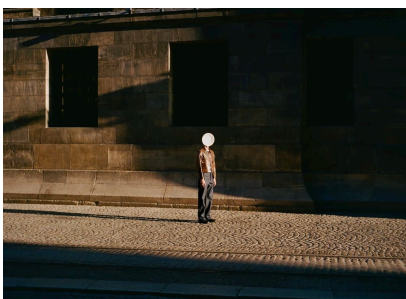# Reaching the Top: 'Young Creative Professionals and their Ability to Achieve Sustainable Progression in their Career Pathways toward High-level Positions in CCIs'

A case study on Young creative professionals struggling to succeed in the creative neoliberal city of Amsterdam

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1. INTRODUCTION

Amsterdam is a densely populated metropole that has been frequently labeled as a 'creative city', because of its fruitful and fair share of (economic) activity within the creative industry (Florida, 2002a). Moreover, Amsterdam has the image of being a multicultural city as its residents descend from many different ethnicities, cultures and countries (Davoudi & Zonneveld, 2012). An interesting topic to look at, and one that has been attracting more attention and questions as of lately, is the working demographic in the cultural and creative work field, especially the composition of top functions positioned at the high (er) levels within the Cultural and Creative Industries and by whom these functions are mostly occupied. A frequently examined topic concerning the work climate and demographics within the creative industries, is the relation between a creative worker's profile in terms of age, gender, race and ethnicity and the professional position they have within their workfield. Previous studies have shown that the opportunities that lead to high-level positions within the creative workfield are highly skewed, which means that individuals of color, being a female or being young rarely find themselves in these high-level positions. It seems as if these high-level positions are set aside for individuals with a particular profile, who are mostly elderly white males who have been in the "business" for over 40 years, which makes it a hierarchical and elitist practice with little to no change (Eikhof, 2017). For an industry that has always had a progressive image and frequently and heavily emphasizes on the importance of terms such as 'innovation', 'inclusivity' and 'diversity' in their policies and strategies, the cultural sector nevertheless seems to be lacking in the actual implementation of these terms (Azmat et al., 2014). The young generation is often referred to as the future of our society by the CCIs, however when it comes to actually giving young professionals a chance to show their potential and talent in a high-level position, the sector seems to be hesitant to hand out these opportunities (Kim & Mason, 2017).

Being able to identify yourself with other individuals in leadership roles as a young professional who is aspiring an ambitious career within the CCI is important as it encourages young professionals to uncover their full potential. Representation within the professional work climate assures young professionals that they certainly can reach certain goals and enjoy high-level positions. According to Kim & Mason (2017) representation *"means that leaders have characteristics that match those of their clients or constituencies"* (p. 52). From this one can conclude that when *"the leadership of an organization is representative of the served community, the organization is more likely to advocate for the needs of those groups"* (Kim & Mason, 2017, p. 52). However, as of lately research has shown that there is an increase of young professionals who are working within the CCI and are able to possess high-level functions within the CCI in the Netherlands (Dutch Culture, 2022).

This is a crucial positive change influencing the future of CCIs in general: seeing young and diverse professionals succeed as curators, creative directors and other important positions within this industry, instead of the same elderly white people, is refreshing and will support a more innovative and new way of policy-making within the CCI's (Brown, 2002).

Many researchers have written about inclusivity and diversity within the professional work field of the cultural and creative industries globally. However, the contemporary landscape of the cultural and creative industries (CCI) is marked by both challenges and opportunities, affecting the composition of high-level positions. This is especially the case in metropoles that have been marked as 'creative cities' such as London, Paris and Amsterdam. A creative city is characterized by the production of cultural and creative products, the presence of creative individuals, and the supporting infrastructure (Baker and Huber, 2013; McNulty, 1988; Paddison and Miles, 2020). According to Alsayel, de Jong and Fransen (2022), a creative city can be defined as a city where *"creative infrastructure as the primary materials and organizational structures are required for creativity performance and cultural places as the proper context for distributing creative ideas and attracting creative inhabitants"* (p 4). As Amsterdam has a history of creativity in transforming the city and aims to retain, develop and access this creative resource, which makes it a fairly interesting case to examine its CCI, its practice, and policy in today's neoliberal state of society (Alsayel et al., 2022). Amsterdam has experienced increasing tension between preserving its cultural heritage and advancing its global status as a financial and cultural hub comparable to London or Paris (Lindner, 2012). This has led to a dual identity for the city: one as a heritage city rooted in the past and the other as a global city with a forward-looking orientation (Nijman, 1999). Since the countercultural movements of the 1960s, Amsterdam has also become known for its urban creativity, social experimentation, and spatial reorganization (Nijman, 1999). Additionally, Amsterdam's identity includes its postcolonial aspects marked by exclusion and its reputation as a sin city, home to the famous red light district, causing fundamental aspects of urban citizenship such as place, community, and belonging are undergoing significant changes (Lindner & Meissner, 2012.

Therefore, the aim of this thesis is to report on the lived experience of young people in the CCI of Amsterdam and their job progression, which can also be described as the unsustainability of their career advancement. The goal of this research is to develop a new proposal for a policy model, specifically for the Amsterdam context, that supports the age, ethnicity, and function ratio in high-level positions within the CCI. The following research question will be central to this master thesis: *"What are the key factors influencing the ability to achieve sustainable career progression within a hyper neoliberal city such as Amsterdam, and how can greater representation of young professionals from diverse age and ethnic backgrounds who hold high level positions be fostered?"*.

Many researchers have written about inclusivity and diversity within the professional work field of the cultural and creative industries globally. However, the contemporary landscape of the cultural and creative industries (CCI) is marked by both challenges and opportunities, particularly concerning the composition of high-level positions.

In addressing the case - the extent of inclusivity and diversity within the climate of young professionals that work high(er) functions within the CCI- this theoretical framework draws on key insights from relevant academic texts. With diversity, this research refers to *"the variety, or heterogeneity, in the backgrounds and perspectives among board members or staff, including race/ethnicity, gender, immigration status, and economic status"* (Kim & Mason, 2017, p. 52).

Through the interviews that were conducted with professional creatives, the challenges faced by young professionals in the creative industries were analyzed and. The struggles identified, such as limited access to opportunities and a competitive environment, serve as a foundation for understanding the unique difficulties faced by young individuals aspiring to high-level positions. Previous studies have shown that young professionals point out that race, gender and their peers coming from privileged backgrounds contribute to the hardships and challenges of getting higher up in the CCI (Campbell, 2018). The changing socio-economic landscape in cities such as Amsterdam, makes it difficult to support (low-income) creatives. This aligns with the input that informants of this research have given.

The upcoming chapters discuss the following. The second chapter of this research presents the theoretical framework that draws upon different concepts, phenomena and industry dynamics of the CCI that will be elaborated. This will allow for a better understanding of the CCI as a whole, as well as Amsterdam's CCI in particular. The theoretical framework consists out of the following three sections, 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3. Each of these sections are paragraphs that hold sub-paragraphs. The first section defines the main concepts on which this research is based upon: cultural policy, the Cultural and Creative Industries and its population. The second section is focused on creative workers in the neoliberal city through a critical lens. In addition, within this section the concept of the neoliberal city is applied to Amsterdam as that is the location of the case study within this research. Thereafter, the arts and culture policies of Amsterdam of 2021-2024 and 2025-2028 are analyzed in terms of the key points that are represented in both policy plans, which provides the reader with a clear comprehension of the current state of the CCI of Amsterdam in particular.

The third section elaborates on Amsterdam's spatial development and draws upon concepts such as gentrification. In the pursuit of trying to answer the main research question, these eight realms have been examined and explained by employing a qualitative research approach based on literature reviews. Moreover, physical interviews with ten creative workers based in Amsterdam have been conducted. The informants are aged from 23 to 60 years old, embodying different ethnic backgrounds. The third chapter of this research contains the methodology, in which the method of analysis that is performed on the obtained data from the interviews is carefully explained. Other components that are included within this chapter are: the research question and concepts that cohere with it; the way of doing qualitative research, the manner in which the collection of data is obtained, the sampling methods used and, the method of analysis chosen for this study, which is thematic analysis, and at last the mention of the validity, reliability and ethicality of this research.

The fourth chapter is the results section in which the most frequently touched themes that were touched upon during the interviews with creative workers are being highlighted, explained and supported with quotes from the interviewees.

The fifth chapter is the findings and discussion chapter. This section provides the most important findings that have been obtained during this study and discusses the implications of the findings, the limitations of the research but also recommendations for further research.

At last, the sixth chapter is dedicated to the conclusion of this research. Here the entirety of the research will be summarized and its relevance and importance will be supported. Furthermore, the main research question will be revisited and answered based on the gathered information from the literature review in the second chapter as well as the results that are supported by the interviews that were conducted with the participants of this research, all creative workers based in Amsterdam.

These interviews have helped to identify lived experiences of ambitious diverse creative workers in Amsterdam as it reports on the realities they face. The next chapter will provide the reader with a thorough explanation of the main concepts that are embedded within this research, before looking at the particular case of Amsterdam's CCI and its participants.

2. THEORATICAL FRAMEWORK

Globally, numerous studies have been employed around the topic of the Cultural and Creative industries (CCI), explaining their ecosystem and its dynamics, the profile of its participants and cultural policy plans that influence the output, its innovativeness and thus the extent of inclusivity and diversity within this industry. The main concepts and theories on which this research is based are Eikhof's (2017) research on decisions that influence diversity and opportunity in the cultural and CCI, and Noonan's (2015) research who emphasized the importance of place for young professionals (YP) who aspire a career in the CCI. In addition, Campbell's (2018) research, illuminates the precarities that come with young people who are trying to make a living in the creative industries, which later on are reciprocated by the experiences informants have shared in the results section. The concept of Florida's (2002a) Creative Class, a demarcation of occupations that belong to the CCI, is explained as well as a critical reflection based upon Peck's (2011) research on the impact of the recreative city and urban arts policies.

The contemporary landscape of Amsterdam's CCI as of now is still ruled by a small group of elderly individuals who more often than not come from a Dutch background (Eikhof, 2017). The lack of diversity within high-level positions in Amsterdam's CCI regarding ethnicity and age on the one hand, and the desire for career progression that YP have on the other hand is what sets the foundation of this research. In addressing the main research question *What are the key factors influencing the ability to achieve sustainable career progression within a hyper neoliberal city such as Amsterdam, and what actions could be taken to foster a more diverse and inclusive representation of young professionals in leadership roles within Amsterdam's CCI* this theoretical framework draws on key insights from relevant academic texts.

The theoretical framework unpacks and explains what can be described as the Cultural and Creative Industry in the Netherlands, what cultural policy entails, followed by the policy plan for the arts 2021-2024 of Amsterdam and the policy plan for the arts 2025-2028. This allows for a better general understanding of the CCI climate within Amsterdam and its regulation. This section thus summarizes the objectives of both of the Arts and Culture policies of 2021-2024 and 2025-2028, stating what the differences are and what consequences this has for Amsterdam and its CCI.

The following sections provide a thorough theoretical background and the elaboration of its cohering concepts, which will subsequently shed light on the key factors influencing the ability of young people to achieve sustainable career progression within a hyper neoliberal city such as Amsterdam. Later on, this theory is connected with the data that is retrieved from the informants that is revealed in the results section.

Together, the theoretical framework and results section will reveal what can be done to foster greater representation of young professionals from diverse age and ethnic backgrounds in high-level positions.

2.1 CULTURAL POLICY

This section will define what a cultural policy intrinsically entails, whereafter the general definition for cultural policies is provided. Cultural policy is the composition of a set of principles that overarches CCI, which directly or indirectly influences and rules the climate, demographics and daily practices by creatives within cities and countries (Scioldo, 2022). These policies differ from country to country, however this section will give insights on cultural policies within Europe in general (Gustafsson & Lazzaro, 2021), and specifically the arts and culture policy of Amsterdam situated in the Netherlands, as the city of Amsterdam is taken as the case of study for this research.

A policy can be defined as a regularized set of actions based on overarching principles. A policy is a technical means to achieve a goal in response to a problem as defined by a set of (political) actors (Scioldo, 2022). The authority of policy is derived from rationality (as opposed to e.g. tradition or merely charismatic leaders). Thus, one can state that policies function as solution plans for problems that may occur in certain realms and therefore need to be regulated to keep the infrastructure within that realm in line (Scioldo, 2022).

The definition and operationalization of culture in policy is historically loaded, and it has both public and private concerns. Cultural policies are developed by both (small scale) businesses and governments and can be defined as structured actions of specific public authorities' response for the cultural sector. Another way to define cultural policy is as the sum of a government's activities with respect to the arts/CI/humanities/heritage. Arts and culture policies are purposefully developed for multiple parties: creative workers that are part of the work demographics of the CCI, authorities of funded institutions and foundations, and for other European countries regarding collaborations (Scioldo, 2022). The realm of cultural politics brings clash of ideas with itself, institutional struggles and power relations in the production/circulation of symbolic meanings. Therefore, policies regarding these challenges are developed in order to equally and fairly navigate through CCIs and avoid exploiting its participants. In their international cultural policy plan of 2021-2024, the Dutch government claims they aim to strengthen international cultural exchange and cooperation, because it helps the Dutch connect with other cultures, enhances mutual understanding and nurtures the Netherlands with new influences and images. Vice versa, the work and subjects of Dutch artists and cultural institutions are a source of inspiration and knowledge in other countries as they showcase what the Netherlands is about. The Dutch government emphasizes that The Netherlands is a country with an open outlook, keen to engage in partnerships and find innovative solutions. The Dutch international cultural

policy plan of 2021-2024 points out that culture serves Dutch political and economic interests. The domains to which cultural policy extends are: Arts, Heritage, CCI, Social welfare (diversity, inclusivity, community, cohesion, innovation), Education, Intellectual property, Tourism and trade. Generally, cultural policies have the following core aims: ensuring the existence of the arts and heritage; enabling access to them for everyone; and raising and maintaining its quality. Moreover, key points such as: heritage protection; the stimulation of artistic excellence; public accessibility to culture (democratization of culture); increased participation of young people; media plurality/fair competition; economic development of CCIs; social integration and inclusion; and cultural diversity and equity are crucial points of interest ingrained adopted cultural policies.

      Before zooming in on the arts and culture policies that are specifically created for Amsterdam and its CCI, meaning will be given as to what the CCI entails through the assemblance of multiple definitions given by various cultural researchers. Thereafter, the professions of which the CCI consists of will be clarified according to Florida's (2002a) notion of the Creative Class and the creative clusters that come with it. These theories and concepts will be applied to the specific case of cultural and creative industries belonging to Amsterdam in chapter 2.2.1, whereafter a summary of the Arts Plans of Amsterdam are provided in the chapters following.

2.1.1 CULTURAL AND CREATIVE INDUSTRIES (CCI)

It can be stated that there are multiple definitions of the CCI, each with slight variations. The CCI vary in complexity due to their nature and hold both intrinsic and socioeconomic value. Creativity being central to the CCI, they play a vital role in driving innovation, creating value, and enhancing competitiveness and smart growth. Today, their impact extends beyond their primary sectors, making them essential components across various value chains (Lazarro & Gustafson, 2021). In a broader policy framework, strategically aligning the CCI with global development initiatives, including the European Parliament's (2016) recent emphasis on sustainability, the CCI has been defined as *"those industries that are based on cultural values, cultural diversity, individual and/or collective creativity, skills and talent, with the potential to generate innovation, wealth and jobs through the creation of social and economic value, in particular from intellectual property; they include the following sectors relying on cultural and creative inputs: architecture, archives and libraries, artistic crafts, audio-visual (including film, television, software and video games, and multimedia and recorded music), cultural heritage, design, creativity-driven high-end industries and fashion, festivals, live music, performing arts, books and publishing (newspapers and magazines), radio and visual arts, and advertising"* (p. 10).

      The creation of meaning and skills through culture and creativity is seen as a key factor in driving innovation and generating economic value. This positions the CCI at the crossroads of various areas in the economy and society (Lazarro & Gustafson, 2021).

As simple as Chuluunbaatar, Ottavia, Luh, & Kung (2014) put it, the cluster concept is the driver behind the development of CCIs, meaning specific places are needed as the catalyst and nurturer to be able to feed and maintain a flourishing CCI. Thus, place-based qualities are at the core of CCIs, which explains why CCIs are mostly based in big (capital) cities as the creative ecosystem tends to locate themselves there as creative HEI are too located in these big cities (Lazarro & Gustafson, 2021). According to Chuluunbaatar (2014), *"The cluster concept is heavily-based on economic geographic concentrations of interconnected people or companies to create collaboration and competition. The authorities mostly predetermine the development of clusters and clusters are believed as the supporting environment for industrial growth"* (p. 552).

According to the UK DCMS (1998, 2001) the (CCI) can be defined as *"those industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill, and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property"*. Therefore Chuluunbaatar et al (2014), state that this definition implies that CCIs "rely on an individual's creativity, skill, and talent to create jobs and produce wealth through the generation of creative work" (p. 553).

Current Arts Plans of the Gemeente Amsterdam (2020), which are arts and culture policies specifically developed for Amsterdam acknowledge the phenomenon of creative clusters that have risen to the surface in the city of Amsterdam as well as their accumulation all over town. This contributes to the hyper gentrification of the city, affecting creative workers in the progression of their careers as it becomes more difficult for them to afford to live and create in the city of Amsterdam (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2020). As Amsterdam's Arts Plan of 2021-2024 put their emphasis more on the importance of inclusivity and diversity within the CCI, it now shifted to the importance of the support that young makers need in the city in terms of funding, affordable living spaces as well as safe work environments and the implementation of the fair practice code in the creative sector in the Arts Plan of 2025-2028 (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2023).

2.1.2 CREATIVE CLASS AND CLUSTERS

Florida (2002a), has developed a theory based on the 'creative class', which is based on the people who possess creative professions. The creative class is thus generally signified by the types of occupation, which can be divided into two groups: the 'supercreative core' and 'creative professionals' (Florida, 2002a). The group that is labeled as the supercreative core consists of people that have professions for which creativity is a must; for example, in science and technology, architecture and design, education, arts, music and entertainment. The latter group, creative professionals, signify professionals who are "active in a broad range of knowledge-intensive industries, such as high-tech, financial services, legal and care occupations, and business management" (Stam & Martlet, 2008, p. 120). Nevertheless, a critical point to be wary of is that this leads to a neoliberal capitalist society where creative

workers are forced to begin their own businesses by working on a freelance basis, holding complete responsibility for themselves and their income as they have to go after paid work projects they could be potentially hired for. As the CCI consists mostly of freelance creatives that are all competing against each other to get the available jobs being offered on the market, the pressure on creative workers is tremendously high. This results in a capitalist neoliberal economy that has a volatile labor market causing augmented levels of socio-economic inequality compared to other cities (Peck, 2009).

Florida (2002a), suggests three key factors in the relationship between the creative class and economic growth: talent, tolerance, and technology. A large creative class fosters social acceptance of minorities and diverse viewpoints (tolerance). Moreover, it enhances the attractiveness of an area for highly educated individuals to base themselves in (talent). The combination of social diversity, creativity, and talent attracts (high-tech) firms and fosters organizational innovation in a specific area (technology). Ultimately, these factors contribute to significant economic growth. The degree to which cities and regions embrace talent, tolerance, and technology serve as crucial indicators for future economic success (Stam & Martlet, 2008).

The problem however, with the causality that is ingrained within this theory, is that it argues that the presence of the creative class subsequently leads to economic growth. However, this does not explicitly have to be the case as it could also work the other way around. According to Stam and Martlet (2008), *the creative class may be enabled to grow more easily in a booming economy; rather than be the cause of economic growth*" (p. 119). As economic growth is linked to increased incomes, this can lead to a rise in the presence of creative classes, particularly those involved in producing luxury goods and services (Manshanden, Raspe and Rutte, 2004). This implies that creative, especially cultural activities, tend to follow economic growth rather than drive it. The value of many creative goods and services becomes apparent only when consumers have sufficient purchasing power. Creativity needs to be appreciated in the market before it can be considered a successful innovation (Schweizer, 2004).

Another critical point of discussion is that Florida (2002a), states that a large creative class enhances the attractiveness of an area for highly educated individuals to base themselves in, also referred to as talent (Florida 2002a). However, not everyone has the resources and freedom to be able to choose to apply for an arts education as not only admission fees are exorbitantly high, but also the supplies and extra curricular activities such as unpaid internships come with a price tag, which not every student could afford to be spending. Moreover, aspiring a career in the Cultural and Creative industries holds more risks as there is no clear path to finding a safe 9 to 5 job. The way to success or making a career for oneself is definitely not linear, which makes it a volatile industry to be wanting to make a secure living out of. Eikhof's (2017) research emphasizes the advantage that people have that have enjoyed HE within, as it subsequently allows for more opportunities to book success in their creative careers. Through a newly proposed conceptual framework, Eikhof (2017), examines the decisions on diversity and opportunity in the cultural and creative industries as a result of specific decisions.

By unraveling the complexities surrounding these decisions, light is shed on the factors influencing the composition of high-level positions. Eikhof's (2017) conceptual framework is based the following three elements: "(**1**) *the points at which decisions influence an individual's opportunities for workforce participation and advancement;* (**2**) *individual workers as objects of decisions, in particular with respect to* (**a**) *an individual's likelihood of being considered in a particular decision process in the first place and* (**b**) *what individuals present for decision makers to decide upon; and* (**3**) *the decision makers and the context of their decision making"* (p. 289). Integrating Eikhof's (2017) framework into the theoretical foundation allows for a comprehensive examination of the composition of the work demographic within Amsterdam's CCI.

From an individual worker's perspective, the chances to participate and progress in any field of work depends on specific decisions according to Eikhof (2017), such as "admission to relevant degree programs, job recruitment, or promotion to higher positions" (p. 292). These decisions impact workers' opportunities to earn a living, gain skills and knowledge, build career-relevant relationships, and develop a professional reputation. To understand why certain groups of workers are more likely to access these opportunities, the decisions that determine how opportunities are distributed must be analyzed. Due to the project-based nature of work that is highly prevalent in CCIs, career progression often involves moving through a network of projects rather than climbing a traditional organizational ladder (Jones, 1996). Progression should be seen as an individual's movement into roles that offer greater artistic or creative recognition, reach, freedom, or responsibility, enable collaboration with more reputable partners, or provide access to better resources.

Throughout a creative professional's life, their chances to participate and progress in the CCI workforce are significantly influenced by key decisions made by others, referring to participation in paid and unpaid work, promotion, and admission to higher education. This analysis explores the CCI-specific characteristics of these decision points. According to Eikhof (2017), the common denominator that is prevalent in *"all of those decision points is the oversupply of applicants: there are far more people seeking careers in the CCI than available positions"* (p. 296). This intense competition makes it crucial to understand the decision points and the factors that influence outcomes, especially concerning diversity and opportunity (Eikhof, 2017).

The third decision point, admission into higher education, can greatly affect an individual's chances and success when they try to participate and progress in the CCI. Despite the emphasis on on-the-job training, having a degree remains a significant signal in the labor market of the CCI. More importantly, pursuing a degree not only establishes connections through personal networks, but also facilitates access to decision makers for entry-level positions, referring to talent scouts and directors that get invited by HEI to attend the graduation shows of their students for example. In addition, HE provides the opportunity to develop and define one's creative identity, which is later marketed by creative workers (Banks and Oakley, 2015; Burke and McManus, 2009). There is limited knowledge available on the process behind the selection process regarding admission decisions as HEI may not always clearly disclose the criteria or expectations for applicants,

nor how admission decisions are determined. This can lead to unfair practices regarding the advantage students have of whom their families are famous, resulting in nepotism. Students from wealthy families also are more likely to be accepted by the admission board as some of them have close ties with these institutions. Moreover, applicants coming from privileged backgrounds may have had more resources to build up their portfolio work before applying at HEI such as prestigious art academies. This results in a default selection in which individuals from working-class and marginalized groups, who may hold the same level of talent if not more, are held back from the opportunity to enjoy HE in the arts. This 'pre-selection' does not allow for inclusivity and diversity of students in HEI, affecting these demographics in the CCI as well eventually.

The following chapter will dive into the concept of the neoliberal creative city, how it affects the CCI and its creative workers and what the common motivations of individuals aspiring to work in the creative field are, drawing upon the phenomenon of the "Bohemian Artist".

2.1.3 CREATIVE WORKERS IN THE NEOLIBERAL CITY

Critical perspectives and concerns regarding Florida's theory of the 'creative class' in connection with modern(neo-liberal) culture and arts policy making have been expressed by Jamie Peck (2011). In his article, Recreative City: Amsterdam, Vehicular Ideas and the Adaptive Spaces of Creativity Policy, Peck (2011) shares "a critical analysis of the reception and ramifications of creativity policies in the city of Amsterdam" (p. 462). Peck (2011) draws upon Zef Hemel's (2002) book named Creative Cities!, to express his critiques on how creative cities should be defined and classified. Hemel (2002) advocated for a shift in Dutch urban policy towards emphasizing culture and economics. Hemel (2002), highlighted Amsterdam's leading role as the creative hub of the Netherlands and questioned how much more its potential could be maximized within the broader Randstad region. Hemel expressed strong confidence in the prospect of significant opportunities for all, foreseeing transformative changes including the creation of prosperity, promotion of social cohesion, cultivation of culture, and enhancement of urban life. As a response to Hemel (2002) and Florida (2002), who have influenced the way Dutch urban planners have adopted the creative lens in the development of the urban policies they make, Peck scrutinizes the use of the creative city concept as a political tactic aimed at "celebrating culture and embracing growth at the same time" (2011, p. 465). This causes the idea of creativity to become a vehicle, or a "vehicular idea" (McLennan, 2004), within the framework of neoliberal urbanism, which involves the appropriation of urban creative culture as a marketable asset in the competitive arena of global cities vying for recognition and investment (Lindner & Meissner, 2014). This refers to the way creative workers are used and exploited in the city and how the city itself takes advantage of their creative labor.

One of the characteristics of CCIs is that its workforce operates on freelance-basis. Freelance- based work can be defined as short-term and project-based contracts that can be taken on by self-employed workers. This means freelance creative workers have to look for work projects they can apply for and are responsible for their own income which can vary from month to month based on how many projects they have been signed to work on (Chuluunbaatar, Ottavia, Luh, Kung, 2014). In particular, artist workers are considerably more likely to attain self-employment status when living in a city with a high saturation of artist occupations (Woronkowicz & Noonan, 2017). On the one hand, this means that you have the freedom to decide exactly on which projects you would like to work, for which time period and from where as you are existing autonomously as your own boss, which can be very liberating (Cnossen, Loots, Witteloostuijn, 2019). However, on the other hand, this also comes with some negatives such as not having a secure stream of income, competing against many other creative freelancers and having to continuously promote yourself in order to assemble jobs. Being in a constant state of having to hustle results in heightened stress and anxiety, especially among young creative workers who just started out and have not had the chance to gain as much experience and as big of a network as some creative freelancers that have been in the game for a while and know their way around (Avdikos & Kalogeresis, 2016).

This research is focused on the Netherlands, more specifically on Amsterdam, a country and city that, according to Stam and Marlet (2008), possess "one of the highest concentrations of creative class and creative industries" (p. 120). This is proven by a statistical research conducted by the Gemeente Amsterdam and Dutchculture, shown in figure 1 (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2024). This (figure 1) claims that 49% of all Dutch international cultural activities descended from Amsterdam based artists and in 2022 more than 1300 artists from Amsterdam were active abroad spread over 89 countries globally (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2024). Within European borders, Amsterdam is a very interesting case to study in terms of urban culture, practice and policy in today's neo-liberaliscally fed society. This is due to the city's rich and historic "transnational exchange dating back to the Dutch Golden Age. The city has a long, deep history of transnational exchange dating back to the Dutch Golden Age", according to Lindner and Meissner (2014, p. 7). Moreover, Amsterdam has become a focal point of tension, balancing the preservation of its cultural heritage with aspirations to evolve into a global financial and cultural center just like London or Paris (Lindner, 2012). This causes creative workers to be used and exploited in the city without policy regulations that protect them (Nijman, 1999). Since the countercultural movements of the 1960s, Amsterdam, an inherently diverse city, has also gained recognition as a hub for urban creativity, social experimentation, and urban restructuring. This refers to the urban development in Amsterdam, which amongst other things, has been led by culture, meaning that culture is used as a catalyst of and a pillar for socioeconomic/sustainable development. Additionally, Amsterdam bears other identities, including that of a postcolonial city marked by exclusion, and as a renowned "sin-city" with its red-light district. These various identities contribute to a state of dynamic change in fundamental aspects of

urban life, such as sense of place, community, and belonging.

Campbell's (2018) exploration of the challenges faced by young professionals in the creative industries provides a nuanced understanding of the obstacles inherent in career progression within the sector. The struggles identified, such as limited access to opportunities and a competitive environment, serve as a foundation for understanding the unique difficulties faced by young individuals aspiring to high-level positions. Campbell's (2018) work underscores the necessity of recognizing and addressing these challenges to foster inclusivity and equal opportunities. Working as a creative worker within the CCI is more often than combined with the *"challenging nature of being a freelancer"* (Campbell, 2018, p. 524). This tends to be a realm where job stability can be uncertain, and it often takes a considerable amount of time to secure desirable jobs and rewards are not evenly and fairly distributed. Moreover, gender segregation is prevalent, with men predominantly occupying higher appreciated functions compared to females and ethnic minorities (Campbell, 2018).

Despite these negatives, many young professionals are keen to evolve in a creative career as huge increases within workers in the CCI are observed (Campbell, 2018). According to Cnossen (2018), the popularity regarding being a creative worker is linked to the fact that *"...the artistic, creative or bohemian way of life is now the preferred lifestyle of young, middle-class workers, so much so that they are willing to sacrifice any social security that would have come with 'traditional' employment"* (p. 395). This is caused by the desire for the freedom that a career in the CCI promises.

Previous to actually starting to be an active worker within the CCI, not only having enjoyed arts education is a must but having done internship, more often than not unpaid, are assets that develop a greater chance to success whenever starting off as a young professional, due to the network, portfolio and credibility that one has built for him/herself. However, not every youngster finds oneself in the socio-economic state to make this possible. Therefore, the assumption that young creatives mostly have to come from privileged backgrounds, is a frequently adopted anecdote within studies regarding freelancing young creatives (Campbell. 2018). Nonetheless, the interviews that are conducted with young creatives within this research show that this is not always the case, as some of them clarified that they work multiple jobs outside of their creative career in order to sustain themselves and simultaneously work on their starting creative endeavors within this neo-liberal society and field of work.

The pressure that is leading in the world of freelancers, especially creative freelancers, and the challenging conditions that come with it such as difficulty generating a sufficient income and reaching high level functions or positions as young creative workers, is worth examining as young people are the future and have to be seen as valuable assets within the CCI rather than workers that do not need to be taken seriously in the corporate creative realm. Drawing upon previous relevant research of Cnossen, Loots and van Witteloostuijn (2019), *"examine what motivates individual entrepreneurs to work in the strenuous working environment of the CCI"* (p. 389).

Most importantly Cnossen et al (2019), point out that this has not only become reality for plain artist that earn their money by making and selling their art, but this also holds truth for creative workers that "engage in non-artistic work in the CCI", such as producers and project-managers for example.
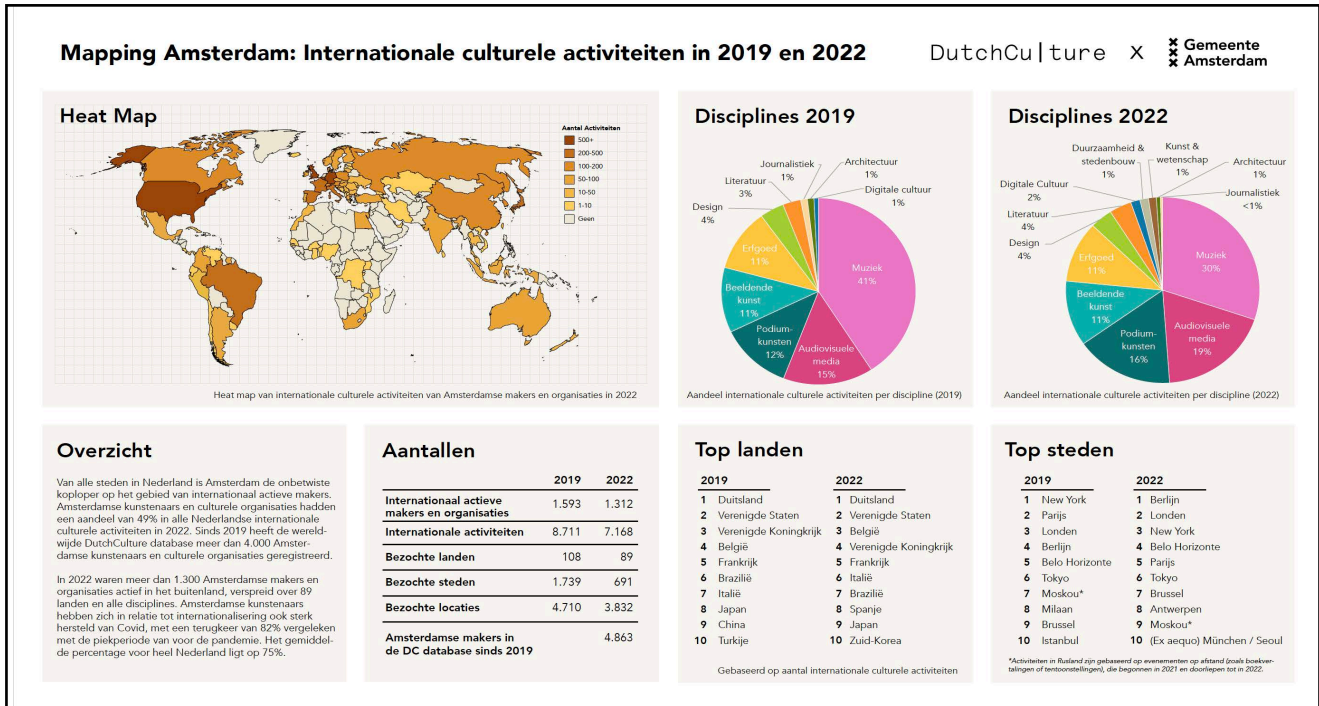
1. Mapping of international cultural activities descending from Amsterdam in 2019 and 2022,
DutchCulture x Gemeente Amsterdam 2024.

2.2.1 AMSTERDAM AND ITS CHARACTERIZING CCI

The arts and culture policy makers of the city of Amsterdam full-heartedly adopted Florida's (2002) three T's theory which entails technology, talent and tolerance for the success of the development of the city. For a long time now, Amsterdam based arts and culture policies have had a range of policies aimed at attracting art, design, and media professionals, as well as supporting creative self-employment (Linder & Meissner, 2014). One of those well known initiatives is the broedplaatsen (breeding places) project, which draws inspiration from the city's squatting movement, which are focused on making more work spaces for creative professionals available. This policy provides and subsidizes workspace for creative professionals in abandoned or underused buildings (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2020). By encouraging these professionals to occupy and develop projects in these spaces, the city aims to foster creativity and help these ventures become profitable in the future. A notorious example of such a 'broedplaats' is the old school building of

the LTS (Lagere Technische School), a former polytechnic education institution based in Amsterdam Nieuw-West, in which infamous queer night club *De School* was formerly located after closing its doors last January (Roele, 2023). Currently the building has reopened its doors under the name of *Tilla Tec*, a night club including a bar, exhibition space, pop-up restaurants, ateliers and other facilities such as a queer gym (*Nieuwe Club Tilla Tec Opent in Voormalig de School-gebouw*, z.d.). Furthermore, a very popular broedplaats at the moment is a nightclub and multifunctional creative space called *Levenslang*, which is a former prison located in a neighborhood named the Bijlmer situated in Amsterdam South-East (*Levenslang Amsterdam*, z.d.). Places such as Nieuw-west and South-East have are charged with negative connotations as they are stigmatized to be the 'bad' and 'poor' parts of the city, that are located outside of the 'ring' of the city center of Amsterdam. Opening clubs and multifaceted creative spaces like *De School, Tilla Tec* and *Levenslang* on such deserted and neglected places in the city contributes to re-building and re-branding of these neighborhoods adding new value to neighborhoods that are perceived negatively and less attractive in general.

Even though the introduction and rise of broedplaatsen reinforced by local arts and culture policies hold a good intention for the development of the city of Amsterdam, it also holds a seam side to it. Such policies regarding broedplaatsen does not help to overcome the tremendously big problem regarding unaffordable housing and unequal access to space, and on the contrary thus fosters and contributes to the growth of these problems. Instead, according to Lindner & Meissner (2014), such a policy only *"enables selected professionals to temporarily bypass the reality of Amsterdam's real estate market"* (p. 6). By dismissing crucial political changes and substantial financial commitments, the city can promote creativity without the need to introduce new social welfare policies. It can be stated that the broedplaatsen policy hence can be seen as an example of a policy that is heavily influenced and charged by the ideas of Florida, according to Peck (2011). Peck's broader critique of Amsterdam's efforts to foster creative industry start-ups focuses on what he terms the *"domestication" and economization of creativity under the "political-economic conditions of neoliberalizing cities"* (2011, p. 482). Moreover, the central management of integrating all cultural activities into the overarching business goal of enhancing Amsterdam's image as an international "Top City" (Topstad) turns creativity into a catalyst for the new economy. Participating in the global market rules of competition, work flexibility, individual self-responsibility, and urban competition for investment, results in a new economy according to Peck (2011), which fits with the restraints of *"flexible labor markets, socio-spatial polarization, constant competition between cities, and housing markets"* (p. 479).

This causes creative capitals to display augmented levels *"of socioeconomic inequality than other cities"* (Peck, 2009, p. 8). Furthermore, another keypoint that Peck notices is that creative cities such as Amsterdam are celebrated for their hyper gentrification and their limited, individualistic ties to specific places. This should not be perceived as such a positive thing for the city as this hypermobility and limited, individualistic ties to specific places simultaneously ensures *"increasing detachment from a place and community"*, as create a manner for people to easily move to a more exciting

location at any time (Lindner & Meissner, 2014, p. 7). This coincides with the commercialization of urban spaces, enabling mobile individuals to experience a place as a temporary event. This means they enjoy a manufactured sense of authenticity without forming social bonds or taking on responsibilities (Lindner & Meissner, 2014).

2.2.2 Providing a Realistic Career Pathway Or Not: Arts Policies Amsterdam

In order to get a deep and solid understanding of the dynamics of the CCI of Amsterdam in particular, the arts and culture policy of the city of Amsterdam, also known as *Hoofdlijnen Kunst en Cultuur,* should be taken into consideration before moving on before building further onto this research. Having a general understanding of the current status of Amsterdam's CCI landscape regarding its policy and comparing the previous policy plan of 2021-2024 with the new policy plan of 2025-2028, allows for insights in certain changes and reveals which points are being valued as important to work on. Furthermore, connecting these insights to the theoretical framework and the interviews that have been conducted with Amsterdam-based artists will help answering the research question that stands central in this research: "*What are the key factors influencing the ability to achieve sustainable career progression within a hyper neoliberal city such as Amsterdam, and how can greater representation of young professionals from diverse age and ethnic backgrounds who hold high level positions be fostered?*".
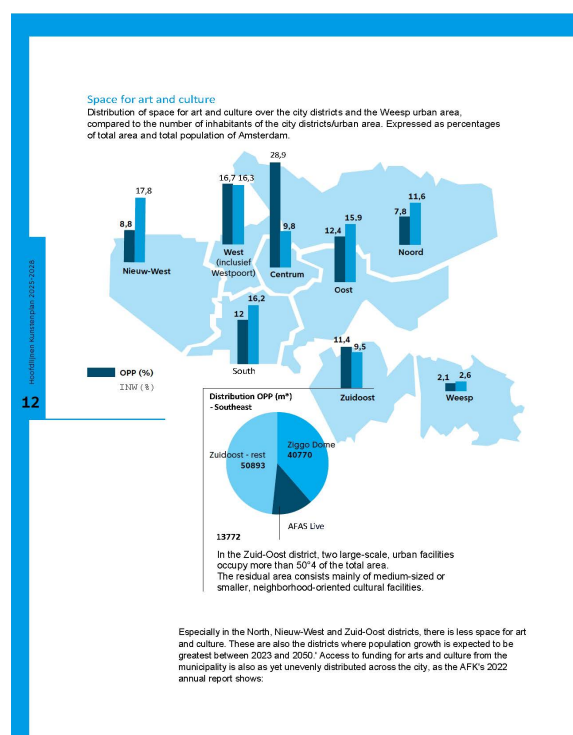
The arts plans for 2021-2024 and 2025-2028 reflect Amsterdam's ongoing commitment to being a diverse, inclusive, and vibrant cultural metropolis. While both plans share core values of inclusivity, support for artists, and international engagement, the 2025-2028 plan introduces new strategies to address the more complex and challenging policy landscape. By focusing on quality, sustainability, and safe working conditions, Amsterdam aims to navigate the pressures of urban development and economic constraints while maintaining its cultural vitality and global appeal.

2.2.3 The Arts Plan Amsterdam 2021-2024

In their arts plan for 2021-2024, the municipality of Amsterdam expressed four main points in their policy that are central to the development and maintenance of the CCI of Amsterdam:

1. The growth and development of the arts and culture in neighborhoods and more attention for artist;

2. More space for experiments, local innovation and nightlife culture;

3. Expansion of cultural education, talent development and global participation;

4. And strengthening international art and culture (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2020).

Starting off with the first keypoint, which is aimed at fostering the development of the arts and culture in neighborhoods and more attention for artists (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2020). The argumentation behind the importance of this key point is that a strong, open and inclusive cultural metropole, is one that offer spaces, and simultaneously protects this space, for all its Amsterdam residents located in every neighborhood at any given point of time during the day (Hoofdlijnen Kunst en Cultuur 2021-2024, (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2020). The aim is to be a city in which everyone can experience and interact with art, and most importantly, in which everyone can sufficiently identify themselves with what cultural projects and institutions have to offer. The importance of tapping into new sources of stories, making visible what was invisible and thus fostering the development of new supply, nurturing arts and culture projects within all neighborhoods of the city of Amsterdam is crucially important. This is the case because within these neighborhoods the makers and the artists work on new stories and new forms of art, creating new connections (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2020). Amsterdam must be a complete city, meaning that art and culture should also be available in new neighborhoods, especially in those parts of the city where supply is currently lagging

2. Mapping of the distribution of space for art and culture divided over Amsterdam's city district, Research and Statistics department Gemeente Amsterdam, 2022.

behind (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2020). Here the focus mainly lies on parts of the city such as Noord, Zuidoost and Nieuw-West, districts where art and culture are currently less (visibly) present (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2020). Figure 2, visualizes this by displaying the distribution of space for art and culture per city district (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2022). According to the policy, investing extra in those districts will strengthen the entire cultural infrastructure in the city and create a better balance (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2020). On the flip side, this will also contribute to the hyper gentrification process in the city of Amsterdam where finding a place to live is extremely difficult due to shortage of housing, let alone affordable housing.

let alone affordable housing. Moreover, one of the informants that contributed to this research pointed out that he got kicked out of his atelier in Amsterdam by the Gemeente Amsterdam as they caught the informant staying there when the informant was in between houses as the lease of his old apartment ended, while he did not have new place to live in yet.

Moving on to the second key point within the arts and culture policy, aiming at more space within neoliberal Amsterdam for experiments, innovation and nightlife/culture (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2020). Characterizing for Amsterdam is its music and nightlife scene, arts and culture do not vanish after midnight. Amsterdam's vibrant nightlife scene, which emerged in the nineties with iconic clubs like Roxy, iT and Trouw, and later on in new ones such as De School, Radion, and recently Club Raum, remains a crucial part of the city's identity. Night culture is a breeding ground for new art forms and subcultures that don't have daytime platforms, and it fosters inclusivity, representation, and safe spaces for marginalized groups (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2020). These groups lead the way in discussing representation on stage, as well as introducing safe spaces and educating about consent. The night is the place where many young Amsterdammers develop socially and culturally, to support this, the municipality decided that nightlife should be protected, nurtured, and fostered (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2020). This involves ensuring that spaces like No Mans Art Gallery, where people can engage with new art forms after midnight, continue to thrive (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2020). The night scene is seen as an incubator for future trends in music, fashion, and lifestyle, offering a place where individuals can express themselves without prejudice . The creative entrepreneurship of the scene gives the city its color. A problem, however, is that as the city grows, the space available for night culture is also becoming scarcer (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2020). However, as Amsterdam grows, the availability of space for nightlife is diminishing, leading to conflicts between residents, established clubs, and alternative cultures. To address this, the municipality introduced Nachtvisie, a policy specifically aimed at supporting night culture (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2020). Broedplaatsen, or breeding places, are potential locations where day and night culture can intersect, offering space for festivals and talent development linked to the alternative and night scenes Gemeente Amsterdam, 2020). Furthermore, events will also be included in the new plans. The starting point of the new vision for events is a sustainable balance between liveability and enjoyment and the choice of an event offering that fits Amsterdam's identity and adds value to the city and its residents Gemeente Amsterdam, 2020). The policy will therefore assess both the cultural, societal and social (added) value and the impact of events in the city.

Not every child gets educated on art and culture by their parents at home, therefore the municipality offers the basics through education, which brings us to the third key point of Amsterdam's arts and culture policy plan: expansion of cultural education, talent development and participation. The aim is for all children to spend at least two hours a week on art and culture at school. The municipality aims for all children to engage in at least two hours of art and culture each week (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2020). This is supported through the Basic Package, which provides schools with a professional music teacher for one of these hours, free transport to cultural institutions, and

the municipality emphasizes the importance of after-school talent development and encourages adults to engage with art and culture (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2020). Among Amsterdam's adults, there are many people who hardly get in touch with art and culture due to their lack of means to do so, not knowing their way around arts and culture and on top of that perceiving engagement in art and culture with a high threshold. The municipal government aims for an inclusive cultural policy where everyone, including individuals with disabilities and vulnerable groups, can enjoy and participate in cultural activities (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2020).

The last key point focuses on strengthening Amsterdam's international art and culture scene. The city aims to maintain its appeal to international artists and address existing barriers. To achieve this, the municipality will develop an Artist Climate Action Plan, which will include both local and national measures to enhance the international artist climate. Collaboration with organizations such as the AFK, CAWA, DutchCulture, and Amsterdam art schools will be crucial in mapping out these measures. Addressing the high costs of accommodation in the city is also a priority. The Arts and Culture Directorate, along with others (Team Innovation, Economic Affairs, amsterdam&partners24 and the ACI), is exploring digital solutions to provide the arts and culture sector with easy and quick insight into the supply of affordable short-stay accommodation and hotels in Amsterdam and the region (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2020). Last but not least, the municipality wants to further improve cultural relations with other countries, focusing on cities and regions where large groups of Amsterdam residents originate (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2020). This will build on previous cultural missions and enhance the city's international cultural connections.

2.2.4 The Arts Plan Amsterdam 2025-2028

In the post-pandemic period of 2025-2028, in which the cost of living crisis is heavily affecting Amsterdam's residents, the municipality of Amsterdam aims to continue to build a strong, open and representative city of culture. The goal is for residents to identify with what museums, theaters, clubs, and festivals offer, creating a cultural capital that supports cultural organizations, promotes makers, and emphasizes equal opportunities in cultural education and talent development (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2024).

In their arts plan for 2025-2028, the municipality of Amsterdam expressed five main challenges in their policy that are central to the development and maintenance of the CCI of Amsterdam:

1. Shifting resources to create more influx of institutions and support for creators.
2. A new subsidy system: clear and straightforward
3. Art and culture for everyone
4. A safe sector to work in
5. Fair Practice Code and good employment practices (Gemeente

Comparing the main focus points of this arts plan to the one discussed in the previous chapter, it becomes evident that the future policy of 2025-2028 pays way more attention to the difficult circumstances in which creative workers have to navigate and their vulnerable state when it comes to socio-economic status in the current neoliberal Amsterdam (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2024). Shifting resources to create more influx of institutions and support for creators and the implementation of the Fair Practice Code show that the context of Amsterdam's CCI is unfair and unsustainable. Therefore, it can be concluded that this plan is way more focused on the workers along with the obvious precarities faced in CCIs

Starting off with the first focus point, which is aimed at shifting resources to create more influx of institutions and support for creators. According to the Gemeente Amsterdam (2024), the Plan for the Arts 2025-2028 aims to create more space for underrepresented cultural institutions within Amsterdam's broader cultural landscape. The city plans to increase direct support for creators, emphasizing quality over quantity and reducing administrative burdens for institutions. Diversity and inclusion will be integral to the application assessment process, ensuring cultural institutions are accessible to all (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2024). In addition, The plan also highlights the importance of social safety within the cultural sector. By focusing on the stories told by artists and expanding the definition of artists and artistic quality, Amsterdam aims to provide more opportunities for makers and reach a broader audience (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2024). This approach will help reveal more cultural narratives and enhance the city's cultural infrastructure.

The second focus point introduces a new, more transparent subsidy system. More institutions than before will be able to apply for Arts Plan grants from the Amsterdam Fund for the Arts (AFK), expanding the AFK's scope and budget, which subsequently results in a greater responsibility. This new system will allocate subsidies directly to seven major institutions: the Amsterdam Museum, Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, National Opera &

3.

Mapping focus of investment points big culture and arts institutions Amsterdam 2025-2028, Gemeente Amsterdam (2024)

Ballet, International Theatre Amsterdam, Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, Bijlmer Parktheater, and Theater de Meervaart (Figure 3). These institutions will apply for grants directly from the municipality, with the Arts Council advising on the amounts to be granted. The municipality has reserved €60 million per year for these institutions for 2025-2028, which is €3 million less than the previous period (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2024). The city believes that these big institutions, with their strong foundations, should bear the heavier financial burden during these challenging times (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2024). This only seems fair as this eventually enables smaller institutions, who do not have as much funds or means to survive the damage that the pandemic has done on their existence . Figure 4 reveals what smaller cultural facilities the Arts Plan of Amsterdam stated to invest in in the period of 2025-2028, that are mostly centered in the outskirts of the city instead of the historic city center where most of the big arts and cultural institutions are situated (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2024).

Following up on the third focus point, which emphasizes making art and culture accessible to all Amsterdam residents, reflecting the city's growing diversity. By 2035, Amsterdam's population is expected to exceed one million, and the cultural offerings must cater to this diverse populace. The Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan from the 2021-2024 period has raised awareness and driven many institutions to actively engage in diversity and inclusion efforts (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2020). This plan will continue in the 2025-2028 period, ensuring that diversity and inclusion remain central to cultural policy. Therefore, the plan of 2025-2028 regarding diversity and inclusion will be continued and perpetuated and moreover make the policy sustainable (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2024). A separate Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan for the period 2025-2028 is not needed anymore, however institutions are expected to include concrete objectives on diversity and inclusion in their activity plan. This applies to Audience, Staff (including social safety), Programming, Partners and (physical) accessibility (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2024). A new focus point within policy making in the plan of 2025-2028 is the investment of leadership of institutions and creators who are currently underrepresented within the city's broad cultural offering. In order to do so, a programme is developed aimed at increasing the business and artistic leadership for (leading) professional creators, new talent and institutions, characterized by their diversity, that make their mark on tomorrow's supply and the city (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2024). This however raises a frequently

4. Mapping focus of investment points cultural facilities Amsterdam 2025-2028, Gemeente Amsterdam (2024)

interviews of this research as some of the informants pointed out that the focus on color and ethnicity is rather followed by the trend of being woke and seems to be less careful of actual talent and art for art' sake. The informants agreed on the urgency of diversity within leadership roles, however the supply of young professionals with a foreign background is way scarcer than young professionals with a dutch background due to their families socio-economic conditions. Therefore, the informants stress that the root of the problem is the accessibility of HE and the cost of living crisis, that prevent ethnic young professionals from getting to apply for those leadership roles in the first place.

The fourth and second to last key point being mentioned in The Arts Plan of 2025-2028 is: a safe sector to work in. This new plan pleads for safe work environments in the arts and cultural sector of Amsterdam (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2024). A safe working environment is crucial to perform well, develop and grow within a workplace. Any form of transgressive behavior is unacceptable. At the same time, a combination of high (work) pressure, vulnerable labor relations and passion for profession, unfortunately more often than not creates unsafe situations in the arts and culture sector. In addition, short-term contracts and limited access to the sector are the norm and highly prevalent, which makes the arts and culture sector needs to be extra alert. For this reason, in the application for the Arts Plan, institutions should specifically address social safety. This applies to both internal and external staff, such as makers, technicians and freelancers. Furthermore, in collaboration with the cultural sector, the municipality is developing a separate social safety support programme for the period 2025-2028 (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2024). For small institutions, which often lack resources, the municipality offers resources, in the form of a voucher programme, to appoint external confidential counselors. Guides, tools and training will be made available by the municipality to help the sector create a safe working environment (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2024).

The last focus point being mentioned in The Plan of Arts 2025-2028 is: Fair Practice Code and good employment practices. Institutions in the 2025-2028 Arts Plan should subscribe to and apply the principles of the Fair Practice Code, which is an initiative of the cultural sector itself. The Fair Practice Code is a moral compass for everyone working in or with the sector (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2024) . The code is used to call for continuous reflection on the work of individuals that professionally contribute to the CCI. The five values of the code are: solidarity, diversity, trust, sustainability and transparency (*Fair Practice Code | Gedragscode Voor de Culturele en Creatieve Sector*, z.d.). The arts and culture sector employs many practically skilled people, such as set designers, technicians and designers. Many of them get to know institutions in the form of internships. A significant focus is on equal remuneration for interns, particularly ensuring no disparity between theoretically and practically trained interns (*Fair Practice Code | Gedragscode Voor de Culturele en Creatieve Sector,* z.d.). This is crucial for attracting future professionals to the sector. The starting point is that the cultural sector itself determines what constitutes fair remuneration and how they implement the other parts of the Fair Practice Code (*Fair Practice Code | Gedragscode Voor de Culturele en Creatieve Sector,* z.d.).

2.3 AMSTERDAM SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT

As stated by Nooan (2015) there are two themes deemed to be "central to the needs of the creative economy within creative industries policy: the economic importance of place and the role of education in delivering a better-equipped workforce" (p. 299). These themes are hot topics of discussions when it comes to analyzing the contribution creative industries have to urban development and regeneration, the clustering of creative firms, and the use of creative outputs as important symbolic and financial resources for countries involved in trade and globalization (Banks, Lovatt, O'Connor, & Raffo, 2000; Oakley, 2006). Noonan's (2015) research contains findings from a small-scale qualitative study of media students within a UK higher education institution (HEI), which provide an understanding of *"the symbolic and tangible value of geography within young people's career development in the creative industries"* (p. 300). Furthermore, this research paper shows whether or not and how the perceived attributes of some locations provide industry credibility and the promise of professional mobility.

Within the Netherlands this would arguably be Amsterdam for example. The idea of the *"creative city"* and the view of creative workers as "essentially urban" (Banks et al., 2000, p. 463) are so influential that city planners and development agencies can't ignore them. As a result, policy-making has embraced the concept of "urban creativity" (Peck, 2005). Even though globalization is a major theme in discussions about creative industries, the importance of local places remains   but not all places are equally important (Noonan, 2015). While this concentration is likely to continue in the future due to the self-perpetuating and internally driven process of cultural production and exchange that has been taken place metropoles, in the last decade, there have been some successes outside the capital often in places with specialist clusters of creativity (Comunian & Faggian, 2011). As stated by Noonan (2015), a common feature of these secondary clusters is the support from local universities, which contribute to growth by offering "*industry-specific research, technical facilities, business incubation, and a constant supply of skilled workers*" (pp. 300-301).

One thing a metropole such as Amsterdam has to deal with is an extreme form of gentrification. To define gentrification, we turn to the explanation provided by Pearman II (2018), who characterizes it as a process involving physical, economic, and cultural transformations in low-income urban areas. This process typically begins with an influx of wealthier residents into poorer, working-class neighborhoods, resulting in significant increases in property values and increased rents (Hwang, 2016; Pattillo, 2008; Smith, 1996, as cited in Pearman II, 2018). As a consequence, long-standing residents often find themselves unable to afford the rising housing costs and are forced to relocate. While *"state-led gentrification policies aimed at social mixing do not always immediately lead to the displacement of long-term residents"* (Bridge & Butler, 2012, as cited in Van de Kamp, 2021), Van de Kamp (2021) emphasizes

that these policies can make existing residents feel alienated from their neighborhood both culturally and socially (p. 439). This sense of alienation is fueled by the emergence of new businesses, such as restaurants, shops, and sports centers, catering to the new middle-class residents (Bridge & Butler, 2012). These changes introduce new lifestyles and tastes, significantly altering the neighborhood's character (Zukin, 2010; Pinkster, 2016; Shaw & Hagemans, 2015, as cited in Van de Kamp, 2021). This phenomenon is particularly evident in neighborhoods such as Amsterdam Noord, De Pijp, and big parts of Amsterdam west such as De Baarsjes, Staatsliedenbuurt en Westerpark. In these neighborhoods, the rise of upscale organic and alternative restaurants, cafés, clubs, and sports centers has transformed these areas into a prominent creative mini-cluster within the city. The best practice case exemplified by Tetterode is a unique solution to the gentrification problem, partially caused by broedplaatsen (See Box 1).

Case 1: Tetterode, best practice solutions for creative workers in Amsterdam

Tetterode is a good example that functions as a solution to the cost of living prices, including unaffordable rents for living and workspaces in Amsterdam resulting in the gentrification process of the city. As mentioned before in chapter 2.3, the rise of broedplaatsen only further aggravates the gentrification process instead of fighting it. This is due to the temporary nature of broedplaatsen, meaning that artists and creative workers have no fixed and stable place to work and live, hopping from one to the next broedplaats. On the contrary, Tetterode is a permanent work-and-housing complex created by and for creative makers and artist only, squatted by a group of young artist in 1981 (Woonwerk - Woonwerkpand Tetterode., 2023). The squatters managed to get a deal with the municipality of Amsterdam to stay and make their own living spaces and ateliers in Tetterode, which used to be letter foundry factory before.In 1986 they closed a solid-rental with housing association Het Oosten (Stadgenoot), in coordination with the Gemeente Amsterdam (Woonwerk - Woonwerkpand Tetterode., 2023). This meant that the housing was responsible for the maintenance of the exterior of the building and that the residents of the building became responsible for the maintenance of the inside of the building, which created incredibly affordable housing and workspaces for artists in the city of Amsterdam. Tetterode consists of 160 living and working spaces. There are small-scale businesses, craft workshops, social and cultural organizations, studios, and homes. Because many spaces have been improved and rebuilt by users over the years, there is an unusually strong bond between the tenants and their space. Self-management is the cornerstone of Tetterode. Thanks to self-management, and self-sufficiency. Because the building was written off anyway, rents are low. Consequently, the complex is home to numerous non-profit companies that cannot afford the rent in other places in Amsterdam. The association selects new members on their objectives. Tetterode makes, to some extent, its own rules. The responsibility thus assumed by the association's members is great. In practice, a considerable number of people are willing to dedicate themselves to Tetterode. By working together and sharing responsibilities, mutual commitment grows. Currently, Tetterode is one of the very few large 1980's live-work buildings that still exists and functions successfully. Instead of augmenting broedplaatsen, which are eventually torn down and sold to developers for large sums of money who build new apartments that are sold to the rich for high prices, the Gemeente Amsterdam should support the permanent purposing of old buildings. A revival of the squatters era in an attempt to soften the neoliberal edges the

5. Tetterode building complex between the Bilderdijkstraat and the Da Costakade, Amsterdam, 1960s.

2.4 SUMMARY THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In summary, a policy is a regularized set of actions derived from overarching principles, acting as technical means to achieve goals in response to problems identified by political actors (Scioldo, 2022). Policies are essential for maintaining infrastructure and addressing issues within specific realms, ensuring fair regulation and support for the cultural sector. Cultural policy is historically loaded and involves both public and private concerns. It encompasses structured actions by public authorities in response to the needs of the cultural sector and is defined as the sum of a government's activities related to the arts, humanities, heritage, and CCI. The Dutch international cultural policy plan for 2021-2024 aims to strengthen international cultural exchange and cooperation, enhancing mutual understanding and nurturing the Netherlands with new influences. The plan highlights the significance of culture in serving Dutch political and economic interests, extending to arts, heritage, social welfare, education, intellectual property, tourism, and trade. Core aims include ensuring the existence and accessibility of arts and heritage, raising and maintaining quality, heritage protection, artistic excellence, public accessibility, youth participation, media plurality, economic development of CCIs, social integration, and cultural diversity and equity.

Florida (2002a) theorizes the 'creative class,' which comprises individuals in creative professions divided into the 'supercreative core' and 'creative professionals.' The supercreative core includes those in fields where creativity is essential, such as science, technology, design, and the arts. However, this leads to a neoliberal capitalist society where freelance creatives bear the full responsibility for their income, resulting in high competition and socio-economic inequality (Peck, 2009). Florida identifies three factors linking the creative class to economic growth: talent, tolerance, and technology. A large creative class fosters diversity and attracts educated individuals, enhancing innovation and economic growth. However, this relationship is complex; economic growth can also lead to an increase in the creative class (Stam & Martlet, 2008). Eikhof (2017) emphasizes the role of higher education in providing opportunities for creative careers. Admission to relevant programs significantly impacts career prospects. However, the oversupply of applicants and the influence of privilege and nepotism in admissions processes limit diversity and inclusivity in the CCI. This chapter sets the stage for exploring the neoliberal creative city and its impact on creative workers, drawing on the 'Bohemian Artist' phenomenon.

Amsterdam's arts and culture policymakers have embraced Florida's (2002) three T's theory technology, talent, and tolerance to drive urban development. Amsterdam's policies have long aimed to attract professionals in art, design, and media, while supporting creative self-employment (Linder & Meissner, 2014). A notable initiative is the broedplaatsen (breeding places) project, inspired by the city's squatting movement, which subsidizes workspaces for creatives in underused buildings (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2020).

Examples include Tilla Tec, a multifaceted creative space in the former De School nightclub, and Levenslang, a creative space in a former prison in the Bijlmer (Roele, 2023).While broedplaatsen aim to foster creativity and regenerate neglected neighborhoods, they also exacerbate issues of unaffordable housing and unequal access to space. According to Lindner & Meissner (2014), such policies enable selected professionals to bypass Amsterdam's real estate market realities, without addressing broader social welfare needs. Peck (2011) criticizes Amsterdam's focus on creative industry start-ups as part of a neoliberal agenda, emphasizing flexibility and competition, which leads to increased socioeconomic inequality (Peck, 2009). Moreover, the celebration of hyper-gentrification and the commercialization of urban spaces fosters detachment from community, allowing mobile individuals to experience the city as a temporary event without forming lasting social bonds (Lindner & Meissner, 2014).

The 2021-2024 arts plan focused on four main points: developing arts and culture in neighborhoods, creating space for experimentation and nightlife culture, expanding cultural education and talent development, and strengthening international art and culture. The plan aimed to make art accessible to all residents, particularly in underrepresented districts like Noord, Zuidoost, and Nieuw-West. It emphasized investing in neighborhood projects, small venues, and public spaces to support new makers and young talents. A significant component was fostering Amsterdam's nightlife and club culture, which is seen as a critical part of the city's identity and a breeding ground for innovation and inclusion. The plan also included efforts to expand cultural education, ensuring that all children receive exposure to art and culture.

Additionally, it aimed to strengthen Amsterdam's international cultural ties and attractiveness to global artists. Building on this foundation, the 2025-2028 arts plan introduces several new elements to address the evolving challenges faced by the city. This plan continues the emphasis on inclusivity and accessibility, ensuring cultural institutions become more representative of the city's diverse population. By integrating diversity and inclusion into all aspects of cultural policy, the plan aims for long-term sustainability without needing separate action plans. The most noticeable points of focus that were newly added to the policy of 2025-2029, are the need for a safe working environment in the arts sector. The 2025-2028 plan introduces policies requiring institutions to address social safety in their applications and develops a separate social safety support program. In addition, the plan emphasizes the importance of the implementation of the fair practice code throughout the cultural and creative sector to overcome inequalities in the pay of creative workers and artists for example.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS & CONCEPTS

This study delves into the underexplored realm of young professionals' career progression within Amsterdam's Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI), particularly aiming to understand the factors hindering sustainable advancement and proposing a model for greater representation. The research question probes: *"What are the key factors influencing the ability to achieve sustainable career progression within a hyper neoliberal city such as Amsterdam, and how can greater representation of young professionals from diverse age and ethnic backgrounds who hold high level positions be fostered?"*. Given the scarcity of literature on this topic, there's a pressing need to bridge this gap by developing a model that not only acknowledges but actively tackles challenges to foster inclusivity and innovation. This entails examining Dutch policies and proposing solutions to enhance opportunities for young creative professionals. The study involves interviewing ten diverse creatives, all seasoned workers within Amsterdam's CCI, to gather insights into their experiences. Through semi-structured interviews and a literature review, the research aims to uncover key findings, address sub-questions, and provide recommendations for future studies. Ultimately, this research is timely and significant, contributing to ongoing global discussions on diversity and inclusion within the CCI (Green, 2008).

3.2 METHOD QUALITITATIVE RESEARCH

This thesis adopts a qualitative research approach. According to Bryman (2012), *"Qualitative research is a research strategy that usually emphasizes words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data."* (p. 380). Other characteristics of qualitative research are that it has an inductive approach which causes the theory results from the research rather than the other way around. Moreover, within qualitative research, the emphasis lies on *"the understanding of the social world through an examination of the interpretation of that world by its participants; and on constructivism, which implies that social properties are outcomes of the interactions between individuals, rather than phenomena 'out there' and separate from those involved in its construction."* (Bryman, 2012, p. 380). This study is trying to uncover the current state of the CCI in Amsterdam and the experiences of creative workers who are part of its creative ecosystem, located in a city that is neoliberal of nature.

The factors that affect their career pathways, either positive or negative, are illuminated, hence what can potentially be set in motion to foster greater representation of young professionals from diverse age and ethnic backgrounds who hold high-level positions. Qualitative research would be the most suitable research strategy to do so.

3.3 DATA COLLECTION

This research involved conducting individual semi-structured interviews with ten informants, whose identities will be anonymized in respect of ethical concerns, and providing them with a safe space to share their experiences and express their critiques (Green, 2008). These informants, representing different generations, share a common experience of working as artists in Amsterdam's Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI). The variety among interviewees provided a comprehensive understanding of their perspectives on diversity and inclusion in high-level CCI positions in Amsterdam. Semi-structured interviews were chosen for their flexibility, allowing the exploration of new and relevant ideas during conversations (Bryman, 2012). An interview guide was used to maintain focus without being overly rigid, ensuring the flow of the discussion was natural and insightful (Bryman, 2012). Interviews were held at convenient locations like participants' ateliers or Soho House, and with their consent, audio recordings were made for accurate transcription and analysis. The interviews, mostly conducted in Dutch with one in English, lasted between 45 to 70 minutes, totaling approximately 10 hours. Participants were contacted through personal networks, ensuring quick and effective scheduling. This method provided rich, detailed data crucial for understanding the dynamics within Amsterdam's CCI.

3.4 SAMPLING

This study employs purposive sampling, a non-probability method, chosen to align with the research goals and ensure the research questions are addressed (Bryman, 2012). Criterion and snowball sampling techniques were used, leveraging personal networks to access interviewees (Bryman, 2012). Thematic analysis was applied to analyze the qualitative data. Participants were selected based on three criteria: (1) being an active or retired member of Amsterdam's Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI), (2) possessing relevant work experience in the CCI of Amsterdam, and (3) being at least 18 years old. A diverse range of profiles among participants was sought to capture the evolution of Amsterdam's CCI over different periods. The sample included individuals who started their creative careers in the 90s or early 2000s, as well as those who began in the past five years. Appendix B provides a table with a full overview of all informants that have participated in this study. This diversity provided a rich data set, highlighting both historical and current trends in CCI policy. Recognizing these patterns is crucial for identifying areas needing improvement to enhance the representation of young professionals from diverse backgrounds in high-level CCI positions. Interviewing active CCI members ensured the most accurate and insightful results, supporting the study's aims effectively.

3.5 OPERATIONALIZATION

Operationalization in this research involves clarifying key concepts like cultural policy, Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI), and freelancing to ensure smooth interviews and reader comprehension (Green, 2008, p. 55). Thematic analysis serves as the method of analysis, starting with defining categories relevant to the research question, such as age, ethnicity, and functions within the CCI. Data is coded systematically, quantified if possible, and analyzed to identify patterns and relationships (Green, 2008). The aim is to interpret findings in the context of the research question and objectives, focusing on factors influencing the professional climate. This process informs the development of a model or policy to enhance representation of young professionals from diverse backgrounds in high-level CCI positions in Amsterdam. By operationalizing these concepts and utilizing thematic analysis, this research seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics within the CCI and contribute to the development of strategies for promoting diversity and inclusion (Green, 2008).

3.6 METHOD OF ANALYSIS

This study employs thematic analysis to identify patterns and themes in the data, guiding interpretation concerning the research question and main themes. Initially, interview transcripts were read and re-read in Atlas T.I. Version 24 to capture first impressions and significant quotes linked to the theoretical framework. Next, a theoretical thematic analysis was conducted, focusing on coding only the data segments relevant to the research concepts. An open coding approach allowed codes to evolve during the process. The analysis then sought patterns across transcripts, merging related codes into main themes, such as combining various consumer motives for purchasing curated second-hand clothes into a single theme. Themes were organized to align with the research question and its main themes. Any codes that did not fit neatly into a theme were managed in a "miscellaneous" category. The themes were reviewed and refined to ensure coherence and clarity, capturing their core essence and interrelations. Finally, a codebook was developed, providing a matrix-based framework for synthesizing data. This included important quotes, corresponding codes, and themes, allowing for comparisons to identify recurring patterns. This comprehensive approach ensured a systematic and thorough analysis, enhancing the study's validity and reliability. This structured approach ensures a thorough and systematic analysis, enhancing the study's validity and reliability.

3.7 VALIDITY, RELIABILITY AND ETHICALITY

The validity of this research was ensured through construct validity, sampling validity, and specific data collection and analysis techniques (Bryman, 2012). Construct validity was achieved by aligning the main research question and main concepts and themes with the theoretical framework and the studied concepts. This involved clearly defining and operationalizing key concepts such as cultural policy, Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI), The Creative Class, clusters, gentrification, commodification of the creative industry and freelancing. Sampling validity was established by selecting participants representing the target population: (young) professionals active in Amsterdam's CCI. This diversity helped capture a range of perspectives and experiences, reducing potential biases and supporting valid results.

The research also provided a clear rationale for selection criteria and sampling processes. Reliability was maintained through several processes, including the use of an interview guide, recording interviews with a dictaphone, and using Atlas T.I. Version 24 for thematic analysis (Bryman, 2012).The systematic analysis of interview data with Atlas T.I. facilitated efficient data processing and the construction of a codebook, enabling concise conclusions. Theoretical triangulation was also employed, analyzing and presenting related research to support the study's findings, enhancing reliability (Bryman, 2012).

Ethical considerations were paramount, involving informed consent, confidentiality, and respectful treatment of informants (Bryman, 2012). The informants were fully informed about the study's purpose and potential publication, and their consent was obtained. Privacy and confidentiality were ensured by securely storing data. Respect for participants' autonomy and rights was maintained throughout the research, creating a safe environment for sharing experiences. These steps collectively ensured the study's validity, reliability, and ethicality, affirming the accuracy of the qualitative research (Bryman, 2012).

4. FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

4.1 LIVED EXPERIENCES FROM AMSTERDAM CREATIVES

This chapter will provide the perspectives of ten creatives that currently work or have worked within the CCI of Amsterdam. The underlying themes on which this research is based, mentioned in the methodology section, are the leading key points of the results that will be shared in this chapter. The perspectives of the interviewees will serve as examples and key results of the seven prominent themes found during the coding process. These themes emerged in the analysis of this research and serve as the read thread of this result section. This chapter consists of six themes that are grouped into three sections. Each section holds two themes that relate and complement each other. The first section holds the themes 'Location' and 'Gentrification' ; the second section provides insights to the themes 'Freelance culture' and 'Neoliberalism in the CCI'; and the last section consists of the themes 'Education in the arts' and 'Diversity, inclusivity and innovation'. The codebook can be found in the table assigned as appendix D, and includes the most important quotes of each theme, its cohering code and theme all together with their definitions.

4.2 IMPORTANCE OF PLACE

CCI'S are more often perceived as the solution to revive cities and regions extinguished by the decline of manufacturing. This strategy however most likely only favors places where creative industries are likely to grow and thrive, where the resources and investments are central which leads cultural policy making to metropoles, hence big cities within countries. Taking the Netherlands as an example, the primary ecosystem of the CCI is located in Amsterdam, however these secondary clusters of creativity can be found in Rotterdam, The Hague, Utrecht and Eindhoven for example as many established art and design academies are situated in these particular cities.

This evidently shows that being located in a specific city when one is aspiring a career in the CCI is crucial to the success one might book. Not only HEI's are situated here but the rest of the creative ecosystems and networks are anchored here. Throughout the ten conducted interviews it became clear that all creatives unanimously agreed upon the fact that Amsterdam provides the most important ecosystem of the CCI and the most fertile creative network within the Netherlands.

Some of them even think Amsterdam is one of the leading creative cities in Europe at the moment together with London and Paris. These local resources serve as opportunities and inspiration that can be transformed into economic benefits. This self-conscious commodification is essential to address the job insecurity within the creative industry (Banks et al., 2000; Oakley, 2013). Amongst the interviewed creatives that have participated in this research, 80% are originally from the city of Amsterdam itself, the other 20% come from either very small rural provinces within the Netherlands or from abroad. For the latter participants, a metropole such as Amsterdam are connotated with concepts of opportunities, success and career-making due to its resources and fertile creative clusters:

> "The guts that people here have, I just find that super inspiring. Every creative that I have met in Amsterdam is so aspirational, everyone really works to go towards their goals. I feel like in Friesland, life is a bit chosen for you. [...] Moving to Amsterdam and going to the film academy has given me so many opportunities and opened many doors for me that I think would not necessarily have been opened in Friesland." (Informant 3).

This quote supports the claims being made by Noonan in chapter 2.3 of this research. Here Nooan (2015), argues that *"the links between place and education are important and influential in the professionalization process, and that place can shape young people's opportunities for, and perception of, work in the creative industries."* (p.300). Young creative professionals that are based in big metropoles enjoy benefits in their professional career by having more job and network opportunities in the CCI's, which are most often located in big cities, which matches what informant 3 has stated in the quote above (Nooan, 2015).

Even native Amsterdam creative that have lived cities within the Netherlands as well as neighboring countries such as Belgium, where secondary clusters are situated, came to the conclusion that Amsterdam is a creative city with a rich creative ecosystem and booming network as it is super dense and concentrated and fairly active for such as small city:

> […]So yes, Ghent is a very nice city, but I realized how much more Amsterdam had to offer, specifically in the creative scene. I was so tired of the gentrification that was going on here in Amsterdam, and in many ways Amsterdam of course is a shitty city, but now that I have been away and am back, I came to realize that you have to take it for granted a bit. The thing I like about this city is the determination and strong will in taking risks and setting things up as young creatives. We are bold and I like that and also find that a very Amsterdam-ish characteristic haha!" (Informant 5).

The participants acknowledge the negative effects gentrification has on the city and them as creative workers within the CCI of Amsterdam. As mentioned earlier in chapter 2.3 that discussed the spatial development

of Amsterdam, neighborhoods that got greatly infected with the gentrification plague are De Pijp. Both informants quoted below are from this neighborhood and confirmed that many of their old original neighbors were obliged to move out of their house as they could not afford their living expenses anymore. This is an example of how gentrification negatively affects its surroundings and residents, pointed out too by Van de Kamp in the theoretical framework of this study. Nonetheless, the informants also express a sense of helplessness which makes as they cannot stop it and simultaneously feel like they (unwillingly) contribute to this problem:

> "Gentrification is here and I do not applaud it, but we are not the only city experiencing this. It is a worldwide recognized problem in metropoles and I cannot stop it by myself. Unless you are someone who is actively working on it and trying to change it on governmental level, I am sorry to say that it is something we have to deal with. and that is your job or you are taking action there. […] because we're all part of that too. It is a paradoxical phenomenon." (Informant 6).

> "Gentrification is complicated. I was born and raised here, in this neighborhood called De Pijp, one of the places that got extremely gentrified at the very beginning stages of gentrification in the city. But it is also a bit inevitable, life is one big movement and change will always be there. I used to have more of an Amsterdam arrogance that has been about it which has softened more as I feel powerless regarding changing or stopping it. I am not going to complain about it that much anymore, because it just is what it is. I can feel pretty bad about it sometimes, especially for all those people who have to leave town involuntarily due to high rent."(Informant 1).

The quotes mentioned above, adheres with the points being made in Noonan's (2015) research. Noonan (2015), argues that the association between cities and creativity is widely accepted, especially among policymakers (Banks et al., 2000; Bell & Jayne, 2010). Urban areas are often depicted as spaces that foster liberation, empowerment, creativity, and a culture that promotes individuality and risk-taking. Despite the presence of established local media, such as radio stations and newspapers, and a potentially less competitive job market in less urban areas, interviewees did not view these regions as conducive to creativity or viable for pursuing creative careers. Instead, they frequently described these areas as limiting, often referring to them as being in the "middle of nowhere."

The informants were each individually asked if they could point out the locations in the city of Amsterdam they experienced gentrification mostly. The map (figure 6) below shows these gentrified areas by the blue circles that are placed around them. What is remarkable in this mapping is that the gentrified locations that got appointed by the informants are situated more outside of the city center, proving the point that Peck (2011) has made gentrification socio-spatial polarization.
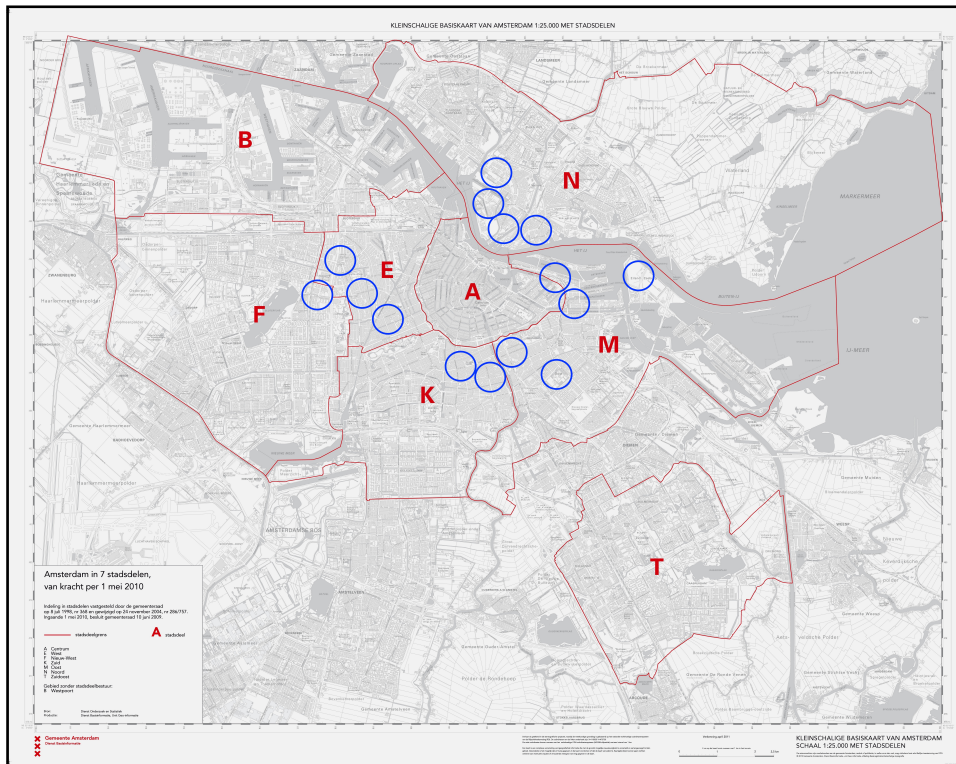
6. Gentrification mapping.

4.3 IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION IN ARTS AND DIVERSITY, INCLUSIVITY & INNOVATION

Many creative workers that are actively participating within CCI's have enjoyed and completed a suiting form of higher education (HE) previously to study and practice their craftsmanship or become knowledgeable enough to be able to flourish in their creative career. One of the key factors that decide whether or not an individual is going to succeed in its creative journey and career is having enjoyed HE in the arts, which is being treated in the Eikhof's (2017) first element and subsequently influences both the second and third element.

This reference serves as a theoretical guide for understanding the organizational dynamics that contribute to or hinder opportunity, and thus diversity and inclusivity, within the CCI for individuals who are aspiring to succeed in their careers. The following quote illustrates the importance of the investment of education for one of the informants, who has not only enjoyed HE in the arts in Amsterdam but trained to get into in to this HEI by going to a special film academy in Denmark to raise his odds to get into the program in the Netherlands a year later.

"I worked a whole gap year to be able to go to a private film academy in Denmark, before applying for the Dutch Film Academy in Amsterdam. I went there with the goal to learn and experiment as much as possible because that school was so rich in resources and their curriculum was so valuable, much more than what you normally would get at the film academy in Amsterdam. [...] Besides the fact that I made a lot of steps as a filmmaker, going to Denmark was a very good step for my personal development, because I was removed from my Amsterdam bubble." (Informant 4).

However, not all participants agreed on the fact that HE is the way to success when aspiring for a career in the CCI. Progressing in a creative career in the CCI is highly dependent on the actual work experience one assembles in the actual work field, according to informant 2:

"I just felt that there was something missing from that study, there was a huge lack of creativity because it was a university course. So, for my final year I decided to do an internship, one that was going to allow me to be physically and actively creative, for the pure reason to get into that practical creative direction a bit more." (Informant 2).

The quote refers back to the importance of having done creative internships, even though they are unpaid, as they act as a jumping board to a YP's way into the CCI. It generally provides YP's with a better chance of succeeding and progressing within their creative careers in the CCI, as claimed by Eikhof (2017) in chapter 2.1.2 of the theoretical framework.

The next quote by informant 5 however totally opposes what is being claimed by Allen and Hollingworth's (2013) study, stating that their participants mostly agreed on the idea that careers in the CCI require a university degree and/or relocation to big CCI hubs such as London:

"After two years I dropped out of Willem de Kooning Academie, as I felt suffocated in this stupid, elitist and commercial way of being educated. Reflecting on it now, I am glad I experienced higher art education, because I found out exactly what I did not want to do and because of that I am way better off by being an autonomous artist, doing my own thing. It is kind of reverse studying, but actually it worked out really well for me. Shortly afterwards, I also had the urge to prove myself by beginning my own business as a freelancer. I was like: 'Yes, stupid school, look, I can do that without you!'(Informant 5).

This quote shows how much the CCI got commodified, which is the result of neoliberal nature of the CCI that capitalizes on the art scene rather than fostering the creation of art for art's sake.

Generally, working-class youth are more likely to eliminate the option of pursuing a career in the CCI, as it has become evident from research that often do not feel represented within this industry (Allen and Hollingworth, 2013). According to Allen and Hollingworth (2013), the lack of (financial) resources restricts their involvement in cultural activities, which causes them to connote cultural production as an inappropriate or inaccessible way of making money later in their professional lives (Allen and Hollingworth, 2013). Additionally, the same study found that working-class parents actively dissuaded their children from pursuing what they perceived as unstable careers in the CCI. These perceptions lead young people to exclude themselves from potential CCI careers, often at an early stage in their lives, before further or higher education. Access to CCI-related education is also linked to social class. Participants in Allen and Hollingworth's (2013) study recognized that CCI careers typically require a university degree and/or relocation to major CCI hubs like London, both of which require financial resources they lack. In general, young individuals from working-class and ethnic minority backgrounds are significantly less inclined to aspire to careers in the CCI and are less likely to find themselves in situations where decisions regarding admission to degree programs or workforce participation, particularly unpaid work experience, are being made.

However, informant 9 addresses the following:

> "…There is a bigger group of people who are creatives that are not coming from art studies. I think now there are a lot of people that are starting creative businesses, starting brands, but also really leaning into that cultural field, not only on the very commercial side but also leaning into the cultural. That has grown, especially in some areas in Amsterdam, where there is now more space for that, I think. Or maybe the group of people claim that space, that is also possible. Maybe interesting as well for you to find out, if there is space being given by the municipality, or is it really people claiming their space and finding their roots/ways, outside the structure that's built as well?" (Informant 9).

This is an interesting observation, as the informant notices a completely different movement amongst YP's in Amsterdam when it comes to HE and aspiring a career within the CCI. This can be seen as a 'new-wave' movement amongst young creatives that could be more diverse and inclusive as they transcend the borders and systems of HEI and go off on their own, rebelling against the educational system. Historically, local art schools provided accessible pathways into the CCI for working-class individuals, but their integration into the broader higher education system has reduced local access to CCI-relevant education (Banks and Oakley, 2015).

4.4 DOES THE CITY INFLUENCE NEOLIBERALISM IN THE CCI

As a young professional who has been freelancing for the past three years, pursuing a rich career in the CCI in Amsterdam myself, I aim to research how the position of young professionals can be protected and benefitted in terms of getting higher up in the CCI of Amsterdam specifically. This section allows for an in-depth exploration of the current professional landscape in Amsterdam's cultural and creative industries, specifically focusing on high-level positions and the nature of the current CCI in the current neoliberal state of society nowadays, as discussed and supported by the critical reflections based on Peck (2011) in 2.1.3. The emphasis on understanding the factors that shape this climate and the desire to develop a model for increased representation of young professionals from diverse backgrounds demonstrates a clear intention to contribute to the industry's evolution.

The following quote of informant 2 exemplifies the precarity of being a creative worker and artist in the current state of Amsterdam's neoliberal CCI:

> "As I just launched my creative business in lenticular vinyl art, I still have to work a job in hospitality as a bartender, which I don't mind as I have been doing this with pleasure for years, even before starting my own creative business. However, this doesn't mean it isn't rough to work multiple jobs in order to develop into an established artist within the creative scene in Amsterdam. This takes time, hard work and devotion, which will make the victory even sweeter though!" (Informant 2).

This show refers to Campbell's (2018) research on the struggles that come with trying to make a career for oneself in the current CCI. This refers to the challenging nature of being a freelancer having to work a side job next to being a freelance artist as it can take a while before a freelance creative has secured enough jobs so that they can drop their side hustle and purely focus on being a creative freelancer.

Despite the fact that trying to make it in the CCI is paired with a lot of stress, uncertainties and hard unpaid labor in the form of internships, many YP's are still determined and keen on chasing after a creative career. The following quote of informant 6 displays the hardships that come with this and the resilience, devotion and hard work that was needed to progress within her fashion career.

> "When I moved to London Six years ago to do an internship at AW Anderson, I only had €1000 to my name and had to figure everything out as I went there, which meant at certain points I was sleeping on people's couches and having to work early morning shifts at a coffee bar in a tube station from 05:00 in the mornings till 09:00. Afterwards I would immediately take the tube to my internship and work my ass off haha. Looking back at it, this was crazy but it did get me to where I am

today. I understand it is not for everyone as I felt like I was an alien at times haha." (Informant 6).

This proves that the life and practice of an artist cannot be compared with the romanticized version of the 'bohemian artist', as referred to by Cnossen (2018) and Eikhof (2017). Sleeping on people's couches and working multiple jobs to maintain multiple prestigious internships at London's biggest fashion designers, is not to be seen from the rose-colored glasses that typifies the bohemian artist and lifestyle.

Furthermore, the clustering of the creative class is confirmed by the following statement being made by informant 1:

> "Yes, it is indeed very much a bubble. Almost all my friends somehow work in the creative scene. I find it funny, because I really don't consider myself and them as the 'elite', despite that stigma surrounding the creative scene. I do understand why people would think that, because it can look that way from the outside as artists and creative professions get romanticized. It's a matter of perspective after all." (Informant 1).

This quote supports the prevalence of networking amongst artists within CCIs, a characteristic that prominently belongs to the neoliberal CCI based in big creative cities such as Amsterdam in this case. This too became evident in previous studies, referring to Eikhof (2017), Campbell (2018), and Cnossen et al (2019).

The built-up pressure and difficulties that come with being a freelance creative worker or artist and working towards a fruitful and progressive career pathway, can also harshly take its toll on an individual's mental health and productivity. Informant 1 shares his experience of losing his best friend, who was also an artist and part of Amsterdam's CCI:

> […] All the ambitions I have come with a price though: all the pressure I put on myself to perform because I want to fulfill them all. But the death of my best friend, who unfortunately chose to end his life himself, an extraordinary artist who also felt the pressure, puts everything more in perspective for me now." (Informant 1).

This illustrates one of the challenges and tragic outcomes of the situations being created by the overly-commodified and therefore neoliberal nature of today's CCI. The pressure to perform, create and be productive is out of balance due to the money-making aspect and highly competitive environment creative workers in Amsterdam are surrounded by in their everyday life. The added stress of increasing housing prices and other costs of living negatively impact this even more as proven in other studies which have been referred to in the chapter 2.3 of the theoretical framework by Pearman II (2018) and Van de Kamp (2021).

Closing of this section with a statement being made by informant 4:

> "There are people with a lot of talent who can't sell themselves well and they end up kicking it less far than people with less talent who on the contrary can sell themselves well. A lot of people want to work in the creative: shooting campaigns and music videos etcetera, however people forget no one is going to knock on your door to hand you these jobs. You really have to put yourself out there and actively try to get yourself jobs as the competition is brutal. There is no time and space to be shy in this industry, eat or be eaten!" (Informant 4).

This quote depicts the brutally competitive and stressful environment which is at the core aspiring a successful career pathway in the CCI, making "unfair" not inclusive at most of the times, proving the points being made by Campbell's research (2018) mentioned in chapter 2.1.3.

4.5 CULTURAL POLICY: THERE TO HELP OR NOT?

The informants have expressed many concerns regarding the current landscape of cultural policy of the Netherlands, including the arts and culture policies specifically made for the city of Amsterdam by their municipality. The informants stated that there are multiple factors that influence the opportunities and possibilities for YP's to achieve sustainable career progression within a hyper neoliberal city such as Amsterdam. The key factors pointed out by the informants are cultural policy, education systems and funding organizations. The latter two mentioned factors are inherently part of cultural policy as they are both adopted in the Arts Plans of Amsterdam. This can be traced back in chapters 2.2.2 through 2.2.4, in which a thorough examination of these arts and culture policies developed for the city of Amsterdam are provided. The common conception that is shared by the informants is that the current arts policies do not support and encourage YP's to partake in the CCI due to empty promises, claiming to want to change, diversify and help individual makers by providing them affordable places to create art and live is something else than actively taking the steps to do so.

According to informant 8, who has been an active located in Amsterdam for over 40 years now artist in the city are in need of the following:

> There's a need for spaces where you can just mess around and let things get dirty and I think the municipality can help with that, because there are plenty of empty buildings. Of course, it's great for housing, but you can't squat anymore these days. There are those affordable anti-squat places, just put more artists in them. [...] You could also bring back the BKR scheme, where artists received a fixed amount

of money and with that they had to submit approximately 20 works per year. Those works would be displayed in hospitals, for example. - (Informant 8).

This connects to the broedplaatsen arrangement that are being offered by the municipality of Amsterdam, providing temporary useless or empty spaces to be lent to artists as workspaces and event locations. Bringing back the BKR scheme, is recommendation given by the informant to foster and encourage the creation of art for art's sake, making the CCI less commodified. This brings us to the next statement being made by informant 8, going against the bureaucratic and hierarchical system of arts and culture policies and arts funding institutions that are directed by the government:

"Art shouldn't be dictated by institutions with money. There shouldn't be rules that determine and direct things. It's somewhat inherent to artists; they sometimes need to break things open themselves. [...] It really has to come from the young artists, who need to break things open and fight against the commodifying cultural policies. I just hope there are people in power around them who observe artists' needs and try to do something about it. However, creatives should not wait and rely on those institutions to do something, in the meantime go and do whatever you can on your own." (Informant 8).

What comes clear from this quote is the lack of trust in cultural policies and governmental agents as whole, the informants seem to feel like the policy is holding creative workers and artists back by the commodifying nature of its policies. This refers back to the theoretical framework chapters 2.2.2-2.2.4. According to both arts policy plans of Amsterdam (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2020; Gemeente Amsterdam, 2023) the CCI is an industry that greatly contributes to the Dutch economy of which the ecosystems are mostly situated.

When asked what other potential solutions there could be to other solutions to support the ability of YP's to achieve sustainable career progression within a hyper neoliberal city such as Amsterdam, and to foster greater representation of young professionals from diverse age and ethnic backgrounds who hold high-level positions, informant 9 proposed the following two things:

"Mentorship is a big one but I'm also a fan of setting quotas. I think this is the starting point, despite it surrounding the big discussion point of harboring "quality": Who the hell decides on quality? That is still that elite upper layer that is all white, so that is not something we can depend on right now and of course that is going to be harsh for a couple of years, you know? [...] England is a big example of setting quota, showing that it works. Policymakers and the CCI as a whole have to see the bigger picture. I do understand the debate and the critical views on quota, but I still think we need to try it because nothing is going to change if no actions are taken to see what could potentially work. If we change how we look at the world this might be a good starting point" (Informant 9).

To add to that, informant 9 pointed out that policy around arts education must be seriously taken into account for a change as HE in arts seems to be less inclusive, diverse and accessible than as it is stated to be in policies.

> "This is also, you know, part of the system. How we have set up our education system, of course, is also a part of the mindset that not everything is for everyone. And that is why it is nice to start with changing the educational system, art and art education should be accessible to everybody but we have to switch up the education systems as well as they are not for everybody. I do think higher education institutions feel that they are not reaching out and not providing for everybody." (Informant 9).

This quote compliments Eikhof's (2017) research mentioned as the foundation of the theoretical framework of this study. Informant 9 proves that changes have to be made in terms of the accessibility to HE in the arts in order to be able to generate and foster a greater representation of young professionals from diverse age and ethnic backgrounds who hold high-level positions. Cultural policy holds the overarching sets of principles responsible for this matter, meaning that cultural policymakers should take a serious look at as the importance of diversity and inclusivity is so frequently stated within both treated Arts Plans in the theoretical framework. Accessibility to higher arts education is the root of the problem, fighting inclusivity and diversity as paradoxical as this may seem.

Informant 7 inarguably agrees with Eikhof (2017) and the previous quote of informant 9 mentioned above:

> "I also think the influx of arts students is not being actively addressed by policies, the access to academies or universities is not at the right level. It is expensive, and it is difficult to live in a big city where many universities and academies are located if you don't have financial support, connections, or a cultural background that encourages following in their footsteps. The distance to participate in the CCI then becomes greater. There should be extra incentives from policymakers because ultimately, you want an influx of people that reflects the broad spectrum of society. Additionally, I believe there is a lot of gatekeeping if you keep your teaching staff very homogeneous and are not consciously addressing access to education in this way. Even confirming the fact that there is a difference between individuals accessibility to arts education. We all need to acknowledge this and take the experiences of people in this context seriously." - (Informant 7).

What this data adds to the point being made by informant 9, is the high costs of living of the places where HEI are typically situated. These institutions all cluster and gather in big cities, supporting the claims being made by florida (2002a), Eikhof (2017) and Campbell (2018) in chapters 2.1.2 and 2.1.3.

In the quote that follows, informant 7 expresses her recommendation to improve the representation of young professionals from diverse age and ethnic backgrounds who hold high-level positions and achieve sustainable career progression within Amsterdam's CCI.

> "I think there are many people in protected positions, which hinders flow and progress, but these protected positions are also maintained by policy. This policy sustains a certain status quo that obstructs development and real diversity both in front of and behind the scenes. I think people are somehow afraid of change because it involves making space for someone else and thereby giving something up. We should rather be looking at how we can both protect people's current job positions and ensure a more interesting, better representation of society as it truly is. Sometimes, things are simply out of balance and need to be brought back into balance   or into balance for the first time if they never have been. I am convinced this would only benefit the CCI and its workers." (Informant 7).

The next chapter will provide recommendations in relation to what has been discussed in the findings andhe results of this study delving into their meaning, importance, and relevance. The discussion chapter explains and evaluates what became evident from the findings conducted through the interview and reflects on how they relate to the literature review provided in the theoretical framework (chapter 2-2.4).

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

It can be argued that multiple factors are deemed to be responsible for influencing the ability of YP'S from diverse age and ethnic backgrounds to achieve sustainable career progression within a hyper neoliberal city such as Amsterdam. Pointing to the main factors addressed by previous studies data retrieved from the conducted interviews with the participants, HE systems, the emphasis on commerciality of the CCI within cultural policies fitting the current neoliberal state of Amsterdam and the lack of inclusivity and diversity caused by unaffordable cost of living crisis in the city of Amsterdam, are frequently touched topics of conversation.

This research has revealed that more young creatives are appalled by the HEI that educate on art and came to the conclusion that in order to survive and thrive in the creative industries they should go off on their own business venture, underlining the importance of needing to have a good network within the city to be able to become successful. To stimulate and foster a greater representation of YP's from diverse age and ethnic backgrounds in Amsterdam's CCI, policy makers should plead for a change in HEI and its systems to be more accessible for everyone instead of being exclusive to individuals descending from a privileged socio-economic background. Due to gentrification, choosing to study art and aspire a career in the CCI becomes hardly available for less-privileged individuals. It seems like being an artist has become a rich kids sport, which to me, goes against everything the arts and cultural sector stands for, backed up by the inclusivity claims being made by the Gemeente Amsterdam (2020; 2023), in their Arts Plans for the upcoming years. Art is and should be from and for everyone.

On the contrary, Dutch cultural arts policies have adopted the creative class concept of Florida (2002a), which commodifies the CCI resulting in the neoliberal nature of the CCI that capitalizes on the art scene rather than fostering the creation of art for art's sake. This harms the CCI and its creative workers that work for cultural institutions that are reliant on subsidies for their existence. This study revealed that it is easier for young creative professionals to reach a high-level position in the commercial creative industry than it is to reach such a high-level position within the non-commercial side of the industry, working for cultural institutions such as museums and foundations. This is the case because cultural institutions are dependent on funding propelled by the government and other funding institutions. To this day, the system of cultural institutions is still controlled by a conservative way of doing things, which has old, white and established people in power who put their trust in other established people of power as this gives them a feeling of security and simultaneously protects their high positions. A point which is made in the results section in chapter 4.5 by informant 7. These cultural institutions feel the urgency of change in terms of inclusivity and diversity, as they are inclined to do so by the Arts Plan 2021-2024 and Arts Plan 2025-2028 (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2020). This also involves giving YP's a chance to lead and progress in their functions and careers within cultural institutions. However, this will be a slow change due to the political arts policy and

immemorial power hierarchy that is tied to it. Further research should therefore focus on what has to be done on governmental and political level to enhance this process and make it less dependent on hierarchical difficulties. Besides the ever important and emphasized need for inclusivity and diversity in the Arts Plans. The new plan of 2025-2029 added the importance of a safe sector to work in and the further implementation of the Fair Practice Code which strives for well-handled employment practices such as fair pay for creative workers (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2024). Nonetheless, a policy with empty promises or mere wishes to take actions but not actually practicing them is not going to do anything for YP's and the whole CCI in general.

Another important finding that has to be taken into account is that the higher art education institutions are more often than not located in big cities where the rent is high due to gentrification of which the capitalized CCI is an exorbitant contributor. This causes to far more narrow the opportunities individuals have to get into the arts. This gentrification is partially kept alive by the development of the broedplaatsen (breedingplaces) which is a practice adopted in Dutch arts and cultural policy. Due to their contemporary nature, broedplaatsen serving as work, living and event spaces for artists and cultural makers only further gentrify the city as these cultural centers that add value to neighborhoods in Amsterdam move from one place to another. Instead, there should be more fixed spaces and buildings with affordable rent such as the Tetterode in Amsterdam located Oud-West, squatted in the late 1980's, beginning 1990's.

In order to increase the chances to succeed and progress in their creative career pathways, various researches including this one, have confirmed that YP's believe that moving to metropoles such as Amsterdam, London and Paris is a must, as that is where the creative ecosystems are located. People who are from the city already and aspire to a career in the creative industry might have some advantages such as not having to worry about housing, having built their network in the city for a longer time and being more familiar with what is available in the city. However, the key to success lies in the network that you built by surrounding yourself with the right people is something that has made clear by the informants in the results section. The urgency to actively look for opportunities and take initiative as a freelance creative YP in CCI has been emphasized by multiple different informants, as there is great competition in this working field. As a young professional, freelancing has its advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, it brings a lot of freedom in the sense of picking and choosing which projects you would like to work on and when. On the other hand, it also comes with a lot of stress, pressure and uncertainty as the CCI is an unpredictable industry to work in as it is the sector that gets most affected by a crisis or any sort of economic downfall or drought. As freelancers are more often than not dependent on project-based work, there are some periods in which there are a lot of work opportunities and sometimes there are periods when there is barely any money to make which causes a lot of young creatives to have multiple jobs, which is mostly in hospitality when examining the conducted interviews. However, when you choose your side job in hospitality wisely, a big advantage can be building a valuable network that you can use to reel in more (freelance) jobs in the creative scene. This aligns with what is being stated in the interviews by most informants.

Exploring the influence different factors such as location, higher education and arts and culture policies have on the the ability of YP's to achieve sustainable career progression within a hyper neoliberal city such as Amsterdam, along with its impact on the development of greater representation of young professionals from diverse age and ethnic backgrounds in Amsterdan's CCI, will contribute a clearer understanding of what can be done in terms of adapting existing policies and initiatives on governmental level to support these YP's. The outcomes of this research will not solely have implications for YP's and policymakers, but also for HEI, commercial and non-commercial work companies and organizations that are part of the bigger scope of the CCI.

Despite its contributions, the study contains several limitations. The small sample size of ten interviewees limits the generalizability of the findings. The focus on Amsterdam's CCI means the results may not be fully applicable to other cities with different cultural and economic contexts. Additionally, the qualitative nature of the research, while providing in-depth insights, lacks the quantitative data that could support broader generalizations.

The findings suggest several areas for future research to build upon. Comparative studies between Amsterdam and other cities with different cultural and economic landscapes could help understand how varying contexts influence career progression and diversity in the CCI. Evaluating the effectiveness of recently implemented policies in Amsterdam, such as the 2025-2028 arts plan, in promoting diversity and inclusion within the CCI, would provide valuable feedback for policymakers.

6. CONCLUSION

This thesis underpins the importance of fostering an inclusive environment within Amsterdam's CCI, advocating for policies that support the diverse needs of young creative professionals and contribute to the broader discourse on diversity and inclusion in creative industries globally. At the core of this research is the exploration of sustainable career progression of young professionals within Amsterdam's Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI), focusing on how diversity among high-level positions can be fostered in a hyper-neoliberal environment. The goal was to uncover the challenges faced by young professionals in the CCI, such as limited access to opportunities and a highly competitive environment.

By emphasizing the potential of the young generation to drive innovation and change within cultural organizations, the study advocates for transformative policies that ensure their inclusion and advancement within the industry. This research aimed to explore the actions that could be taken to foster greater representation of young professionals from diverse age and ethnic backgrounds achieving career progression within a hyper neoliberal city such as Amsterdam and eventually gold high-level positions within their creative career. Based on qualitative thematic analysis of experiences and perspectives shared by the ten informants and prior studies employed around topics that are familiar to and cohere with this study, it can be concluded that the key factors influencing the ability to achieve sustainable career progression within a hyper neoliberal city such as Amsterdam are: (1) the cost of living crisis created and enforced by gentrification, (2) the lack of diverse and inclusive representation of people in high-level positions, and (3) the discrepancy between arts and cultural policies and its actual proven actions to foster greater representation of young professionals from diverse age and ethnic backgrounds who hold high-level positions. The root of the problem here is the inaccessibility of higher arts education for everyone, referring to individuals with a less privileged socio-economic background with foreign backgrounds.

The research contributes significantly to the field by addressing the underexplored issues of diversity and sustainable career advancement in Amsterdam's CCI. By developing a comprehensive theoretical framework that includes cultural policies, industry dynamics, and the socio-economic landscape of Amsterdam, the study sheds light on how neoliberal policies and gentrification impact young creative professionals. It emphasizes the importance of inclusive policies that support individuals from diverse backgrounds, highlighting how factors such as race, gender, and socio-economic status crucially influence career progression within the CCI.

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FIGURES

Figure 1: DutchCulture and Gemeente Amsterdam (2024), *Mapping Amsterdam: Internationale culturele activiteiten in 2019 en 2022* [JPEG]. Bijlagen hoofdlijnen kunstenplan 2025-2028. bijlagen (PDF, 2,1 MB).

Figure 2: Gemeente Amsterdam (2022), Culturele en creatieve sector in Groot-Amsterdam, [JPEG]. Onderzoek en Statistiek Gemeente Amsterdam.

Figure 3: Gemeente Amsterdam (2024), *Hoofdlijnen Kunstenplan 2025-2028.* Hoofdlijnen Kunstenplan 2025-2028 (PDF, 1 MB).

Figure 4: Gemeente Amsterdam (2024), *Hoofdlijnen Kunstenplan 2025-2028.* Hoofdlijnen Kunstenplan 2025-2028 (PDF, 1 MB).

Figure 5: [Photograph of Tetterode building complex between the Bilderdijkstraat and the Da Costa kade in the 1960's]. Retrieved June 7, 2024, from https://www.wwpt.nl/woon-werk/

Figure 6: Stadsarchief Amsterdam (z.d.) , *Kleinschalige basiskaart van Amsterdam 1:25.000 met stadsdelen*. https://www.amsterdam.nl/kunst-cultuur/hoofdlijnen-kunstenplan/.