Summarized Interview Data Research Part II

D.1 Interview Artes (Bussum)

Role?

Board member with focus on PR, website, organization of events.

Active as board member for about five years now.

Character of the organization?

A bit of a club of the elderly. Average age I think 60. I am 47 and am the guppie. Difficult to get fresh blood and young people. Survey. Added value? Older generation: fine website and members on it, own page. Young people don't need us for that. Added value must be reinvented I think.

Bussum Cultureel every year. Artists who are connected can participate. Animo runs somewhat back with age. To get it full we have abolished membership. With this we have made the usp of Artes disappear.

70 members.

Villages all have their own association. We want to join together but others do not. Membership is for now really Bussum. Bussum cultural is national. Throw. People with money who want to buy my stuff.

Visitors?

Gooi and a little bit beyond.

A big old people's club.

Motivation?

Became a member to participate in things. It was still compulsory back then. Board vacancy: gaining some experience. I had built a website before.

In the end, it was fun to expand my network, but that was not my intention.

Did graphic school, advertising, hospitality, restaurants, 10 years back to graphic and art.

Distinction amateur/prof?

Being a professional. Ballotage committee. You have to like your work. Few people can make a living from it, so it's not a gauge. It is if you are involved on a professional level.

Committee changes. Fits in somewhat with application.

Space?

Large studio: soos nights. Members only.

Involvement? Super hard to get people involved. No longer a status symbol, it was. Thinking carefully about added value. Not moving forward, the members. Super difficult. December empty building, popup store-like. That was much appreciated, many people participated. Laid out ready to go. Not much enthusiasm for organizing. Hard core who undertakes things. I don't know if that can change.

COVID?

People really didn't want to get together. Online? No, no way.

All the expos were cancelled. Pretty disastrous. But I did manage to run a pop-up gallery for $\frac{3}{4}$ of a month, which was fun. Have to sell as well or the fun would soon be gone.

Artes is separate from my practice. Exchange is useful and fun, undertake things too. It doesn't happen very often now. But not if you have to keep pushing the cart up the hill.

Right to exist: good contact with the municipality. Bussum Cultureel, discussing art in the public space. Thinking along about cultural platform gooische meren.

For example: outdoor exhibiting with many artists. New form, outside, everyone participating. Good trend to go outside.

Factors?

Difficult question. Popup store: every day at least 1 or 2 who want to sell their work. People actively coming in, so surprised how much is being made. Website is nice, you can try to get some traffic to it. Remains a picture on a screen. Art you really have to see. Space to be able to show your work.

Always a school or old space somewhere. Be creative with it. Studio space not so much in sight.

Survey?

I think young blood should come in to push the oldies forward. What is our added value? Couldn't really answer the question.

Website very important. Appreciation soos-evenings. Just fine. Not expected.

Have thought about leaving the board. Taking the initiative again. But then I think: that's silly too. Just keep doing it.

Future?

Hope to recruit young members with a brilliant idea, otherwise I'll have to turn out the lights.

Exchange?

Yes, with others within the Gooische Meer. Lots of exchange, nice people. I say: sweep together. Have to have something to offer. Am not afraid of losing ties with Bussum. With others risk is greater, fortified towns etc.

Board?

7 members 2 artists. Too few. Treasurer for example is very sweet, but to know what an artist needs in an association you might have to be an artist. 25/30 guys who are always there are articulate though.

No collaboration with businesses/sponsors. Suggested several times but we don't have anyone for that.

D.2 Interview VAK (Amstelveen)

VAK, now Amstelland Art. A bit shorter, a bit clearer.

Role?

3 years member. Treasurer for 3 months. Board. Pretty good at numbers but board position is not quite my thing. Math background.

Furniture restorer, 6 years in addition art. In the beginning you sell nothing, now it's going quite well. Eventually I want to be able to make a living out of it.

Own work?

On the board, you come into direct contact with many artists. You have to meet a lot more with the members. Fun, but takes a lot of time. Comes with a lot. Make policy with them. Thinking along. Subsidy? What for? Who? How? Much more than is involved on paper.

Mission?

Previous treasurer quit suddenly. Several stepped down from the board. Struggles. Haven't really gotten around to policy yet. Extinguishing a lot of fires. Creating unity in the association. Nothing demonstrably happened, but just didn't really get along.

Unite members. Get exhibits, possibly sell them. Strive to be a little more national. 53 members now. Better website + gallery/sales area. Page on website. Attract nationwide as well.

Better studio policy. Much contact with the municipality. Too few studios. Make yourself hard for this.

Would like to have more members from further afield.

Amsterdam has St Lucas and members come from everywhere.

In that respect, expansion is complicated. Members from Emmen, for example, do not come to meetings. Committees etc.

Future?

Members are relatively old. The older they get, the less you can expect. Also more time, but still. Need more people on the board. But who? 3 is too few, way too much work. Then I won't last either. No board? Then the association ceases to exist.

Association in Amsterdam stopped. Artists are not administrators. Bit obstinate. Clashes too. Not all have the same idea. Often do other things as well. A lot in education. Lots of meetings etc.

May also attract board members from very different angle. Volunteer angle we hope. I don't see a new secretary among our members. Should be at least 1 artist, preferably 2. Can't just have board members from outside.

Involve members in association?

Committees, lots of them. Technique, PR, newsletter, exhibition committee, sponsorship/subsidy, love and grief woman, balloting. Everyone is part of a committee. Involved and taking on work. Some very active. 1x month meeting exhibition committee. Very active. Brainstorming. 6/7 people so then you can do something. Technique waits until they can do something. Do you still feel at home?

Joint expos. tricky in corona time. 1 online, 1 behind the windows.

COVID?

Must be surviving for a while now. Expect to have had the worst of it. Not a whole lot of lasting changes. Haven't seen each other much. Online meetings, therefore also misunderstandings. Because you don't see each other. Lots of mail. Did not contribute to the good atmosphere. Some artists are faster, more outspoken, more radical.

Distinction between amateur and professional?

Being able to make a living from it is very little. Do have balloting committee. Profile as professional. Fairly serious committee. But of a certain level. Show work, what your idea is, developments. Many people do not apply because of this.

Balloting committee is approx. 4 members. Everyone gets an explanation, even when rejected.

Younger members. There is little between young and old. All a bit dusty. 2 from rietveld. I think they live in Amsterdam.

Collaboration?

Not much contact. Sint Lucas, perhaps more cooperation. All associations are struggling to stay afloat. Sint Lucas is a bit older. At a certain point, it dies out. Have to make sure you have new recruits in time.

Maybe even go all the way together. Nobody wants to give up identity. Especially older clubs.

Role within Amstelveen?

Visibility. Atelier space, project space. For members. Joint studio building of the municipality. 1 day per week for members. Building in poorer neighbourhood. Request from municipality to do something for the neighbourhood. Neighbourhood days. Free access for local residents.

From municipality or from members?

A few members are very committed. Approach differs between artists. Exposition in front of the windows also for the neighborhood, for example.

Also cooperating with small companies: for example a moving company. This allowed us to build a nice interior. Coincidentally through contacts. Not very consciously.

Factors?

Taking art seriously. By city council in any case. Not just a closing entry. That people understand that art really adds something. Increases general happiness. People don't realize, eat and roof. But art is also important.

For myself. Association was very stimulating. Membership. You see what others do. Tips. To get further, you may have to be a member. Building group exhibition is very nice. Also more audience. Not just your own little circle. They know it at some point. You also want to sell something. Someone else will be happy too.

My ideas will keep coming. Building relationships with buyers.

Originated?

I think just a group of artists started. In the beginning no ballotage. Anyone could join. Level was not very high. Now there is balloting, but people are not sent away of course. In the beginning you just want to grow. Own initiative.

What is missing in Amstelveen?

Studio space. Very difficult. Nr19 on the list, 15 studios. Atelierroute also uses the town hall. Very nice. Sponsorship from the municipality. Probably some subsidy to professionalize the website. Very focused though. You have to justify everything. A hassle but nice.

D.3 Interview ART Hilversum

Role?

President for about ¾ of a year.

Also sits on the board of senior citizens association and director of reading club organization

This is volunteer work, small amount of subsidy. Maybe end of the year. I'm handy at organizing. Know a lot of people. Websites, facebook.

Board?

Artists on the board creates problems. Now no artists on the board.

Distinction professional/amateur?

45 artists (10 applications)

Balloting committee. Externals. Retirees who can finally do arts again. Professionalism, but most can't make a living at it. Experts. As a result, some decide not to apply.

Members | ballotage | board

Open to all means professional artists leave. Too much watercolor.

Mission?

Podium Hilversum artists. Platform function. Twice a year exchange/consultation. Rent space and let artists attend, so more contact with each other.

How to involve members in the association?

Members are only involved in the execution. Just want to make work and exhibit.

Board looks for location, arranges subsidy, executes. Pleasant kind of voluntary work in this way.

Contact with municipality?

We are minimal player. 6500 euros subsidy per year. Relatively little allocated for culture in Hilversum. Cultural wasteland. VVD and Leefbaar Hilversum, very much a failed contribution. We try to pull our own plan. Own income: packet of art, art cards etc. Small projects.

Factors needed for good art climate?

Proximity to Amsterdam Utrecht. Fine living. Artists more the established kind. Grey organization.

Recruitment? Future?

Young people harder to present a portfolio. We want young people there but not so sure how.

Central exhibition in the museum during open studio days is no longer there, because museum doesn't want it anymore. It doesn't always have to be eccentric and installation art. I don't think ART Hilversum is for that.

ART Hilversum is an advocate of visual art. There's nothing else in Hilversum. We're the only ones still doing anything with exhibitions.

Space?

No space of our own.

Want to do something in the neighbourhoods, be able to experiment. In the center is unaffordable. ¾ thousand euros a month.

Collaborations?

Depends on estate agent for rent. Bit much work, he says, for 34 months. We have to show that we are important.

People don't cycle from place to place like that anymore. It seems that studio days have had it. Entering an artist's home is also seen as threatening. Now we want to do 1 Sunday per district. We still need to find out how to cooperate.

Active recruitment?

No. 45 is also the maximum, also in connection with exhibiting. Could be up to 55.

Hilversum only. Our goal is not to attract the rest of NL.

Collaboration?

Seniors association. Supervised visits to artist monthly. Extracurricular care. Viore, foundation for people with cancer.

Social rather than cultural organizations? Other performing artists during atelierroute. With Museum Hilversum, love is over for a while. Bookstore. Rather a good collaboration with bookstore than library at the moment, in terms of location.

COVID?

Things that didn't go through. Exhibitions cancelled. Artists do just make their stuff. Newsletter intensified. Art cards released. Online isn't going so much.

No online meetings. Fall 2020 expo. Spring everything fell silent for a while. Now the thread picked up again. Older target group was also not really waiting for it (elderly).

Courses of professional artists included in newsletter. I am the one who has to do that. Exposition online via newsletters. I have to do that and have kept up with it a bit less. Money matters, reception, tours, pr and communication for me.

Motivation?

Hilversum could use some cultural excitement. I love visual arts. And also coincidence. I saw possibilities. They had a nice chairman so I didn't think I was in danger. Here some more different ages and little crazy people.

I like art more than many other activities. Previous chairman wife of an artist. I like everything easily. Art knowledge is not a requirement in the board. We have others for that. I always buy something.

Factors that are needed?

Active housing policy. Space is scarce in Hilversum. A property developer will be there in no time. Establishment policy.

Exhibition policy. Hilversum is all about media. I think it's monoculture. Should be a kind of branding of cities. I would make it a little broader, a little more variety. A lot of money goes on marketing now. Flags for example. '

Role within Hilversum?

There isn't that much at all. Us and Museum Hilversum.

Members would like to have more exhibition opportunities and some more long-term studio space.

Every municipality has something like that. Atelierroute etc.

Board?

Not a conscious decision to move away from the artists I think. Before my time. Had an artist on it that caused arguments so this board thought: never an artist on the board.

Future?

Generate more of our own income. Percentage of sales. More forms of income. People don't buy art every day so you need to develop other ways to exhibit that art. Package of art for example. Gift store with applied art.

D.4 Interview Kadmium (Delft)

Role?

Chairman foundation

Board wanted to stop at move. Asked to be chairman, because artist.

15 years

4 board members

Moving to different spaces, all close to each other

Kadmium (Korenmarkt 48) Delft Visual Arts Foundation

2009 Started by myself. 2010 made booklet.

Merging different organizations in one building. Catering/tu/art supermarket. Not yet completely successful in creating different departments. Reasons: money and volunteers.

Volunteers have limited time. More tasks not possible. Volunteer myself.

Funding, role within the city?

Subsidy of municipality. Rent + exhibitions. In return, talk to municipality about visual arts climate. - Small club. Know people who are needed. Works well.

Studio space with 8 artists. Then rent was raised, went to municipality and got help. Basinol is (well) an active club.

Mission?

Kadmium's mission: bringing art to the people. P's: professionalization, podium, platform Delft. Kadmium. Little bit about it.

Program council: organizing exhibitions with national artists in downstairs space.

Involvement of members by?

Ballot committee is Joost. Participant. Participate in exhibitions with discount on membership. Members attendants etc.

+ Discussions about new initiatives, therefore more connection.

E.g.: large exhibition participation along the water in collaboration with other cities and initiatives.

Amateur / professional?

Intuitive: nothing to do with education. Ceramics, for example. I see that it has quality.

Describing it is difficult. Approach and quality are quite similar.

Trained as a teacher myself, drawing and handicrafts. First cook. Then I have two classes, created art history book. Resigned in 2003. Since 2012 training as a make-up artist. Body paint and airbrush. Always made art, but sometimes difficult to combine.

Role within Delft?

Kadmium has many relationships within the city.

Prinsenhof wanted to expand, but failed. Prinsenkwartier is the whole building and is also rented out. Very active within the city. Good partner for the municipality. Mayor. Small world.

Necessary? Necessary? Absolutely. Being in touch with the community. Calling can be done, but then little happens. Or without money.

Factors needed for lively climate?

Lively climate: historical piece + TU (modern) + culture. 3 most important parts of the municipality.

Role visual arts: something special, exhibitions where the public is surprised. We let Delft artists be featured + national

Growth factors?

Grey. Youngest 29 daughter. 35/40 Most 60 or older.

150 artists in Delft. Per 10 inhabitants 1 artist.

Problem?

Audience is also old so yes. Older audience has time, interesting. 1x per year: final exams Rotterdam + The Hague. Competition, from junior class to 6vwo. Active recruitment of young people.

Municipality wants us more in the neighborhood. Does not make much sense. A few people think it's great.

Young artists hardly ever stay. How we organize exhibitions perhaps the reason?

As a young artist, would like to become a member of a group, but a very active group. We are not active enough. Also has to do with the fact that a lot of things are up to Joost. Do nothing, nothing happens.

Young people are looking for an active climate.

Future?

Hold on to subsidy. Prinsenkwartier must be paid for. As artists of Delft, we must find a new place because of the arrival of the science center.

Space?

Place is necessary. Visibility. Exchange. Little to exchange otherwise.

COVID?

I fell out of everything. Requested rent reduction. Didn't get it. Teach one day.

City contracts go through Kadmium. Then I got an assignment. Then another one.

Kadmium always manages just fine financially. Didn't have to make a flyer because it can't be distributed anywhere.

Online activities?

Permanent online activities? Virtual exhibition thought perhaps.

Closed exhibition opened by alderman, QR codes linking to sales, not worked.

Artists want to do live things, not like online. Workshops for kids from essential workers, wasn't allowed. Boa's.

Visual arts climate in Delft?

Don't miss much. Happens quite a bit. Modern art. Outdoor routes. I miss museums. Great museum with modern art.

Motivation?

I want the art climate to be up to par and done right, done right. I make time for that. Also a few other artists that do are active, that helps.

My wife has a very good job so can support us. Without her I wouldn't have made it.

Board?

Board consists of 4 people: 1 pennies, 1 construction, 1 fundraising.

Artists on the board is good but not necessarily necessary.

Own practice and board position? Connection?

Board wanted to buy artwork, but would be conflict of interest. Further, my practice is separate from boards. Facilitates communication with artists though.

I also think it's good to know lenders and am happy to make an effort to do so.

D.5 Interview Kunstenlab (Deventer)

Role?

Formal coordinator. Small organization so do many things.

Initiate projects, think them up, carry them out. Public space. Social themes.

Small team, do a lot together. 8/9 people part time.

We think up projects together, find funding, work them out. Making a lot of connections between parties. Especially in public space.

Exhibition space more classic. Gerda and Aalt have the biggest say there.

Within all activities we have also divided policy areas among Mieke, Josien and myself. I do artist policy aimed at local artists. Also studio policy.

I have been doing this for 20 years.

Any changes?

Suppose it's been working for a long time. Just some innovations. Center for visual arts existed for a long time, of course. Cuts 2008/9/10 a lot fell over.

We remained standing. Start: artists' initiative, exhibition space, studios, art loans. Little direction.

More network organization/production house now. Less form-bound. Clearer plan of who we are and how we implement it.

Mission?

Artists have clear role in society. Many different ways they can. Involve artists in themes and issues that are relevant to society. Presenting them to the public.

Issues of spatial planning for example. At one point a lot of money redevelopment of disadvantaged neighborhoods. This in turn led to the emergence of community art.

We also do projects beyond the artistic product: with the business community.

Many collaborations generated by us. Motivation is not money, but it is nice that there was a lot of money. We see the importance of involving artists in large projects and thereby showing a different perspective.

Relationship with the municipality, role within the city?

Structural subsidy relationship for basic organization. Agreements are in place. Bound by local boundaries, but municipality is reasonably accommodating. You have to see it in a broader sense than a number of exhibitions. This has enabled us to initiate projects that are much larger than the basis that existed within Kunstenlab. This is possible because of a basis that provides calm in the organization and development.

+ great inner drive and belief in what we do. That's why we do a lot of profiling in the public space. It's nice to be able to link up with other institutions. As a result, we are somewhat behind on the exhibition front. Now catching up with Mondrian funds.

All the things we do are connected. That is unique. We don't want to be just a production house.

Motivation?

The potential of art and artists. Broader than just from the studio and exhibition space. Everyone should see this, everyone should be confronted with it.

Background: art history, literature,

Ended up at Kunstenlab. Bombardment of application letters. Had reasonable idea of the job market. Could do unpaid project. Rolled in.

Important that people are committed, that there is stability.

Role Kunstenlab in Deventer?

All art disciplines represented. Small town. There is a culture here that wants to make a difference. That's what Kunstenlab is for visual arts. The only one with a structural subsidy relationship for the visual arts. Even in the province one of the few.

Thin swill.

There are also young artists active in Deventer. No academy. No natural growth. People actively moved to Deventer because there is an active climate, very much focused on making.

Something is really happening. The growth remains, but it is still small.

130/140 artists connected. We don't get to see them all.

Working method?

We don't program to give everyone a turn. Nonsense. You don't want that on your resume.

Content discussions precede projects. One on one.

Invite artists from graduation and guide 2 years + workspace, presentation. In this way recruitment outside Deventer. Made a case for studio housing. Has yielded a lot, people from Rotterdam. Still there. These things are very important.

Artists from the Randstad (the urban conglomeration in the west of the country) said they liked being able to work without being overbearing. The need to look for something more on the sidelines.

Factors lively climate?

Activity. There is just a lot to be done. Municipality wants to work with program lines. As many parties as possible should join one larger party. We take the lead in visual arts.

Not just a pot, too short and fragmented. There must be more structural underpinnings. A constant/anchor point is needed. And also as a sparring partner.

COVID?

Exhibitions not carried out, exhibitions left standing for a long time. Tried to do some things digitally. Curatorial meeting, artists choose curators. 1x live 2x online. Online more international.

Provides opportunities again, though. In this way you involve more people. I would like to keep as a notion to open your eyes. Interview an artist as an opening. Nothing beats live.

What about the future?

Always fight for a position. Vigilant. Relevance too! Danger of compartmentalization lurks. We bring people in to question us.

Funding will always be an issue. We are very comfortable now, but you don't know how things will turn out. There is a great danger of that. Discussion around fair practice. We meet the requirements now, but going back to less is very crazy.

We would no longer be able to pay certain artists. Not hotshots, but also in terms of size. There is no middle ground. Outdoor projects are easier to finance because the money comes from other sources.

D.6 Interview Museum Jan Cunen

Role?

Curator, sole curator. Responsible for all content of the exhibitions. Specializes mainly in art. Collection 19th century, modern, contemporary, regional history, archeology. I am particularly involved with contemporary art.

Curator for 2.5 years now. April 2019 official. Started 2005 as a tour guide. That's why I stuck around. 10 years a private company but also remained active for Jan Cunen.

Own company still exists, writing about art, sometimes making exhibitions. A lot of magazine work in Palet and Atelier Magazine, for some galleries. I like to keep my eyes open.

Organization?

One person for everything. An island. And in addition 70 volunteers. Many volunteers is fine, one part of the day is very nice.

Mission?

Collection is very broad, eclectic, fragmented. Now we want to use that as a strength. 1st lockdown: new plans written with new director. April 100 days letter. Wrote plan together and applied for subsidy. Important: story of Oss core, without narrowing. Heart of the building historical storylines set out. Wonder room. Stories that people are proud of. Also about the art collection. Without the exhibition around it compromising freedom. Homely of the villa... Inventions. Beautiful hooks to hang contemporary art on.

Meaning more for Oss. Happened in different ways during the past decades. Getting both in house, both Oss and national. Also a lot outside the walls of the museum. Into the city.

Collaborations?

Was tried before. Less successful approach in my opinion. Now a better breeding ground. Open call for amateur artists for example, without judging. Everyone showed, but people don't really come back (family). National audience thinks: what should I do with this. Now we have it both ways.

Collaboration between us and artist. We invest a lot in it. In consultation with the artist. Building bonds. Seeing what is good for the artist. Much involved with associations in Oss.

Also in the public space. Fanfare, whole street of residents, women's choir, experts, city archives, etc. Lots of lines at all sorts of levels.

I don't live in Oss myself, I'm not in the middle of it, but I can get there very quickly. Especially from the work network. There is now someone added as city programmer to build and maintain various layers of network. For example women's choir or neighborhood that never comes to the museum.

So far we notice that target groups do not know how to reach us and others even almost too well. People want all sorts of things. Sometimes they come from the same place. Show that we really are there for everyone. Long breath needed for this.

City programmer is what the museum wants. Also meets wishes. Functions are gaining ground in the art world. There are similar developments in Schiedam. We are between Den Bosch and Nijmegen, Schiedam close to Rotterdam. Soulmate in involving the city. A lot of contact between directors before. Also depends on the person.

Nice to see you're not inventing the wheel on your own. Bit insular though, lots of time constraints I think.

In the city?

Lots of contact with the municipality. Privatized municipal collection. Sometimes we are a bit forgotten. You have to correct that. Those lines are there.

The city of Oss is different. We also do a lot for education. For everyone, accessible, educational institution. Thousands of schoolchildren come here. Primary and secondary education. Beautiful soil. Then a hole, nothing for a while. Then again families with children and especially older audience. Quite difficult to increase the target group.

Regular audience is very welcome and I think we program very young, but it takes a while before people in their twenties realize that.

Factors needed?

City must be vibrant. So close to Nijmegen and Den Bosch. I see that Oss has been given a facelift. Trendy eateries, special beer etc. Few festivals, liveliness and galleries. Some amenities but not that much. For many artists that seems to me harder to make connections so less attractive.

Young artists in Oss?

Relationship. Through love or growing up, family. Not necessarily art climate.

Improvements?

Difficult. Must grow naturally. In Nijmegen: already has some interesting things, then more people start doing something (Nose). It is not so developed here. Think that is easier in cities where there is an academy, where there are already things. Oss is really an industry state, nature of Ossenaar. If you grow up here and you want something in the arts, you leave. It helps that it has slowly become a bit hipper and more vibrant.

COVID?

We came out of it just fine. One exhibition cancelled. Just wasn't going to work anymore. Safe assembly was not possible. In retrospect the right decision, but a very unpleasant one. Solved by building another type of exhibition from our own collection. Dragging things out for the organization. People do not feel so much urgency. Neverending construction.

Financial side: nothing comes in. Very complicated. Crazy holes in the arrangements. Lots of costs though. We came out of it all right in the end without too many problems

During the first lockdown, we were able to present new plans with a great deal of focus and energy and we also received subsidies for them.

Now you think: come again. But there are still relatively few visitors. Among volunteer team much disappointment. Not busy at all. Complicated for motivation.

Volunteers?

From Oss. Also a way to be connected to the environment. If I need something, contact with a certain type of person, I can also put that out to the volunteers. They also represent the public that we address a lot. Sometimes they don't understand what I do. Persistent things.

Online?

A lot of visibility on social media. Started vlogging myself about work I have at home. Started on my own at home. Not a lot of interactive. Supply was very large and you are quickly saturated online. With a few shows and symposiums I was already satisfied. Not as much commitment as a small one, more visibility. Last minute online opening. June. But I

just did it. That was actually very good. Nice and relaxed. Chat and then entertain. Now it was an hour of peaking. Afterwards a beer and done.

Pretty positive reactions. Nice to be home instead of a busy opening, not seeing anything and then having to come back. Volunteers have a great need for contact with each other, and you can provide that. Generally speaking, quite positive.

Perhaps look into hybrid form. Still restrictions, especially if there is not that much space, maybe online is better. Now you also know where you can get the expertise. Each on their own level. You can get away with being a smaller museum. More informal.

Background?

Art history. Collecting network. Always been busy, made a living at it, done fun things in the art world. Been pretty focused on it. Grabbing things. Guest lecturer said they were looking for tour guides for the weekends. Nice workplace in my field, I thought it would be good to be open to that. Around my graduation I did think about larger museums. Smaller organization you do everything: sometimes very nice, sometimes not nice at all. I find that super fun. The bigger the institution, the more specific your task. Big name is not everything either. I feel very much in place. Can let my hair down, get ideas out. Out of the box is easier in a smaller organization. Trying things out, fooling around. Not wait and see and overanalyze. May also run into the lamp. Learning museum. Learning every day. As an institution and as a curator.

Artists from Oss?

Not necessarily. Stand behind the quality. If I see a hook, I will not fail to program that one. I don't think everyone is good enough for the museum. Sometimes not popular.

Example: young artists, trio, invited to the theatre. Invited to put installation in the exhibition. From next year the guest room, can be broad. But connection with projects in the museum, thematically.

Building is a villa, we call it a house. Not a cold white cube.

D.7 Interview GBK (Oss)

Role?

Secretary. Very connecting factor. Streamlining, subsidies, annual reports. Nice role.

9 years. Officially 3 terms of 3 years, then replace.

40 artists.

Members are involved by?

First joined at 23, old cock club. After retirement so joined again. Board arranged everything then. Bad thing, now committees. Gotta streamline it though.

Events committee, balloting committee.

Still an oldies' club though. Had ambition all my life but never able to give it shape because of work. Always there. You can only become active after 65. 40 years of 40 hour work. Nurse, then creative therapist, then policy advisor. Did a lot. For a health organization. Challenge to get that done. I'm a born creative. 16th first expo. Time was not of the essence. Making money. No time no space.

Amateur / professional distinction?

Amateur artists: distinction. If you can support yourself = pro.

Recruitment?

Need to expand 5 years ago. 5 over 40. 40 target number. This in connection with exhibitions. Everyone join with 1 and preferably 2 works.

Ageing population. Youngest 45, oldest 102. Only joined 5 years ago. Was an architect.

Why not?

Balloting committee: always 3 members, committees, period of 3 years. For very specialized applications, we send someone along who also understands that direction.

Space?

No private exhibition space. We have a fixed location per month where we meet. Now we might move to a new location: muselink. We use locations in numerous places in the outlying area. Need more space, more comfortable, teachers.

Collaboration? Only with exhibiting. Not in terms of content. I was also with Ed Paulus, studio together, but everyone is on his own island. Sometimes we really work together, but only when there is an outside demand, e.g. from the municipality.

Originated?

Founder. Founded in the attic of Museum Jan Cunen. Posted a call for help in the newspaper.

Joint working day. Every month, work meeting most important part. Also members who meet as a result of used medium.

Role within the city?

Working hard on visibility. Bringing exhibitions to attention. Annual expo in Oss and outside area. Visible to municipality and banks.

We show ourselves through a solid annual report. Involved in various projects in the city.

Umbrella organization has been cut. Visual leisure art. Supporting factor for amateur companies. Exchange exhibitions, contacts. Very unfortunate. A real loss. Money tap turned off. 1 year taken care of by companies. Still exists but is not alive anymore.

Recruitment?

5km outside the border of Oss. But Oss is big. People sign up automatically. From hearsay, from seeing an exhibition once, when I grow up I want to join.

Obviously everyone is a bit older. Or disabled.

Did you end up on the board?

You're so in a board if you want. You are fine for in the board. Also active within a permaculture association.

Factors needed for a vibrant art climate?

Very tricky question. What are your own needs? What would you like? A reasonable art climate in Oss. All defined, though. Amateur. Prof. Muselink is also very busy for the city itself. Fantastival. Everything is possible there. Masses come to the city centre. Always a complete party. Groene Engel

Visibility. That there is so much happening in and around Oss.

Collaboration?

Not really working together.

It is not a big city. It's a different feeling. Richer, more visual, more challenging. Oss is moderate, defined, calmer. Den Bosch can also invite from outside, boulevard, parade. In Oss it's about what's in Oss.

K26 is heavily subsidized by the municipality. Beautiful large space. We don't want anything special. An own space. Took a lot of work. First Jan Cunen. It was great. Everything in trenches. Mutual problems leadership. New director. Gone. K26. Space in 2, so group in 2. Not an option. Then corona, all wrong. Ruw'art was in town but is looking for a space now. Had to be houses. Again K26, new board. Who said: fine.

COVID?

Very large space rented a few times to celebrate anniversary. Online board can meet and make decisions quickly. Further, online is going out the door again. Not everyone is digitally up to date.

Volunteers?

Members volunteer themselves.

Board?

5 members. All people who make and have a thing for art. Impact? Externs can also have benefits. Who know their way around. Arranging grants. All board members are also members. I don't know what advantages or disadvantages there are. I think it can be important for money and to raise your profile with the municipality. After it was founded, the municipality of Oss didn't see much point in art in the 1960s. Then came notables who started supporting. Took off. By notables? Or was it because of the notables? I think notables. You also need pioneers.

The future?

I can't see into the future. How will future 65-plusser life. Different. Independent, travel a lot, active for a long time. Don't want to commit anytime soon, I think. Think it will be difficult. As much as possible. Organize differently? Not as collective anymore. More specialized. For example, sculptors. Area is big enough.

There is so much. There are so many possibilities besides art. So many interests. Seeing things, experiencing things. There's more to do.

Changes within GBK?

Willingness of people to take a part. When I came, it was a one-man faction. A little more diversity, more techniques. Tricky when photography came up. Is visual, but there are already several photo clubs. Still allowed.

Willingness to get involved increased, also contagious.

D.8 Interview Marres (Maastricht)

Role?

Role at Marres: production manager and support of the business part of Marres, for 3 years now.

Previously worked as a volunteer, at the time of other director. Then some time away.

Mission?

Presentation institution. No collection. Our goal is to create space for artists to experiment financially and in terms of space. We also give curators the opportunity to do so. + Recent graduates in the Currents trajectory, including guidance.

All layers of artists, as experimental and free as possible. Much emphasis is placed on the guidance process. Including writing texts, practical guidance.

Currents track: a lot of training. Every 2 years. Other year in Hasselt with partner.

Connecting platform? We are primarily a museum for the visitors, they don't experience all those processes. Often an exhibition is preceded by a process of about two years. We also try to bring exhibitions to other locations, such as Lisbon or London.

Role within the city?

Maastricht has the Euregion. This makes it easy for us to operate internationally. We are now looking at developing art walks together, for example.

In the city, we have the important Bonefantenmuseum, for the general public. We have a smaller audience but are of great importance in the South for connoisseurs and enthusiasts.

We work a lot with Jan van Eyck, theater academy, performance, bonefanten.

Collaboration?

It's nicer to do something together, we can accommodate many more people. More square meters of wall. Biennial, for example. Offer a stage to as many people as possible. Our house is big enough, but with partners we can serve more people.

In the South, not in Amsterdam. Money flows differently, people are less likely to come here. A larger event will trigger a larger flow of visitors.

Pots. 2 institutions have more money than one. More possibilities than alone. Euroregional project done: Elements. Then you can apply for other grants.

Relationship with municipality?

Not active enough. Difficult to get permits, difficult to get money. Not as cut as a few years ago, but climate is difficult. Euregional often calls, but little motivation from the municipality. There are talks, there is good contact. Some urgency should be given to this again. Also depends on which alderman is in office.

Factors necessary for a lively art climate?

I come from Maastricht, luck and problem. Organizations are willing, here in Limburg. How do we keep bringing that power up? 10x as much work as contract. We are in BIS so there is good national recognition. Municipality however never approves a permit. Once a year street party in the neighborhood, to get people from the neighborhood in. 1x and after that never permit again. Very unfortunate. Very little confidence that things will go well. Will from institutions is certainly there.

Culture is not something obvious in the south. It's easier or more accessible to attract visitors in the Randstad. More difficult here, real Maastricht people don't come. Fighting to get others in than the regular clique. That's why we started the Limburg Biennial. Everyone from Limburg and surroundings can sign up. A lot of works. We also do this to appeal to the hobbyist. The front door is open. We are fun. You do not have to have studied.

You can walk in even without knowledge. You're welcome. Hard to force.

Other clubs?

Few clubs here. Education works closely together.

Accretion?

Are a lot of people leaving. Done academy myself, lots of people leave. We are working hard to cooperate with the academy. At least one graduate in the Currents selection. If you don't get any money from anywhere, and the municipality works against you, it's a struggle. Income is difficult, so it's a struggle. BIS presentation institutions. Four years and have a good chance of the next 4 years. Only 6 presentation institutions receive this. Our plan is good enough, is also hard work. Province listens to the BIS. Municipality subsidy that is rent. Saves. Basis is covered by this. Because of our broad activities, we can apply to many different funds.

Different activities?

Working hard to keep it together. Lots of writing. Responsibility and expectation.

We are with 6, normally with 7.

Started at Schunck in Heerlen during study, really wanted that as a production assistant.

Motivation?

Artists trust you to work with their work. I'm going to take care of the artists from the beginning until the opening. As a child I found that very interesting, that feeling that you are allowed to do that. Such a private place. I'm not an artist, I can't do that, it's not what I was made for. But I understand artists very well.

Making more hours is part of it. If you really like it, you're happy to do it. It has to be recognized, to be mentioned, to be appreciated. Get it back from the artists too.

Connected to the city?

Marres not necessarily connected in terms of location, but the challenge is that we are here. I will definitely leave for another city at some point. Marres keeps me here for now, the work is so much fun, varied and surprising.

Randstad? Yes, I think so. I also work a lot on the financial side, so I want to stay in the Netherlands because of the subsidy climate.

Maastricht is small in many things, not much in terms of other types of cultures. Challenge for Marres.

Funny thing about Limburg is Sittard, for example. Lots of very good artists come from Limburg. Especially Sittard. They all know each other, then came to live in Maastricht.

An ageing population?

A very aging population in Maastricht. Housing market a big problem, very expensive. People turn against it and leave. Chic and shung, beautiful and neat principle. Everything has to be inspected by the municipality. No neon lighting, just a banner that here is a museum. Not allowed. André Rieu is allowed, anything under 30 nothing is allowed. In another city they encounter the same problems. When loading and unloading, an enforcer is present in no time. Museum in the middle of the city and art is simply in a truck... In another city, a street is simply blocked off.

D.9 Interview K26 (Oss)

Role?

Board member again. And artist. About 14 years ago. Then I became part and joined the board. Out for a while. Now back on the board.

More functions: balloting, events. Professional/ semi-professional

Distinction between amateur/professional?

Training is important but doesn't say everything. Without training; how active? What is your story? Is tricky, are borderline cases. Balloting committee: 2 fixed and ask 2 people in the discipline that matches application.

Total of 35 artists. Approximately. Lots of applications this year. Same kind of members as before.

Membership: in Oss without university and college... older people participating. Aging. People who are very forthcoming, scholarships etc. leaving.

Because takes a lot of time. We carry it together. Every artist is expected to participate. Host/woman and all kinds of tasks. Meetings. Conversations. Brainstorms. If you're very outgoing, your attention is just elsewhere.

Members involved by?

Fairly fixed role per member. You have to have good teams. Good exhibition team. Artists can think along for type of expos. proposals possible. Organizing and decorating is regular club. Is a separate profession.

Some artists prefer to do it themselves. Often this is not possible in a group. Everyone wants to present their own work. Sometimes they have a good view. Generally difficult. Competition.

Emerged?

1 activist. Cultural events organizer. Atelier route. No balloting. Anyone could apply. A lot of fun. Needed our own space! That became the foundation. Got help from the municipality. Benefited from artists organizing themselves. Facilitates communication.

Role in the city?

Regular contact with the municipality. Subsidy in the sense of service organization. Ensure that we bring art to the people of Oss. Work with schools. Organize cultural activities. Fantastival. Are expected to participate. We are. Suits us as well. In this way we will extend the cultural life of Oss.

Not one of the big cultural things (Muselink, green angel, library, theater, cinema) step below. But we do participate in the cultural story of Oss. Jan Cunen is the visual arts heart of Oss. Do work together, done. Board changes from both sides. Sitting opposite Groene Engel. Also some management problems. Cultural report from the municipality.

Collaborations?

More and more. Very nice.

Reason for board changes?

Corona? No, I don't think so. Was playing before that. Growth process organization so things have to keep changing. Transition phases. Part doesn't want to or can't.

Must be more open. More transparent. Board got to work. Difficult for number of people. All not clear. Miscommunication. Unrest. If you don't, you all sleep in. Now new members. Members who were gone and are coming back.

Older people?

Young artists don't stay in Oss! Smaller town: everything you do is highly valued. Outdoor walking route. Garden and window. Very nice. We must continue to do this. Beautiful space does have a threshold. People don't just come in.

Visibility in the city?

Beautiful expos, lectures, workshops. Atelier route. Also pleases many people. Also from larger area artists. Therefore very scattered. Therefore now route.

Recurring things every year. Eye of Oss. Submissions of work. Beautiful prize. Public prize.

Make expo's that are interesting for Oss. Well known Oss people.

In this way we try to keep in touch and still show good art. Also artists from further away. Viavia. Graphic studio den bosch. Visiting expos and remembering names.

Last year: paper. Anita Smit.

Collaboration?

Muselink past. Education yes. Projects exhibit in k26. Artists do projects. Corona problem. Tight program, artists who can do that, must have all of them.

COVID?

Walking tour. Openings can't go on all the time. Especially now for people exhibiting and supervisors. Artists tell, that's nice though. Miss big openings with lots of audience. Nice group of volunteers we have. Studio visits, to Museum Jan Cunen, meetings, dinners together. Mutual connection is very important. 20/21 volunteers. Sometimes we involve them in an exhibition.

Also have a group of friends. Artists make small work, 5x5. Sponsor frames. Artists free. Volunteers and friends 1 work per year.

Art practice in corona. Lots of peace and quiet. Nice work without pressure. Now all sorts of things in the pipeline again. Also distracting. Is also good. My work has changed, but whether that's because of corona or not...

A combination of your own practice and a management position?

Separately. Remains in that atmosphere and activity. Feels connected. Helps in communication with other artists. Could do without.

No online activities K26. Everyone taking a break, nice break. Now everyone is jumping up and down again. Groups are also formed that create more intensive contacts. Every month a group gets together, does something different than usual: different material, etc.

I studied in Tilburg myself. The eighties.

Motivation?

Important that the organization is there. Also for own contacts. Like to organize. Was out of it for a while. Nice. Much sense of responsibility. I find that difficult. Very nice, but hope someone else can take over.

Future?

I want to go outside more and more. Nice space, but literally outside. Oss may think differently about this. A place of my own is very important. The entire structure is tied to that place, it keeps the organization going. Influences the whole structure. That's where we are at home.

Certainly essential for good visual arts climate. Many don't have that. That's why we've done a lot. If you have a place, you go for it. Motivates you very much. We did so much there because we love that place.

Volunteers are very important, otherwise you don't make it.

Media is very important, that people pick it up. Contacts.

Good people in the right place.

Space?

K26 very important. Also pitfall, can also linger. Otherwise you may have to go outside. Is valuable as an artist to see work outside studio context. Important stepping stone. You grow because you are all talking about it. It goes smoothly now. Takes time to build up. Continuation is even more difficult. Clashes, conflicts of interest. Think we are doing a good job.

GBKO just exhibited. Very nice. That way we also do something for Oss.

We are very free in what we do. Everything is recorded but as a result of what we already did. Doing it this way was already our objective.

Art climate in Oss?

Talks with the municipality. Report becomes more and more professional. Space itself is already super nice. Really worthwhile.

It is well organized in Oss. Also poets' club. Poetry stage Oss. Also poetry evenings in K26. There are also studios.

I would like to have such a hall as the carnival clubs. That you can share to make very large work. I'm making very large drawings now.

Also done a lot of exchanges with other art initiatives, you have to have your own space.