

Intrinsic motivation vs. monetary incentives

What factors ensure that corporations and artists benefit mutually from their collaborations?

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Abstract

This thesis explores the dynamics of a collaboration between an artist and a corporation. The aim is to understand how both parties can mutually benefit from these collaborations. While the existing literature has addressed the motivations from corporations, such as branding, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), or innovation, and also focused on the cultural value of the artistic input, it largely neglects to research the experiences and intrinsic motivation of the artists.

Through a qualitative approach, based on ten in-depth semi-structured interviews with participants from both the artistic and corporate worlds, this study researches the motivations, expectations, and outcomes of these collaborations.

The findings of this research reveal a significant tension between artistic autonomy and the interests of the corporation, especially around the commodification of art and the preservation of the artist's intrinsic motivation. Even though corporations mention artistic freedom as important, in reality, corporations focus more on the priorities of their business, which can potentially lead to crowding-out of the creative motivation of the artist. Retrospectively, artists value collaborations for the visibility and engagement with their audience, but only when the collaboration aligns with their vision and values.

The study concludes that a successful and meaningful collaboration, especially if it is mutually beneficial, depends on a balance. This balance needs to be focused on the commercial and creative objectives, between formal agreements and mutual trust, and individual and shared values. This thesis then offers practical implications for both sectors that can contribute to the ongoing academic discourse in cultural economics, with a particular focus on valuation, accessibility, and the ever-evolving role of corporations as cultural actors.

Keywords: mutual collaboration, artists, businesses, crowding-in vs. crowding-out, valuation

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1. Introduction

Collaboration has been integral to artistic practices (Becker, 1982). From a partnership with a manufacturer of materials to engaging with the “outside world”, namely the corporations, artists have long been navigating their external relationships to support and distribute their work. The recent years have seen an expansion within such partnerships, where not only fashion houses, but also less “creative” corporations seek to collaborate with artists as part of their branding, corporate culture, or social responsibility strategies. Examples of such collaborations include Absolut Vodka and its bottle design, which was created in collaboration with artist Rafael Grampá. The company BMW built its cultural engagement strategies by promoting the so-called BMW Art Car in collaborations with Andy Warhol and David Hockney. Such initiatives as these examples highlight how corporations increasingly engage with art to signal innovation towards their employees and clients, and deepen the engagement with their public (Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2008; J. E. Schroeder, 2005).

The involvement of the arts in corporations is a key strategy for enhancing brand identity, supporting artistic communities, and engaging the public with culture (J. E. Schroeder, 2010). Corporate art collections, artist collaborations, and sponsorships provide opportunities for these initiatives to foster innovation and accessibility in the art sector (Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2008). However, the existing literature also warns of risks: collaborations might prioritize investment value or branding over cultural enrichment and artistic autonomy. With this, they are commodifying art and limiting its potential (Baudrillard, 1972; Bourdieu, 2006). Even though these partnerships seem reciprocal on a surface level, a closer analysis shows that artists often deal with a disproportionate burden, such as compromising their intrinsic motivation, which is the foundation of creative integrity (Frey, 1997; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

This research will respond to that tension by turning the attention not to the end result, but to the **process** of collaboration between a corporation and an artist. It aims to identify the values that both parties bring into the collaboration, the dynamics that influence the **motivation** and **authorship**, and the conditions that make a collaboration **mutually beneficial**. By doing so, this will contribute to the growing body of work in **cultural economics** and **cross-sector collaboration**, with a specific focus on the interplay between economic logic and artistic logic (Eikhof & Haunschild, 2007).

The existing research shows the economic benefits for corporations and, sometimes, the artist (Dell’era, 2010; Potts, 2019). Another point that existing research stresses is the outcome of the collaboration and the impact of that collaboration on consumers (Luukkanen-Hirvikoski, 2021). However, there is less focus on how the collaboration is **structured**, how

both parties **negotiate** their values, and how the **creative autonomy** of an artist is supported or undermined. A significant problem when examining **mutually beneficial collaborations** is how the **valuation of art** is determined and how **the intrinsic motivation** of artists is influenced by such cross-sector collaborations. Being part of the cultural economic discourse, this ongoing debate on **how art is valued (Dekker, 2015)** and **the crowding-in and crowding-out** of intrinsic artists' motivation (Frey, 1997; Klamer, 1997; Petrova, 2020) remains understudied within a broader context. Acknowledging this, **this research aims to contribute to the discussion of the value of art, especially in the context of collaborations between corporations and artists.** Moreover, this research aims to contribute to a mutual collaboration between artists and organizations, creating a balance between their values. For corporations, this can ensure that by building corporate collections and displaying the artwork in their office, they do not solely focus on the commercial value of the artworks. For artists, this can enable them to stay open for co-curation of their own works.

This research originated from my first Master's thesis, in which I researched the effects of exposure to artworks in the workplace on employees' creativity. The results of this research showed that the employees produced significantly more creative ideas when artwork was present, particularly when the art came from an unknown artist compared to a well-known artist. These findings align with literature suggesting that the physical environment, such as using visual stimuli such as art, can influence creativity and divergent thinking (Dul & Ceylan, 2011; Shalley & Gilson, 2004). Moreover, artworks can create emotional and cognitive responses that, in turn, can inspire novel ideas (Antal & Strauß, 2013; Eriksson, 2009). These findings suggest that art in the workplace not only inspires aesthetic or symbolic experiences but can also be used as a practical tool to enhance innovation and the performance of employees (Katz-Buonincontro, 2008; van den Broeck et al., 2008). However, in spite of the increasing presence of art within the corporate environment, many corporate art collections have continually focused on **prestige, investment value, or brand positioning** over meaningful engagement with artists or employees (Antal & Strauß, 2013). While such collections can serve as an external image goal, the corporations often overlook the potential of a **genuine collaboration** between the corporation and the artist. This study is inspired by that tension between the corporation and the artist. Rather than focusing on the **outcome** of the corporate collections, this research turns the attention to the **process** of the collaboration itself. It will ask the questions: *What factors ensure that corporations and artist benefit mutually from their collaborations? What enables artists to stay truthful to their intrinsic motivation, and what do corporations expect in return?* To start with, the research addresses a gap within the existing

literature, where the main focus has been on the strategic use of art by corporations, and less on the mutual dynamics, values, and conditions that shape these cross-sector partnerships. The goal of this is to get an understanding of how these collaborations work in practice and how they can become truly **beneficial to both parties**.

My previous experience with the topic has inspired me to continue my inquiry within the context of cultural economics. That is how I arrived at my research question after conducting a deeper examination of collaboration in the art and corporate worlds. While many collaborations seem to be mutual on the surface, a closer examination reveals that the artist is often at risk for compromising their **intrinsic motivation**, especially when external commercial expectations begin to have a say in the creative process (Eikhof & Haunschild, 2007; Frey, 1997; Petrova, 2020). This is a dynamic that has been captured in Frey's (1997) crowding-out theory and is supported by research on the artistic labor within commercial contexts (Eikhof & Haunschild, 2007; Petrova, 2020). Therefore, it is essential to examine the various types of collaborations and how artists can maintain their integrity while also engaging with diverse financial opportunities. Engaging in various financial opportunities increases their audience and potentially secures financial sponsorship to expand their artistic portfolio. Within the discourse of cultural economics, the artist-corporate collaborations offer insights into how the **market value interacts with cultural and symbolic capital**, shaping not only the economic outcomes but also **social identity and innovation** (Bourdieu, 2006; Klammer, 1997; Throsby, 2000).

This research argues that different motivations drive corporations to build and expose art collections. To analyze this, it is essential to distinguish between a monetary incentive as a gift, an entitlement, or compensation for the artist's work (Zelizer, 1998). This research will further the discussion about what conditions make a collaboration mutual for all parties or when it is solely instrumental. Based on the analysis, this research aims to contribute to the field of **cultural economics and cross-sector collaboration studies** by suggesting how artists' cultural value and their intrinsic motivation can be acknowledged and protected within corporate partnerships. Additionally, it provides practical insights for both artists and corporations. For the artists, it will explore what conditions allow them to **maintain their creative autonomy and artistic identity**. For corporations, it will give insights as to what is required to build mutual collaborations that will go beyond aesthetic value or branding objectives.

To get a grasp on this problem, I have developed the following research question:
What factors ensure that corporations and artists benefit mutually from their collaborations?

I have also developed three sub-questions to answer this research question. These three sub-questions should help answer the more significant research question: *How do these partnerships impact artists' motivation? What enables artists to stay close to their intrinsic motivation? What are the key motivations and expected outcomes for corporations engaging in art-related collaborations?*

This research will use a qualitative approach to provide a clear and concise answer to this question. Ten in-depth interviews were held with people from both the business and artistic worlds. The individuals who will be interviewed from both sides will include executives, such as brand directors, artists involved in the collaboration, and curators and gallery owners as representatives of cultural institutions.

Firstly, this thesis will proceed with the literature review on the subject. This will touch upon different aspects such as collaboration, crowding-in and crowding-out of artists' motivation, the gift economy, the valuation of art, and corporate branding. Next, the methodology for this study will be explained, along with the choices made to conduct this research. The results are retrieved and analyzed using this methodology and compared to the theoretical framework and the presented literature. Finally, I will present the answer to the research question and the sub-questions, along with the conclusions drawn from this research and the implications for future research.

2. Theoretical framework

The following chapter will provide an interdisciplinary literature review on the topics of collaborations and valuation of the arts within the cultural economics perspective. Using this as the basis of the thesis, the theoretical framework will offer a strong foundation. First, the theoretical framework will start with the corporate collections, **why corporations engage in these collaborations, and what benefits they experience. After that, the corporate identity and its branding will be explored.** Then, the **artist's motivation and the benefits** from the collaboration will be presented, as well as the **values of the arts**. Finally, the conceptualization of the **gift economy** will be explored to understand the interest between the arts and corporate sector collaboration.

2.1 Corporate collections

Collaboration and cooperation are important notions for this thesis and the art world. Becker (1982) argued that the creation of cultural goods is collective, meaning that it does not depend solely on the artist but on a network of individuals, including technicians, institutions, curators, and patrons. This underscores that art does not and cannot exist in isolation, but that it is embedded within a system of institutional and social interdependencies (Becker, 1982).

Reciprocity becomes a crucial component for a functional and sustainable partnership within this collaborative framework. The notion of reciprocity involves more than a transactional exchange; it is also a form of pro-social behaviour which is based on mutual trust, fairness, and shared expectations (Gray, 2009). In a successful collaboration, especially in cross-sectoral ones, reciprocity ensures that each party contributes meaningfully and is appropriately valued. Participants are aware of the risk of “free riders” and know how to deal with such situations (Gray, 2009).

Over the recent decades, collaboration between the **corporate sector** and the **artistic world** has gained attention, especially through **corporate art collections**, branded partnerships, or artist commissions. Such collaborations can attend to mutual interests. For the corporation, engaging with the arts can support their **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)** strategies, promote **innovation and employee engagement**, and enhance **brand identity** (O'Reilly, 2005). For the artists, the partnership can provide financial support, visibility, and an expanded audience (Boorsma & Chiaravalloti, 2010).

However, such cross-sector collaborations are non-traditional and structured in a complex manner, as they need to bridge two worlds governed by fundamentally different value systems and logics. On one hand, there is the **artistic logic** that tends to emphasize **creativity, autonomy, authenticity, and symbolic meaning**. On the other hand, there is the **economic logic** of corporations, which highlights the importance of **return on investment, reputation, efficiency, and strategic alignment**. These opposing logics often clash in practice, which can make a collaboration between an artist and a corporation fragile and prone to misalignment (Eikhof & Haunschild, 2007).

Such tensions become apparent within corporate collections, as these are often positioned at the intersection of **strategic branding** and **aesthetic appreciation**. Organizations may adopt art as a tool for cultural signaling and differentiation, without understanding the creative autonomy and values of the artist. Then the challenge becomes to create conditions in which both parties can mutually benefit. This would mean a situation in which the collaboration

would not lead to the instrumentalization of art or the crowding-out of the artist's intrinsic motivation (Frey, 1997; Petrova, 2020).

2.2 Innovation through cross-sector collaboration

In collaboration with artistic institutions, corporations can generate value by combining diverse skills and perspectives according to the **innovation commons** (Potts, 2019). This term refers to the system that is set for rules, which **facilitate cooperation**, and they must be organized and incentivized by an institution that enables a **platform** for pooling a set of ideas and resources (Potts, 2019). For collaboration, this can then be seen as an ideal space, as the innovation originates from human creativity, which in turn is able to create value. However, it needs to be economically sustained. As the art market is seen to be all about money, value, and investment, artists are working on selling their images. This means that art has become an emerging asset class (Clayton, 2004). Therefore, it can be helpful for corporations to utilize the specific knowledge from artists for branding or value creation (J. E. Schroeder, 2005). These collaborations will create a shared space for businesses and artistic institutions to exchange knowledge and specific expertise (Potts, 2019). This, in turn, can lead to **novel ideas** and processes that neither party could have conceived on their own. In other words, cultural institutions can gain resources, while businesses can integrate creativity, allowing for innovation in both parties (Baumgarth, 2018).

On the one hand, businesses can benefit from **the unconventional new approaches** that artists bring to ideation and innovation. On the other hand, artistic or cultural institutions can benefit from such partnerships by gaining access to **funding and expertise**, such as marketing. This mutual benefit benefits both parties and contributes to their societal relevance. Moreover, the previously mentioned benefits have one significant outcome: **cognitive diversity**, a process in which different ways of thinking, creating, and problem-solving are used (Page, 2008). In addition, hybrid solutions are often made through joint projects that combine artistic ingenuity with commercial feasibility (Antal & Strauß, 2013).

2.3 Corporate identity and branding

The use of art to gain an advantage in **branding** is increasingly recognized. Art can shape a **corporate identity** and form a more meaningful connection with different stakeholders (Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2008).

Art is used particularly to **signal innovation**, which positions the corporation as culturally aware and forward-thinking. A collaboration with unconventional artists allows a brand to communicate that it values openness, creativity, and originality. These qualities resonate within today's economy, where differentiation is key. This can then enhance customer engagement and employee creativity by developing a unique brand experience that resonates on a personal level (Baumgarth, 2018). When a corporation partners with a well-curated artistic entity, it reflects a **commitment to authenticity**, which is highly valued in the current world, where skepticism is taking the lead.

Within this context, brand authenticity refers to the perception that a brand stays true to its values, that they are consistent with these in its actions, and that it is connected to social or cultural meaning (Beverland, 2005). Instead of using art solely as decoration, a corporation can utilize it to express its values and identity. This can transform a collaboration from a visual marketing tool into narrating the brand's cultural positioning.

Furthermore, integrating art into organizations can increase employees' creativity and, therefore, increase innovation within the company (Amabile et al., 1996; Kristensen, 2004; Woodman et al., 1993). The two categories of the environment in which employees perform their jobs are physical and social-organizational, with the first category being tangible aspects, such as windows, plants, or colors (Dul et al., 2011). This category can, in turn, be divided into three elements, namely architectural, ambient, and interior design (Harris et al., 2002). Interior design encompasses everything from furniture to color, what is displayed in the room, or what is hung on the wall, namely artworks. This has also been researched with several art programs in the workplace to give employees a better understanding of innovation (Antal & Strauß, 2013).

2.4 Cultural value, artistic motivation, and commodification:

Art has a **cultural value** that can be seen as **multi-dimensional** and has many elements within the concept that cannot be expressed according to a quantitative or qualitative scale (Throsby, 2000). Consequently, it differs from the economic value of cultural goods and may include **aesthetic, authenticity, symbolic, spiritual, historical, and social dimensions**. Another perspective on cultural value is provided by Klammer (2004), who stated that cultural values relate to "a source of inspiration or symbols of distinction" (p. 138). Respectively, he makes a distinction between social and cultural values.

As earlier pointed in this thesis, a critical tension within artist-corporate collaboration lies within the relation between artistic autonomy and the commodification of art. Art is seen as a commodity, subject to **market forces** and **consumers' behaviour** (Caves, 2002; Jensen, 1996; J. Schroeder, 2000; Sturken & Cartwright, 2001; Watson, 1992; Witkowski, 1996). **Commodification** is a concern frequently raised when corporations are involved in the arts, as the artistic value is seen to be reduced to its market value (Baudrillard, 1972).

Looking at this concerning monetary influences of payments, there is a distinguishment between crowding-in, desirable effects, and crowding-out, undesirable effects on intrinsic motivation (Frey, 1997). This theory of Frey (1997), namely the “**crowding theory**,” shows an understanding of the artists’ creativity and a need for a balance between the intrinsic motivation of an artist and the external interventions, such as monetary payments or valuations. **Intrinsic motivation** is a motivation that refers to performing an action because it is inherently interesting or enjoyable for the individual (Ryan & Deci, 2000). When referring to **extrinsic motivation**, it is focused on performing an action because it will lead to a separable outcome, meaning it depends on an external reward (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The **crowding-in** occurs when the **cultural** as well as **other non-economic values** of an activity are influenced positively by **a financial transaction** (Petrova, 2020). Conversely, **crowding-out** occurs when the previously mentioned values are **diminished** (Petrova, 2020). Moreover, art usually serves the function of holding up a mirror to society, prompting people to start asking questions, while also being aesthetically pleasing and evoking a response from the beholder of the artwork (Klamer, 1997). Therefore, it can be said that the involvement of corporations can undermine or crowd out these values by commodifying the process and the finalized product (Baudrillard, 1972; Velthuis, 2013). In line with that, there is also the possibility that artists will experience the “**spill-over**” effect when they have been working for a longer time under market conditions, which can then lead to the artist adopting the commercial incentives, which could lead to affecting their work (Petrova, 2020).

Collections made by corporations and the collaborations that happened to create these collections often have a duality within their purpose. Not only do they promote **corporate identity**, but the partnership also aims to enrich the **corporate culture**. However, by having such an initiative, it is argued that **brand enhancement** is chosen over **cultural democratization** (Baumgarth, 2018). This can be seen as controversial as cultural democratization can also lead to a better brand reputation and loyalty, it can lead to an expanding market, and it can create a better Corporate Social Responsibility (O’Reilly, 2005). On the one hand, modifying the product does provide funding for the artistic side. On the other

hand, it endangers the extrinsic motivation of an artist, so crowding out for corporate gain (Becker, 1982; J. E. Schroeder, 2005). This is also seen by the fact that the strategy for the collaboration is mainly focused on catering to a specific target audience (Fillis, 2006; Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2008).

On the contrary, it is emphasized that co-working between the two parties can also democratize art by showcasing it in the daily lives of corporate workers. When the final product, the artwork, is placed in spaces, products, or experiences, it can reach a broader audience, namely the workers at corporations, than it would typically reach when hanging in a museum. This means that it will bring culture together with public access (Dell'era, 2010).

Therefore, to mitigate the risk of commodification, a corporation must recognize art's symbolic and cultural value and not only focus on its market utility. Klammer (1996) and Throsby (1999) also underscore this, stating that art holds cultural capital and symbolic value. These qualities risk being diluted when a commercial motive dominates. This is also where the spill-over effects become increasingly important: corporations should ensure the artist that their commercial incentives will not erode artistic value (Petrova, 2020).

2.5 Value of collaboration

In addition to concerns about commodification, there is also concern about the value created through collaboration. The value of art, **the valuation processes of artistic and cultural goods**, first need to be analyzed, moving beyond the study of only the prices and the markets (Dekker, 2015). The first establishments about cultural economics as a sub-discipline of economics show the fact that there are two approaches since they represent unity (Blaug, 2001; Towse, 2010). In more recent works, it can be seen that those approaches and within the field of cultural economics have increased attention to the systems that value art '**beyond price**' (Beckert & Aspers, 2011; Hutter & Throsby, 2007; Karpik, 2010). To try and grasp this principle, there needs to be attention to the position that arts have in society, which is inspired by the empirical studies on the arts and the impacts that it has while focusing on the uncertainty that they bring with them as well as how the attention to how taste is formed and how the approach of the economics of the arts influences this (Dekker, 2015). As art has been viewed as lacking a practical utility, it has been primarily considered a **luxury**. Therefore, the relative value of the arts needs to be improved (Galbraith, 1974).

Looking at market prices can provide some information, but the information provided is not very specific (Dekker, 2015). Therefore, price can be seen as just one outcome and not

always a significant outcome (Hutter & Throsby, 2007). De Marchi (2008) delves deeper into this by adding a new evaluation practice, '**viewing pleasure**.' Therefore, rather than viewing the art and cultural goods markets as the intersection of supply and demand forces, it is more important to look at the **coordination** (Dekker, 2015).

When collaborating on an artwork, most companies avoid the question about the **economic value**, as they must ensure to their stakeholder that all decisions have been made on solid ground. In other words, there is a competing standard of value within organizations (Dekker, 2015). Therefore, they are more comfortable mentioning the **company's support** for **local artists** than speaking of less financial value (Martorella, 1990). On the one hand, there is the **economic theory**, where production and consumption play a leading part, and the value is based on calculations (Smith, 1983). On the other hand, there is **cultural theory**, where intrinsic and transcendent values inspire the leading part (Smith, 1983).

The current way to measure the value of art on the market is to talk about **commercialization**, **sponsorships**, or even **partnerships** (Klamer, 1997). An example of an attempt at valuation is done by three selection processes: **market selection**, **peer selection**, and **expert selection**, which can operate within innovative markets (Wijnberg, 1994, 1995, 2004). However, some values or quality standards that have been created may conflict with each other, e.g., the appreciation of art might be diminished due to the recognition or fame that the artist has (Dekker, 2015).

Lastly, when looking at the price of an artwork, it can mean different things. When the cost of an artwork increases, for example, it can mean a shift in the market position for the artist, telling more about the people behind it, such as collectors, but it can also mean a change in demand (Velthuis, 2013). Instead, suppose the focus shifts to the valuation process that the institutions make up, such as museums, awards, audiences, other experts, and critics. In that case, they can contribute to realizing art's valuation (Dekker, 2015). Additionally, art is uniquely positioned as a **symbolic good** related to **people's identity and feelings** (Dekker, 2015). By comparing corporations' values and current practices, the corporation's motivations can become relevant for the study. Evaluating the organization's values could give insight into how participation is among the company's values, how the corporation vocalizes the values, how they realize them, and how they affect strategic decisions. When these values are understood, it can provide an understanding of the corporation's operations, the effects of these values, and how they influence the relationship with the artist (Klamer, 2020).

2.6 Gift economy and types of collaborations

To better understand the value of collaboration in the arts, this thesis studies the monetary transactions. They can be differentiated into **gifts, entitlements, or compensation**, and must be explored to understand the dynamics between corporations and artists (Zelizer, 1998). Unlike traditional market transactions, which are strictly monetary, the gift economy focuses on **relationships, trust, and mutual benefit**. This is why the gift economy is relevant to artist-corporate collaborations. Using this framework as a foundation for the partnership between the artist and corporation will help explain how creative integrity needs to be balanced with commercial goals.

Different forms of collaboration exist between corporations and the arts, each serving a different purpose by shifting between cultural and commercial objectives. These collaborations can be differentiated into **sponsorships, co-creation, and corporate art collections** (J. E. Schroeder, 2005).

Corporate sponsorships involve giving material or financial support to an artistic project, institution, or event. The purpose of these collaborations is primarily to enhance brand visibility and cultural capital while enabling artistic institutions to continue with their work (Baumgarth, 2018). When collaboration is based on **gifts**, voluntary support is needed to foster trust and long-term relationships (Zelizer, 1998). An example would be when a corporation funds an art exhibition, which provides the artist with resources while gaining a brand association with cultural value (Zelizer, 1998). In addition to gifts, the dynamic could also be based on **entitlements**, which refer to an artist's benefits based on the established agreements (Zelizer, 1998). Examples of such benefits would be intellectual property ownership or royalties. The last type of monetary transaction is **compensation**. This involves direct payment for the service, meaning that the collaboration becomes a traditional business transaction, potentially influencing creative innovation (Zelizer, 1998).

Examining these various forms reveals that each dynamic impacts the value systems and the interactions between artists and corporations. Looking at the artist, it is expected that they often prioritize **authenticity, freedom of expression, and cultural significance**. Conversely, corporations may focus more on **market expansion, profit, or brand differentiation**. To shape a successful collaboration, these differing value systems need to find a **common ground**. This can be reached by building relationships based on **respect and trust**. Respectively, these relationships can have crowding-in effects for the artists and enhance the artists' motivation, resulting in authentic and innovative projects. Understanding the sponsorship through the discourse of the gift economy helps relate it to the concept of

collaboration, as it relies on **social, symbolic, and relational dimensions** that extend beyond pure market price. Sponsorship has an exchange value, as it can be framed as a form of support for the arts, going beyond just a business deal. Moreover, sponsorship also involves brand alignment, goodwill, visibility, and cultural investment. In other words, it broadens the cultural ecosystem within the company.

An example of this would be luxury brands that sponsor art exhibitions, which contribute to democratization by bringing high-end art into spaces that are publicly accessible (Dell'era, 2010). Nevertheless, a concern remains about how much a sponsor can influence the artwork created. This also refers to the crowding-in and crowding-out effect, meaning it is essential to find a balance between the sponsor's say and the artist's creative freedom (Frey, 1997). If the sponsor has the power to influence this process, this can undermine the artist's autonomy (Eikhof & Haunschild, 2007). This is because extrinsic factors, such as monetary incentives, can outplay the intrinsic motivation of an artist to create their artwork. This can undermine their autonomy either consciously or subconsciously.

Next to sponsorships, there is a phenomenon of collaboration, as **co-creation**. The corporation and the artist create a product or experience together in this process. This means that both parties have an equal say in the input to the production process. In other words, a synergy is created that can benefit both parties (Becker, 1982). An example of this collaboration would be product designs inspired by certain artists' aesthetics, such as a collaboration in the fashion industry (Karlsson et al., 2018). However, as mentioned in sponsorships, having a co-creation collaboration may still undermine artistic autonomy (Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2008). This happens when the artist is overshadowed and the company's influence dominates, which can strip the artist of the internal drive needed to complete the project or artwork.

Finally, there are collaborations for building **corporate art collections**. These collections are primarily built to display art in the corporation's office or can be seen as an investment. It is essential to realize that these collections serve not only the purpose of showing status but also as internal branding. This internal branding means that the artwork, when displayed, should inspire the employees and align with the corporation's identity (Schroeder, 2005). However, choosing the artwork that will be bought often reflects the current corporate agenda. This will raise questions about the representativeness and inclusivity within the art world.

To conclude, the theoretical framework combines several interdisciplinary perspectives that form a comprehensive understanding of collaborations between artists and corporations. By bringing these insights together in the theoretical framework, this research can examine how the strategic motivations of corporations and the artistic, symbolic, and cultural values shape collaborations. Therefore, this framework will serve as a foundation for the empirical research of this study, and it will provide a basis for the interviews.

This framework allows for an exploration of how **conflicting or coexisting value systems** can influence the process and the outcomes of collaborations between an artist and a corporation. The theoretical concept of **crowding-in and crowding-out** (Frey, 1997; Ryan & Deci, 2000) enables the study to assess how the different forms of corporate engagement can enhance or suppress the intrinsic motivation of the artist. The **gift economy** perspective (Zelizer, 1998) helps to interpret how non-monetary forms of value can shape the relationship between an artist and a corporation.

The visual framework (see Figure 1) conceptualizes this relationship. It shows how the **corporate collaboration context** can influence the intrinsic motivation of the artist and whether **crowding-in** or **crowding-out** occurs. Drawing on these theoretical perspectives, this research proposes three hypotheses to guide the empirical investigation.

First, it is expected that **collaborations that are characterized by high levels of creative autonomy** will support the artist's intrinsic motivation. Thus, the first hypothesis is:
H1: Collaborations that foster high creative autonomy will lead to crowding-in of intrinsic artistic motivation.

Secondly, when a collaboration is mostly **driven by corporate branding objectives** or when the agenda is set by the corporation without negotiation, it may influence or override the artist's internal motivations. Hence:

H2: Collaborations that are driven solely by corporate branding or agendas set by the corporation are more likely to crowd-out intrinsic motivation of the artist.

Lastly, although external rewards, such as financial compensation, may risk undermining the intrinsic motivation, it can be moderated if the support is perceived as respectful and if it is aligned with artistic freedom. Therefore:

H3: The perceived financial support of the corporation, such as fair compensation, moderates the relationship between extrinsic rewards and artistic motivation.

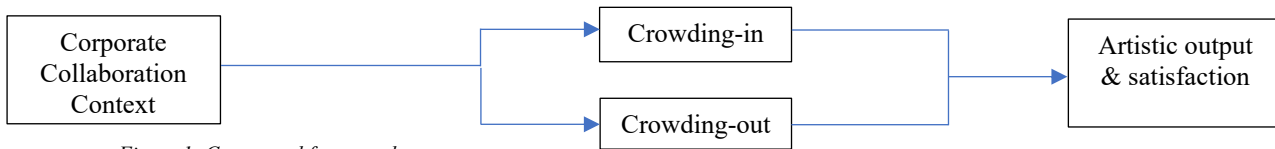


Figure 1: Conceptual framework

3. Methodology

The thesis aims to answer the following research question: *What factors ensure that corporations and artists benefit mutually from their collaborations?* Answering the sub-questions: *How do these partnerships impact artists' motivation? What enables artists to stay close to their intrinsic motivation? What are the key motivations and expected outcomes for corporations engaging in art-related collaborations?*

The literature review suggests various theoretical aspects of the artist-corporate collaborations. Building on this, this research aims to gather insights from real-life practices. To ensure a reliable outcome of the research, the qualitative approach must rely on criteria such as validity, replication, and reliability (Bryman, 2012). The existing research focuses primarily on theory, meaning this qualitative approach might have a fascinating insight into real-life examples and circumstances (Bryman, 2012). The research questions can be seen as a subjective matter, which matches best with the interviews, as these in-depth interviews can provide new data relevant to this topic.

Ten interviews will be conducted, and the group was divided into two. The first group was the outside corporate world, with people responsible for the collaborations from the corporate side. Conversely, the artists, gallery holders, and other experts were responsible for or involved with the collaboration or partnerships. The total time of the interviews accounted for 6 hours and 3 minutes, leading to an average of 38 minutes per interview. The interviews took place in March, April, and May 2025. The interviews were conducted either at the location of the artist or company, but some took place online due to the limited available time. Next, most interviews were held in Dutch to ensure that communication and the ability to answer the questions as truthfully as possible were maintained. As the interviewees came from different fields and different backgrounds, there was an interesting perspective on the outlook of each of them. Most interviewees were contacted via telephone as I either knew them personally or a family member did. The other part was contacted either via LinkedIn or email. When contacting the respective individuals, I always presented the subject of my thesis, highlighted the importance of their expertise, and explained how they could contribute by sharing their perspectives. All interviewees needed to sign the consent form, which asked about their consent

to record and the fact that this data would be collected and used for my thesis research. This consent form also stated that the interviews would be anonymous. This ensured that the results of the interviews would be authentic and based on the interviewees' perspectives.

3.1 Operationalization

To start the operationalization process, an analysis of the theoretical framework and the main points that can be retrieved from it must be conducted. These were then transformed into the interview guide (Appendix 1). Two interview guides were created for the two interview groups mentioned previously. The interview focused on the art valuation and the collaboration between the groups and their respective perspectives. However, as each interview has its own flow, it is essential to note that the interview structure differed per interviewee to ensure the best answers. As each individual had their own set of knowledge and experience, no two interviews were the same, and different subjects, depending on the person, were touched upon. Since there are differences in the knowledge of each person, there were also differences in the knowledge about the theory that was used in the interviews. Therefore, ensuring each interviewee understood each question correctly was essential to provide a clear and honest answer. When reviewing this, I decided to make the interviews more semi-structured.

Lastly, the importance of each individual's experience was highlighted, as this would be the best approach to answering the research question clearly.

3.2 Sample

The data collection consisted of a sample of professionals or experts working in the cultural or corporate fields. In other words, they were all professionals or experts within their operating field. As each individual was carefully chosen, this sample can be seen as purposive sampling or, more specifically, criterion sampling based on the individual's knowledge (Bryman, 2012).

Half of the respondents, such as visual artists, worked in the artistic or cultural world. The choice to interview these people was based on their experiences with collaborations and how they valued their artwork or the artwork within the gallery.

The other half focused on experts or managers working, mainly in marketing, or within the financial sector as a curator, but in companies not directly related to culture. For this side, I reached out to banks, as they focus on collaborating with artists and having artworks present in their workplaces. I reached out to the people who arrange those collaborations and have the

most knowledge about them, without focusing on experts within these companies who also have too much knowledge about art.

The present sample can be argued to be inadequate due to convenience sampling. However, it was the ideal choice for this study due to limited resources and time. In other words, the interviewed people were previously within the known circle. This can be seen as a drawback, as it does not represent the whole community being studied. Therefore, it is crucial to avoid this and carefully consider whether these results should be used for study designs.

3.3 Data collection & analysis

All of the interviews were documented using either an audio recorder or Microsoft Teams. Once the meeting was finished, the audio was transcribed. The transcription was done in the original interview language. This means that it is either in Dutch or English. A crucial part of this analysis was to gather the data and consistently put it through a thematic analysis. This was crucial, as it ensured a specific number of codes, which in turn would help answer the research question and its sub-questions. Ultimately, 66 codes were created manually and grouped into categories, such as collaboration, outcome of collaboration, and artistic freedom (Appendix 3). Atlas.TI was used for mapping the first round of categories in the interviews. These categories were based on the relation between the codes and were seen as thematic categories. This analysis is formed from an index of several recurring and essential themes and their respective subthemes, which can then show recurring categories within the texts (Bryman, 2012). This made it easier to see the relationship between different interviews and how the interviewees made the same point while using different wording.

3.4 Ethical matters

Ethical concerns must be addressed to ensure a suitable study design that does not harm the participants. This is crucial in all research involving human subjects, and it was also vital to incorporate ethical concerns into this research, which focuses on in-depth interviews with the parties involved in the artists' and corporations' perspectives.

Multiple measures have been taken to ensure this research complies with ethical standards. Therefore, the participants were assured they would not suffer any adverse effects before participating.

In addition, participants received an informed consent form containing all the necessary information about the research, its goals, and the rationale behind the chosen method. The form

stated the participants' rights, and they could only continue participating if they signed it beforehand. Furthermore, the consent form reserved the researcher's rights, ensuring no information asymmetry existed in this study.

The participants also received confirmation that their answers would not be shared with anyone and would only be used for this research. The security of this process was also discussed so that the information gathered during the interview would be confidential and used only for academic purposes.

3.5 Value of research

This research contributes to the field of cultural economics and cross-sector collaboration studies by providing insights into the dynamic between artists and corporations. It highlights the conditions that are necessary for mutually beneficial collaborations, with a focus on preserving artistic integrity, navigating value conflicts, and supporting corporate identity.

The thesis adds on existing literature by exploring how a collaboration operates not just in theory, but in experienced practice, offering new perspectives on the crowding-in versus crowding-out of intrinsic motivation (Frey, 1997), the gift versus market logic (Zelizer, 1998), and the tensions between the economic and cultural value system (Eikhof & Haunschild, 2007).

The findings can help corporate managers, artists, curators, and cultural policymakers design and negotiate more sustainable, respectful, and creatively rewarding partnerships. It can offer strategic guidance to organizations seeking to build authentic relationships with artists and to artists aiming to maintain their voice while engaging in these opportunities.

Moreover, the research sheds light on the nuanced power dynamics involved in such collaborations and highlights the importance of trust, transparency, and value alignment, which are particularly relevant in a cultural landscape shaped by symbolic capital, corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategies, and branding.

The study adds depth to a conversation that is often approached from a marketing or managerial perspective. By making a meaningful contribution, an understanding of the human and ethical dimensions of artistic collaborations in corporate contexts is created.

As this research is qualitative, there can be doubts since the results are not as easily replicable as those of a quantitative study. Nevertheless, this approach was the most suitable for gathering an answer; therefore, the interviewees' answers and opinions are relevant to the research. Since people might not be as honest as they could be due to ethical issues, it was

ensured that they or their company would remain anonymous. The only part mentioned was their profession, without saying where or which sector exactly.

3.6 Limitations

As with any qualitative research, this thesis presents several limitations that must be acknowledged. The most evident one lies in the small sample size of the interviewees, which restricts the generalizability of the findings. Although the insights gathered offer depth and richness, they do not represent the full spectrum of perspectives within the broader population of corporations and artists.

Additionally, participants' replies may be influenced by a social desirability bias or other factors that limit their honesty about their feelings and/or ideas. To address this, anonymity was guaranteed to all participants. Only their roles and sectors were mentioned, without referencing the specific company. The ethical precaution was taken to ensure openness and protect the participants' identities.

Another drawback is that the researcher's interpretation of the interviews can be interpreted differently. The researcher's choice of questions, analysis of the interviewee's reply, and presentation of these findings may be influenced by their underlying bias. Furthermore, the use of open-ended questions can result in conflicting interpretations.

The use of open-ended questions can also lead to inconsistent depth across the interviews, despite their benefits in uncovering rich insights. One participant might elaborate more freely, while the other might offer a shorter or guarded response, which can result in an imbalance of detail. Moreover, time constraints can occasionally limit the length of the interviews, which may have led to certain themes being underexplored.

Lastly, as a qualitative study, the findings are not directly replicable. However, this research aims for analytical rather than statistical generalization, which focuses on understanding the dynamics, mechanisms, and experiences within a specific context. The in-depth interviews provided valuable and credible data that offer insight into how value is negotiated within the cross-sector collaborations, even if they cannot be generalized.

Nevertheless, in-depth interviews are practical qualitative research techniques for examining the interaction between artists and organizations. However, limitations must be considered when interpreting the results.

4. Results

The following section will present the outcomes of the analysis of the interviews with the business and artistic sides. The discussion of these outcomes will be combined with the analysis made through the theoretical concepts discussed at the beginning of the research and presented in Section 4.5.

The sections will present findings about the motivation for collaborations, the outcomes of a collaboration, and the difference between the values of the artistic versus the business world. Next to this, what both parties need for a successful collaboration will be investigated. This is followed by a discussion of the findings and their alignment with the theoretical concepts, along with the new insights on how to get a successful collaboration, and what both parties need for it to succeed.

4.1 Motivation for collaborations

Collaborations between an artist and a corporation are often framed as mutually beneficial, but the underlying motivations for such collaborations and the reasons for engaging in them vary widely. These motivations are structured in different value systems. This section will explore the driving forces behind each party's participation, with an emphasis on the deeper personal, strategic, and cultural logics underlying their reasoning. On one hand, corporations focus on cultural integration, brand identity, and public engagement. On the other hand, artists emphasize ethical alignment, creative autonomy, and a meaningful connection with the audience. These differing priorities raise the question of how such contrasting values are then negotiated in practice, and how they **shape the nature and the outcomes of the collaborations**, whether as a source of tension, compromise, or synergy.

4.1.1 Corporations' perspectives

Participants from the corporate side described a range of motivations for initiating a collaboration with an artist. While practical benefits, such as branding or creating a particular atmosphere, were commonly mentioned, the underlying values translated in various motivations. These showed a blend of **strategic identity building and social responsibility**.

Although “branding” appears to be the most prominent reason, the interviews revealed a deeper need to express an **authentic identity**. The collaboration is not solely to put themselves in a certain perspective for the customers, but it is part of a broader effort to shape who or what the company is becoming.

“To be honest. Mostly branding. I will not deny that image matters. But an image without depth will fall down. For me real motivation is identity. It should not be what we want to look like, but who we want to become.” (Interviewee 5, Business side, CEO)

The interviews also highlight the **value of cultural integration**, in which art becomes embedded into the workplace.

“I need to participate by thinking about how art can add to our internal communication. But also on the wellbeing of the employees and the branding. Art is not just decoration for us. But it is part of how we create meaning to a space and identity. (Interviewee 4, Business side, Art Manager)¹

Not only to express the value of beauty, but to add another dimension to the employees experience and company narrative. The value of art, in this sense, is symbolic. It is tied to **the internal culture** and **emotional engagement** of the corporation. Or as one of the respondents puts it:

“Art opens worlds within the company. I can see how a painting can nudge people to talk, to think, to feel.” (Interviewee 3, Business side, CEO)²

Next to that, the corporations have expressed **social motivation**. They emphasized the desire to support local artists and the increase their cultural visibility.

“Yes, and preferably a local artist. We have always talked about this with each other. We want to give local artists a spot.” (Interviewee 2, Business side, CEO)³

“Supporting artists, we see that as a societal investment. (...) With our purchase, the artist can get that extra push to pursue or to get a bigger audience” (Interviewee 3, Business side, CEO)⁴

¹ Translated from Dutch: “Ik moet dus meedenken over hoe kunst kan. Bijdragen. Aan onze interne communicatie. Maar ook de wellbeing van werknemers en de branding. Kunst is geen versiering by ons. Maar. Het is onderdeel van hoe we betekenis willen geven aan ruimte en identiteit.”

² Translated from Dutch: “Het onverwachte ervan. Kunst opent werelden. Binnen het bedrijf. Ja. Kan ik zien. Hoe een schilderij kan aanzetten tot praten. Of nadenken. Of voelen.”

³ Translated from Dutch: “Ja, en bij voorkeur een lokale artiest hebben we altijd een beetje over gesproken met elkaar. We willen gewoon lokale artiesten daar een plek geven”

⁴ Translated from Dutch: “Daarnaast willen we als bedrijf ook iets teruggeven aan de samenleving. Het ondersteunen van kunstenaars zien we. Als. Een maatschappelijke investering. Veel van de werken in onze

4.1.2 Artists' perspectives

Artists have also identified several motivations for participating in a collaboration with corporations. Their motivations were grounded less in the social exposure or financial gain, and were more grounded in **ethical alignment, artistic freedom, and meaningful engagement**.

Next to this, there is also a motivation that is related to value alignment. The artist mentions that there can also be a discomfort due to **the ethos of the company**. This shows a clash between the **personal integrity** of the artist and the **organizational culture**. With this, it is shown that there is a need for **value alignment**, and not just a contractual agreement between the parties.

The artists find it important to have an **ethical alignment** with corporations based on shared moral principles. One respondent explains it:

“There are certain companies with whom I do not want to collaborate. This is mostly due to the people that walk around there and the expectations that they have for their employees. Next to that, their appearance when you meet them” (Interviewee 1, Artistic side, artist)⁵

Artists carefully assess whether the corporation's values, culture, or their public behaviour align with their own values, culture, and public behaviour. By this, the artists draw a clear boundary to protect their creative way of working. As one of the artists articulates their creative process, which is intrinsically motivated:

“My expectation is that they choose me based on my previous work. They hire me for my work. Not because they need something to be done. With this, I mean that they give me the opportunity to work with my creativity. Everyone is able to perform a task that they are handed. If I'm right, they don't choose me for that” (Interviewee 3, Artistic side, artist)⁶

collectie zijn daarom ook van plaatselijke kunstenaars. Opkomende kunstenaars. Door onze aankoop kunnen ze dan net dat ene zetje krijgen om door te gaan of om meer publiek aan te trekken.”

⁵ Translated from Dutch: “Ja dus wat ik daarstraks noemde. Er zijn bepaalde bedrijven waar ik sowieso niet mee wil samenwerken. Dit hangt vooral af van de soort mensen die er rondlopen en wat ze van hun werknemers verwachten. Daarnaast de uitstraling die ze hebben als je ze ontmoet.”

⁶ Translated from Dutch: “Mijn verwachting is dat ze hebben gekeken naar mijn eerdere werken. Dat ze me inhuren voor mijn werk. Niet omdat er iets gedaan moet worden. Daarmee bedoel ik vooral dat zij mij ook mijn creativiteit de gang laten gaan. Iedereen kan iets uitvoeren wat ze voorgeschiedt krijgen. Daar kiezen ze mij als het goed is niet voor.”

This also expresses a fundamental need for **creative autonomy**. The artists articulate the collaboration as a space where they expect their vision to be honoured and not redirected.

Another important aspect of artists' motivation to collaborate with the business world relates to their inner urge to **provoke and disrupt** while **engaging** with others.

“It's about engagement. I actually want art to exist outside museums. I want to interrupt daily life if someone's on their way to a meeting, and I see a painting that makes them pause. That's kind of a minor revolution.” (Interviewee 2, Artistic side, artist) (Example in Picture 2)

In addition, the artists are using the platforms created by the corporation not to advertise their artwork for it to get sold or for them to grow, but to **reach audiences who typically do not engage with art**.

“There's something that's very satisfying about your work. Showing up in unexpected places. So, when I collaborate with a company, my work ends up on walls where it wouldn't normally be displayed. It isn't in an exhibition. Where it would normally be, but it's somewhere else. It's in a new spot. And yeah, that's that's that's different. It's a storefront, a magazine. It can be a campaign. Not just about visibility, it's also about accessibility.” (Interviewee 4, Artistic side, artist)

And further, this motivation can be seen as cultural, namely, to make art a part of the everyday life and to spark reflection for the audiences. They do not only focus on growing their audience, purely in economic terms, but also on creating new meanings and generating inspirations.

“We weren't just doing like a product promotion, but we were exploring ideas. For example, in one collaboration, we were exploring the idea of time not just as something linear or marketable, but as something that's deeply human. And those kinds of partnerships work when both parties are invested in more than just the outcome.” (Interviewee 4, Artistic side, artist)

When, in general, talking about collaborations, both the corporations as well as the artists articulate strong and value-driven motivations for collaboration, which reflect their expectations. The corporations focus more on branding, innovation, CSR, and the internal culture. The artists, however, focus on authenticity, ethical alignment, artistic freedom, and

engagement with the audience. Even though differences are able to cause friction, they also provide the option to create shared value.

4.2 Realization of value during the artist-corporate collaborations

In this section, the study will explore how the process of collaboration is undertaken by both the corporate representatives and artists and how they perceive the actual **outcomes** of their collaboration experiences. Some of the outcomes are aligned with the interviewees' initial expectations, while other outcomes reveal unexpected insights or tensions during the collaboration. Importantly, these outcomes of the collaboration are not limited to instrumental results, as financial or logistical, but they also express **core values**, such as **impact, engagement, control, and authenticity**. Next to that, it also raises some key issues that were addressed in the theoretical framework, such as **cultural value, crowding-out, and innovation through cross-sector collaboration**.

4.2.1 Corporations' perspectives

For the representatives of the corporations, two of the main outcomes of their collaborations with artists are important. The first one is the way art enhances their corporate internal culture, which is usually shaped by the relations within the organization. The other is the way that art can reinforce corporate brand identity, which is usually important for their external clients.

“I would say that [art] influences the [corporate] culture. People see more. Not just the art but also each other. That is the true gift of visual culture within the workplace.”
(Interviewee 5, Business side, CEO)

This perspective confirms the expectations that were outlined in the previous section that **the value of art** can impact the corporate culture, for example, by contributing to **internal cohesion and empathy** within the corporation. The findings confirm that art is not only seen as decorative, but also that it functions as a **tool for social refinement and reflection**. Or as one respondent puts it:

“Art opens worlds within the company. I can see how a painting can nudge people to talk, to think, to feel.” (Interviewee 3, Business side, CEO)⁷

⁷ Translated from Dutch: “Het onverwachte ervan. Kunst opent werelden. Binnen het bedrijf. Ja. Kan ik zien. Hoe een schilderij kan aanzetten tot praten. Of nadenken. Of voelen.”

While, in general, artistic freedom is valued by corporate representatives, when it comes to appropriating it in practice, they find it difficult. Instead, they prefer to prioritize **predictability, brand alignment, or efficiency**.

“That person needs to be in your shoes. So, you are going to feed that person with who we are, what we do, and what we envision for the art on the wall.” (Interviewee 2, Business side, CEO)⁸

“Yes, 100 percent. I can say this without guilt. I believe that limitations are necessary. And when they are transparent, they do not censor. They give me an editing role.” (Interviewee 5, Business side, CEO)

The respondents mention a collaboration where there comes a balance between showing respect to the creative input, while ensuring that the artwork aligns with the needs of the corporation. This is a critical moment for the collaboration because it can potentially lead to **crowding-out** intrinsic creativity, especially when edits or restrictions feel imposed rather than co-developed. Next to this, the **value of cost-efficiency** might influence the final choice of the businesses to collaborate. In other words:

“The will is unbelievable and for sure, the contacts and the way of working that we have been able to do, such as Upwork. This is incredible. Within 24 hours, I have an artwork, for which I would normally need weeks to look for a new artist with a certain style. What would be the costs? Sometimes you look for weeks for new artists for nothing, and that is a lot of invested time.” (Interviewee 2, Business side, CEO)⁹

⁸ Translated from Dutch: “Ja, totaal anders, maar die ga je heel erg voeden met wat je wil hebben. Je moet wel anders krijg je ja, die die diegene moeten even in jouw schoenen staan, dus die ga je voeden in ja, wie We zijn, wat we doen en en wat we voor ogen hebben met die met die muur zeg maar”

⁹ Translated from Dutch: “Je wil is ongelooflijk en en zeker ook de contacten die We hebben en de manier van werken die we die we allemaal weten te bewandelen, zoals dat upwork en zo Dat is. Dat is ongelooflijk. Ja, dat heb ik. Binnen 24 uur heb ik wat geregeld, waar ik normaal gesproken weken ook op zoek naar een nieuwe artiest op zoek naar een bepaalde stijl. Wat gaan de kosten zijn? Contacten leggen ja, soms contacten leggen voor niks is heel veel tijd te investeren. “

4.2.2 Artists' perspectives

Multiple interviewees with artists emphasized the opportunity to **reach audiences outside of the traditional art world** as a considerable benefit for participating in a collaboration. In the words of the artists:

“The new contacts that I can make and the possibly new audience that I attract. It makes it that my message is spread more across the country or throughout the sector in which the company performs, where the work is displayed.” (Interviewee 3, Artistic side, artist)¹⁰

Another artist elaborated further by suggesting that the benefit of a corporate collaboration goes beyond visibility. The **unexpected interaction** can inspire new interpretations and directions within their creative practice. The exposure that they receive to new audiences and contexts opens up opportunities for **reflection, professional growth, and innovation**. Instead of only increasing reach, the experience can catalyze a reimagining of the purpose of the artist and their identity, while fostering **interdisciplinary connections** that would be less likely to happen within the traditional art world:

“I think the biggest ones are that it gives you a new audience. Not only it gives you new audience. So maybe a bit more reach, but it also can give you new ideas, new interpretations. You can overhear people. It can be in a spot where you would never put your artwork, but it can also give you a new vision, can give you new ideas. It can give you new people to work with.” (Interviewee 4, Artistic side, artist)

While the initial motivation of artists to collaborate with organizations is to keep their artistic autonomy, in reality artists expressed a sense of frustration with how their work was sometimes adjusted or taken out of context, which lead to a sense of disconnection “when people walk past it, smile politely and never ask what it's really saying. That happens.” (Interviewee 2, Artistic side, artist). Being out of context, can also de-value its cultural meaning as shared by one of the respondents:

¹⁰ Translated from Dutch: “De nieuwe contacten die ik ermee kan leggen en het mogelijke nieuwe publiek dat ik ermee aantrek. Het zorgt er dan toch voor dat mijn visie verder verspreid wordt door het land of door de sector waar het werk hangt.”

“There was one early collaboration, or like early in my career, where a marketing employee re-edited one of my videos, and they did that to make it fit a specific time frame. (...) So it felt like you were halfway through a movie. Someone presses pause and says, OK, well, we're done now.” (Interviewee 4, Artistic side, artist)

In a way, their intrinsic motivation was **crowded-out**, while their messages are overridden by the goals of the marketing team or logistical restraints, such as time (Frey, 1997; Petrova, 2020). These findings also point to **commodification** of the artwork by reducing the symbolic value of the work in favor of the surface-level appeal (Baudrillard, 1972).

In other cases, for the artists, the collaborations have helped them to **clarify their own values** as well as refine their voice. This even happened in cases where tensions arose.

“A collaboration forces you to defend your decisions, and that's a good thing because it makes you sharper.” (Interviewee 2, Artistic side, artist)

“I think that a collaboration can lead to a new sense of creativity. New insights. And those new insights can lead to new artworks for my own collection. They can bring a new perspective on life.” (Interviewee 3, Artistic side, artist)¹¹

From these perspectives, the collaboration with the corporations contributed to **personal and artistic development**.

The results show that the intended values have different realizations. This depends on the concrete context, and/or on the capacity of both parties to negotiate and align their values. For the corporations, this means putting an emphasis on **cultural enrichment, brand alignment, and employee engagement**. However, sometimes this can result in more emphasis toward **control and efficiency**, which can potentially lead to the risk of crowding-out the artistic motivation. For the artists, they reported the outcomes of **expanded reach, artistic development, and the potential of creating a dialogue**. They also describe the experiences of **dilution and the loss of meaning** when their autonomy or voice is being compromised.

¹¹ Translated from Dutch: Ik denk. Dan toch. Dat. Dat het leggen van nieuwe contacten een goeie bijkomstigheid is. Dat ik misschien nieuwe klanten heb of mensen die mijn message kunnen verspreiden. Daarnaast. Denk ik ook dat het hebben van een samenwerking kan leiden tot nieuwe creativiteit. Nieuwe inzichten. En die nieuwe inzichten kunnen dan weer leiden tot nieuwe werken voor mijn eigen collectie. Ze kunnen een nieuw perspectief op het leven brengen.

Both of these perspectives on outcomes confirm the **potential for shared value and the delicate balance** that is needed to preserve intrinsic motivation and the cultural significance.

4.3 Factors that hinder the collaborations between artists and corporations

The analysis in the previous section points out that the collaboration between artists and corporations can face some tensions that are rooted in different value systems. Such tensions are most evident when the artistic freedom is conflicted with the goals of branding, when the expectations are not clearly articulated, or when the symbolic value of the artwork is overridden by the instrumental use. Referring back to the theoretical frameworks of **crowding-out, commodification, and gift versus market logic**, the following section will look into the friction points that can negatively influence a mutually beneficial collaboration.

4.3.1 Misaligned expectations

Multiple participants expressed a **disconnection between artists' and corporations' expectations about the collaboration**, and what the corporation expected from them in return. The findings indicate that these misalignments frequently originated from **unclear communication** at the outset of the collaboration or from unaddressed assumptions. However, the issue goes beyond just mismatched goals, as it also reveals a broader lack of clarity and structure that can destabilize the artistic process. The artist mentions that corporate partners can **enter a collaboration without a fully formed idea**, and they **retrospectively try to shape the artist's output** to match a vision that was only clarified mid-process. Regarding the artistic commissioning, it demonstrates a **conscious** approach, where the absence of a clearly defined brief creates uncertainty for the artist. This also undermines the artist's ability to work autonomously and stay aligned with their **intrinsic creative motivations**. Next to that, it puts an additional strain on the collaboration, as the artists are frequently asked to **adapt under tight deadlines**, which potentially compromises the **quality of the artwork** and the **trust** between both parties:

“Time pressure. That they want someone as soon as possible. Later on, they realize what they actually want. Then they try to push this onto you. In my opinion, this works against the creative process.” (Interviewee 3, Artistic side, artist)¹²

¹² Translated from Dutch: “Ja. Dat denk ik wel. Vooral omdat bedrijven er vaak te gehaast in duiken. Tijdsdruk. Dat ze zo snel mogelijk iemand willen. En later pas doorhebben wat ze eigenlijk willen hebben. Dan proberen ze dit op jou over te brengen. Naar mijn mening. Gaat dit ten nadele van het creatieve proces. (...) Maar dat

On the corporate side, the expectations are that the artists need to reflect “who we are, what we do, and what we envision for the art on the wall. (Interviewee 2, Business side, CEO)¹³

Even though this can be seen as a reasonable direction from a corporate perspective, it does run the risk of instrumentalizing the artist’s practice as a service provider rather than being part of a creative collaboration. In a way, this shift from gift to a **compensated task** can be interpreted as a transition from symbolic to **market logic**.

4.3.2 Restrictions on artistic freedom

There have been several experiences described by artists where they had their creative freedom limited after the collaboration had begun, often without a clear justification:

“There was one early collaboration. Or like early in my career, where marketing re-edited one of my videos, and they did that to make it fit a specific time frame. They cut it in a way where? Did a message. I came across another one because they just cut the end of it, so it felt like you were halfway through a movie. Someone presses pause and says, OK, well, we’re done now. And I remember that I watched the final version. And I was thinking this isn’t mine, and it taught me a lot about boundaries and setting expectations early on.” (Interviewee 4, Artistic side, artist)

This suggests that a **crowding-out effect** happened, where the external constraints undermined the sense of ownership of the artist and their creative motivation. Although it began as a collaborative opportunity, it ultimately resulted in a compromised output, which eroded trust and the intrinsic drive of the artist.

Some corporate interviewees expressed this dynamic as well. However, they used the language of “**necessary boundaries**”.

“It is not a carte blanche. I respect their voice, but it is a workplace. The canvas must be shared.” (Interviewee 5, Business side, CEO)

gebeurt steeds minder. Misschien ook omdat ik selectiever ben in de samenwerkingen. Vroeger deed ik het nog wel eens om te kunnen overleven van het geld. Tegenwoordig is dat minder. Dus kan ik ook wat selectiever kijken naar wat ik wil doen. Mijn mening staat dus op de voorgrond.”

¹³ Translated from Dutch: “ja, wie We zijn, wat we doen en en wat we voor ogen hebben met die met die muur zeg maar”

In here, it can be seen that the corporation makes an attempt to balance **respect for the artist** with the need for **contextual appropriateness**. This attempt is a balancing act between the organizational demands and the artistic logic. It defines the space of most of the tensions.

4.3.3 Ambiguity and lack of feedback

Another tension that was recurring in the interviews was the lack of **structured feedback or reflection** after the collaboration was completed, especially from the corporate side. The absence of this often left artists feeling disconnected from the process and unsure if their work was used or how it had been received.

“No, really. The only contact I had with OxAlien was when a painting was sold (Picture 1). Then he would send me a message, and I would get it. When it is sold, I would say: “tomorrow, okay, I will pick it up”, and he will reply “yes, that is fine”. That is the only time we are in touch and for the rest, I have zero contact.” (Interviewee 2, Business side, CEO)¹⁴

With such minimalistic engagement after the collaboration, it enforces the idea that art is seen more as a **transactional product** instead of a relationship or shared process. This reflects the **failure of reciprocity**, which is essential for a sustainable collaboration.

4.3.4 Economic pressures and outsourcing

Some of the corporate interviewees talked about the **rising importance of cost-efficiency**. This led them to **abandon the more relational and local artists’ collaboration** for a more remote or outsourced work.

“Within 24 hours, I have an artwork, for which I would normally need weeks to look for a new artist with a certain style. What would be the costs? Sometimes you look for weeks for new artists for nothing, and that is a lot of invested time.” (Interviewee 2, Business side, CEO)¹⁵

¹⁴ Translated from Dutch: Nee echt. Het enige contact wat ik heb met met OxAlien in dit geval, is als er een doelpunt verkocht is, Dat is echt het enige. Dan stuurt hij me een berichtje hier dan ik kom even ophalen. Wanneer kan het dan zeg ik ja, morgen oké, prima kom morgen ophalen en dan stuurt die terug. Ik neem gelijk een nieuwe week. Ja is goed., Dat is echt het enige wat we voor de rest heb ik echt nul contact.”

¹⁵ Translated from Dutch: “Je wil is ongelooflijk en en zeker ook de contacten die We hebben en de manier van werken die we die we allemaal weten te bewandelen, zoals dat upwork en zo Dat is. Dat is ongelooflijk. Ja, dat

It might be understandable from a corporate perspective, but this shift reduces the artist to a **supplier of visual material** instead of a creative partner. This introduces the form of **depersonalization and commodification**, which diminishes the symbolic and cultural value of the artwork.

From the artistic side, this puts an emphasis on the timeline and the pricing contributed to a sense of alienation:

“Yes, I would think so, especially because companies get into it too quickly. Time pressure. That they want someone as soon as possible. Later on, they realize what they actually want. Then they try to push this onto you. In my opinion, this works against the creative process.” (Interviewee 3, Artistic side, artist)¹⁶

This shows a **frustration whenever there is a rush in the transaction**. This does not only pressure the artist, but it also **dilutes the quality and meaning** of the final artwork, which reinforces the division between the **cultural and economic value**.

These tensions, between autonomy and direction, symbolic and market value, and collaboration and efficiency, highlight the friction that happens between the artist-corporate collaboration. Although both sides may enter the collaboration with good intentions, the underlying logics in which they operate often clash. This can then result in compromised creativity, an erosion of trust, and misunderstandings.

To create mutually beneficial collaborations, it is essential to understand these tensions, where shared goals and expectations are clearly defined as well as protected from the unintended pressures from the corporation.

heb ik. Binnen 24 uur heb ik wat geregeld, waar ik normaal gesproken weken ook op zoek naar een nieuwe artiest op zoek naar een bepaalde stijl. Wat gaan de kosten zijn? Contacten leggen ja, soms contacten leggen voor niks is heel veel tijd te investeren. “

¹⁶ Translated from Dutch: “Ja. Dat denk ik wel. Vooral omdat bedrijven er vaak te gehaast in duiken. Tijdsdruk. Dat ze zo snel mogelijk iemand willen. En later pas doorhebben wat ze eigenlijk willen hebben. Dan proberen ze dit op jou over te brengen. Naar mijn mening. Gaat dit ten nadele van het creatieve proces. (...) Maar dat gebeurt steeds minder. Misschien ook omdat ik selectiever ben in de samenwerkingen. Vroeger deed ik het nog wel eens om te kunnen overleven van het geld. Tegenwoordig is dat minder. Dus kan ik ook wat selectiever kijken naar wat ik wil doen. Mijn mening staat dus op de voorgrond.”

4.4 Factors that foster mutual collaboration between artists and corporations

After researching the motivations, outcomes, and tensions within an artist-corporate collaboration, this section focuses on what both parties **perceive as supportive** of building successful collaborations. While corporations and artists use different wordings and emphasize different concerns, they both identified core values for a collaboration as essential to avoid conflict and enable mutual benefit. These core values include **trust, clarity of roles, and shared vision**.

4.4.1 Trust and respect

Both groups most frequently mentioned **trust** as one of the values that support their mutual collaboration. More specifically, trust was articulated closely with **reliability**, but was also connected to **respecting each other's creative boundaries, personal integrity, and professional space**. There needs to be a deep level of operational trust, where the artist is not managed, but is expected to work responsibly and independently. As one of the respondents mentioned:

“Yes, exactly, and what is important, what I have named a few times already is trust. Of course, this is pretty important, because, you know, you give them a key, so they can enter whenever they want. You trust them to finish the work within a certain timeframe, without giving too many obstacles to them. The only thing I would need is a sketch and what they would need from me.” (Interviewee 2, Business side CEO)¹⁷

The artistic side echoed this need as well as a non-negotiable requirement. As one of the respondents mentioned, the trust needs to be more than solely logistical, such as timely communication, payments, and access to the physical workspace, but it also needs to include **emotional and conceptual trust**. This refers to the belief that the company will not distort, misuse, or censor the artwork:

¹⁷ Translated from Dutch: “Ja precies en ja wat je dan eigenlijk denk ik ook best wel een paar keer genoemd hebt, is dat vertrouwen Natuurlijk best wel belangrijk is dan Omdat hè, je geeft ze een sleutel, ze mogen binnenkomen wanneer ze willen. Je vertrouwt dat het werk binnen een bepaalde tijdsframe wel klaar gaat zijn Zonder dat je daarin te veel obstakels eigenlijk aan zich geven. Van hem bij wijze van dan wil ik de schets hebben en dan moet ik dit hebben.”

“I want trust, if we cannot talk openly about what the work means or what it might trigger, then it's not worth it.” (Interviewee 2, Artistic side, artist)

4.4.2 Artistic freedom and autonomy

Most of the artists recognize **artistic freedom** as the most important value. This was also highlighted by the corporate participants, but it was inconsistently applied throughout the collaboration. The artistic interviewees mentioned that they want assurance that they were chosen for their unique voice and that they are not hired to execute someone else's idea.

“They hire me for my work, not because they need something to be done. With this I mean that they give me the opportunity to let me work with my creativity.” (Interviewee 3, Artistic side, artist)¹⁸

The artists emphasized that while they value autonomy, they also understand that successful collaboration requires a **careful balance** between freedom and structure. This balance depends on setting **clear boundaries and expectations** from the outset. Autonomy does not mean that they want total creative control; instead, they highlight **mutual respect** and shared decision-making within a defined framework. If these boundaries are unclear or imposed too late, the artists risk experiencing **crowding-out** of their intrinsic motivation, resulting in work they do not feel connected to or proud of. For the corporate perspective, this balance is framed in terms of contextual constraints and shared goals. They acknowledge the value of artistic freedom while also emphasizing the practical realities as well as the objectives of the organizational setting. This reinforces the need for **transparent communication** and co-created boundaries as the foundation for the collaboration:

“It is not a carte blanche. I respect their voice, but it is a workplace. The canvas must be shared.” (Interviewee 5, Business side, CEO)

4.4.3 Clarity of expectation and contracts

Artists put a high value on setting clear expectations early on, especially focusing on the creative direction, support, timeline, and the scope of the work. They **value transparency**

¹⁸ Translated from Dutch: “Mijn verwachting is dat ze hebben gekeken naar mijn eerdere werken. Dat ze me inhuren voor mijn werk. Niet omdat er iets gedaan moet worden. Daarmee bedoel ik vooral dat zij mij ook mijn creativiteit de gang laten gaan. Iedereen kan iets uitvoeren wat ze voorgeschoteld krijgen. Daar kiezen ze mij als het goed is niet voor.”

and predictability. Artists are not resistant to structure. In reality, artists appreciate structure when it protects their creative space. This observation then contradicts some assumptions of corporations that formality will limit artistic freedom.

“Expectations are related to what I can expect from you and what you can expect from me. It is really important to vocalize that early on. Since we will be working together for a longer period of time to complete the work. In the end, it is my work, but I want to know from the beginning what you exactly want. That way, we can avoid any miscommunication.” (Interviewee 4, Artistic side, artist)

“The contract goes hand in hand with making agreements. The contract provides that the deals are written down. (...) And that both parties have something to refer back to, so that the assignment or outcome does not change suddenly.” (Interviewee 3, Artistic side, artist)¹⁹

4.4.4 Shared vision and value alignment

Both the artistic side and the corporate side mentioned that the most successful collaborations were those in which both parties had a sense of **shared vision**. This could be either conceptually, ethically, but also aesthetically.

“For example, in one collaboration we were exploring the idea of time not just as something linear or marketable, but as something that's deeply human. And those kind of partnerships work when both parties are invested in more than just the outcome.” (Interviewee 4, Artistic side, artist)

“There has to be room for dialogue, for concept, for real exchange.” (Interviewee 4, Artistic side, artist)

This aligns with the idea of **co-creation** rather than a commission. A collaboration where both sides **contribute to the meaning** of the artwork, and not just to a product, is formed.

¹⁹ Translated from Dutch: “Het contract loopt ergens ook wel samen met het maken van afspraken. Het contract zorgt er alleen voor dat de afspraken opgeschreven worden. (...) En dat beide partijen er terug naar kunnen verwijzen, zodat de opdracht of uitkomst niet opeens wijzigt.”

4.4.5 Communication and professionalism

Even though it was often taken for granted, both parties mentioned the importance of good communication and professionalism. Professionalism in this sense was focused on meeting deadlines, respecting time, and being responsive.

“The last one, professionalism should be a given in any situation. (...). But I do think it's important for it to be in there.” (Interviewee 2, Artistic side, artist)

The corporate side also expressed a sense of appreciation regarding clarity and process. This varied from invoices to the installation logistics. They did acknowledge that these were not a make-or-break issue for the collaboration if trust was strong enough.



Picture 1: Artwork in the space of Interviewee 2, Business side, CEO



Picture 2: Artwork of Interviewee 2, Artistic side, artist for a current collaboration

4.5 Discussion

This part interprets the findings of the study through the lens of the theoretical framework, which has been outlined earlier. An overview of this can be found in Table 1. It will address the central research question: *What factors ensure that corporations and artists benefit mutually from their collaborations?* Next to that, it will also focus on the sub-questions regarding the **motivations**, the **nature of the outcomes**, and the **artistic autonomy**. The findings are discussed alongside relevant theories on **cultural value** (Throsby, 2000), **intrinsic**

motivation, and **crowding effects** (Frey, 1997; Ryan & Deci, 2000), **conflicting logics** in cross-sector collaborations (Eikhof & Haunschild, 2007), and **gift economy frameworks** (Zelizer, 1998).

4.5.1 Different value systems in collaboration

Both the reviewed theory and the findings of this research reveal that collaborations between artists and corporations are shaped by distinct, but overlapping and intersecting **value systems**. The analysis unpacks how these **artistic** and **economic logics** operate in reality and how they influence the perceived **success** or **failure** of collaborations. The role of **intrinsic motivation** is prominent within the collaborations, with an emphasis on how the conditions from an organization can sustain or suppress the intrinsic motivation. With both of their perspectives, the artistic and corporate, it enables an exploration of how collaboration can lead to **mutual benefit** or **disconnection**, which depends on the extent to which the value systems are respected as well as aligned (Eikhof & Haunschild, 2007; Frey, 1997; Ryan & Deci, 2000).

The findings of the interviews have revealed that there is clear evidence for two different value systems, which are described in cultural economics as **value-based rationalities** (Klamer, 1997, 2020). The **participants from the corporations** have framed their motivation through a strategic logic. This logic focuses on **branding, CSR, or employee engagement**. These motivations then correspond with what Throsby (2000) and Klamer (1997) have identified as **instrumental** or **economic values**. This is consistent with the economic logic, by which outcomes are evaluated based on their **efficiency, reputation, or innovation gains** (Eikhof & Haunschild, 2007).

Although **branding** seems to be the most prominent reasoning for corporations, the findings revealed that corporations use art not solely for visibility, but also as a part of a broader effort to shape what the company is becoming and what they want to become. One of the interviewees emphasized, “It should not be what we want to look like, but who we want to become.” (Interviewee 5, Business side, CEO). This aligns with the perspective that art can help signal **authenticity, corporate identity, and innovation** (Baumgarth, 2018; Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2008).

Opposed to this, the artist approached a collaboration through the lens of **cultural value**, particularly emphasizing its **symbolic dimension**. This focuses on **authenticity, ethical alignment, and autonomy**. The artists’ motivation behind this was found in their **intrinsic values**, such as the need to engage in **creative exploration, convey meaning, and challenge**

norms. This is also in line with the **cultural logic** as emphasized by Eikhof and Haunschild (2007), as well as the framing of the **symbolic goods** by Klammer (1997) and Throsby (2000).

Moreover, the artists carefully look at whether the corporation's **culture, public behaviour, and their culture** align with their own values. By doing so, the artist can use this to draw a clear boundary to protect their **creative identity**, which is driven by their **intrinsic motivation**. One of the artists mentioned, "They have to want me for my voice, not because they need something to be done" (Interviewee 3, artist, artistic side). This statement underlines the tension that has been identified by Eikhof & Haunschild (2007), where the artistic logic conflicts with **commercial agendas**.

This highlights a fundamental distinction between the value systems, which is supported by Eikhof & Haunschild's (2007) theory of **conflicting logics** within a cross-sector collaboration. These tensions can arise when there is a **misalignment of expectations**, especially when a corporation expects deliverables without clear communication about the corporation's expectations or when they impose constraints that can hinder the **artistic freedom**.

4.5.2 Intrinsic motivation and crowding effects

An important finding from the research was the role of **intrinsic motivation** and how this is and can be influenced by **corporate behaviour**. By drawing on the **crowding theory** of Frey (1997) and the **self-determination theory** from Ryan & Deci (2000), the findings illustrate how an external intervention can enhance (**crowding-in**) or diminish (**crowding-out**) the intrinsic motivation of an artist. In cases where a corporation would offer **recognition, clear communication, and artistic freedom**, the artist felt **empowered** as well as **creatively fulfilled**. These collaborations can then make space for results such as a **deeper personal growth**. This affirms Ryan and Deci's (2000) emphasis on **relatedness, competence, and autonomy**, as drivers for intrinsic motivation. Some artistic interviewees described collaboration as a space for **growth and conceptual exchange**, which enables both sides to be invested intellectually as well as emotionally. Therefore, such collaborations are not a typical transactional relationship, but these are **co-creative partnerships**. These partnerships have been subscribed as **gift economies**, where the symbolic and relational value will outweigh the financial exchange (Zelizer, 1998).

Nevertheless, when a corporation sets restrictions or edits the final work, the artists described to feel **alienated**. Their creative process then becomes **task-driven**, which reduces

the artist to a service provider. Such situations are constantly described by the artists as **demotivating** and lead to a detachment of the final outcome. These responses support the theoretical risk of **crowding-out**, where the **intrinsic and symbolic value** is overridden by **extrinsic demands** (Frey, 1997; Petrova, 2020).

4.5.3 Tensions around commodification and branding

Some of the artists mentioned a feeling of frustration when the engagement was superficial, or that they experienced the feeling of their work being **instrumentalized**. This is in line with **Baudrillard's** (1972) concern about **commodification**, where the **artistic value** becomes reduced to a **market value**. More specifically, the participants mentioned that the constraints from branding, editing, or global outsourcing undermined the **cultural value** of the artwork. This experience creates a tension between supporting the **local creative ecosystem** and **global outsourcing**. It can then, in turn, raise questions about the corporations and their long-term commitment to **cultural value** instead of **transactional convenience**, as addressed by **Velthuis** (2013).

The artists who participated in this study have emphasized that their work holds a broad spectrum of **cultural value**, including **authenticity, aesthetic expression, and symbolic meaning**, rather than being reduced to its commercial or decorative appeal. This is in line with **Throsby's** (2000) conceptualization of cultural value as multi-dimensional.

4.5.4 Art as a reflective and innovative tool

Furthermore, the findings confirmed the perspective **that art acts as a reflective and relational tool**. This reinforces the theoretical framing of **cognitive diversity** and the **innovation commons**, where several stimuli have the ability to spark **creative thinking** as well as empathy within organizations (Page, 2008; Potts, 2019). In practice, art created **conversations** and new forms of **engagement** for the corporations. This also suggests that there is a successful alignment between the intent of the collaboration and the actual outcome. The value of art lies within its capacity to **provoke reflection**, which can improve the **cultural depth** and **employee interaction**.

4.5.5 Types of collaboration and their impact

The research in this thesis also revisits the three different types of collaboration outlined in the theoretical framework: **sponsorships, co-creation, and corporate collaborations** (J. E.

Schroeder, 2005; Zelizer, 1998). A **sponsorship** often appears to be the most **transactional relationship**. These types of collaborations were the ones that were most likely to lead to **crowding-out effects**. In contrast, **co-creative collaborations** provided a space within the collaboration **for open dialogue and mutual respect**. Such collaborations were the most prone to crowding-in, where the artist felt seen, trusted, and heard. The **corporate collections** varied in their effect on collaborations. Some of these provided genuine efforts to integrate the art into the workplace and its culture, while others functioned more like an **image management tool** for the corporation. These different types of collaboration have allowed the research to map different practices across the spectrum that goes from **transactional** to **relational**. This can provide insights into what structure is able to promote **artistic integrity** and **equity**.

4.5.6 Evaluation of hypotheses

The **hypotheses** that have been introduced in the theoretical framework can now be evaluated against the findings, combined with the theoretical framework itself.

H1: Collaborations with high creative autonomy will lead to crowding-in intrinsic artistic motivation.

The analysis suggests that artists are indeed motivated by experiences of **creative autonomy** in the context of collaboration. Within every case, the artist mentioned **creative autonomy**. Collaborations with high creative autonomy allowed the artist to **express their vision, feel intellectually engaged, and explore new ideas**. The findings from the research is directly aligned with **Frey's (1997) crowding-in concept** and the **self-determination theory of Ryan & Deci (2000)**, which highlights the importance of **autonomy** for intrinsic motivation. The interviews of this research also confirmed that when corporations had respect for the **vision and voice** of the artist, the outcome was **personally enriching**, instead of only aesthetically or artistically satisfying.

H2: Collaborations that are driven by corporate branding or agendas set by the corporation are more likely to crowd out intrinsic motivation of the artist.

The analysis suggests that **brand-driven collaboration**, particularly when it restricts the artist's input, tends to negatively impact the artist's **intrinsic motivation**. These findings

align with the theoretical concerns that were raised by **Frey (1997)** and **Petrova (2020)**. Whenever a collaboration was driven by **branding goals**, without leaving space for negotiation or to understand the **artistic value**, the artists experienced **detachment and frustration**. Such scenarios of a collaboration would involve **redirection, strategic control, or editing** of the artwork's meaning. In these collaborations, the **sense of purpose** of the artist was **undermined**, and they felt that their **intrinsic motivation** was **diminished**. Nevertheless, there was one way in which this could be prevented. In a case where the agenda towards branding was discussed upfront and **transparently**, and the artist still felt **aligned**, the collaboration remained **motivating** for the artist. This nuance provides a suggestion that **transparency** can act as a **moderator** for branding-focused projects.

H3: The perceived financial support of the corporation, such as fair compensation, moderates the relationship between extrinsic rewards and artistic motivation.

The findings suggest that **perceived support from organizations**, such as logistical facilitation or **fair compensation**, can have a positive influence on the artists' experience of the collaboration. In line with the notion of **Frey (1997)** that financial incentives do not necessarily **crowd-out motivation**, if they are combined with **autonomy** and **recognition**. The artistic participants were open to **financial rewards** for the collaboration, and in many cases could appreciate a form of **compensation**. However, they did emphasize that it was necessary to keep their **motivation** intact, which needed to be done by **artistic freedom and respect**. There was **one deviation from the findings with the theory**, when the artist would place **relatively low importance on compensation**, even when this was a generous amount, if other artistic values were compromised. This suggests that support cannot override the fundamental needs for **trust** and **authorship**, even though support is important to the artist.

Taken together, this research confirms that the **artist-corporate collaboration** is not purely a **commercial transaction**. The collaborations are complex **value negotiations**, which involve **identity, relational ethics, and symbolic meaning**. When both the artist and corporation enter the collaboration with **mutual respect, clear expectations**, and an understanding of each other's **values**, the outcome is more likely to be **mutually beneficial**. This finding reinforces the importance of **reciprocity** (Gray, 2009), the alignment of **value systems** (Klamer, 2020), and **cooperation networks** (Becker, 1982) in designing a meaningful and mutual cultural partnership.

Value	Artists' perspective – Understanding & attributes	Artists' perspective – Experiences	Corporations' perspective – Understanding & attributes	Corporations' perspective – Experience
Artistic freedom	Creative autonomy. The ability to express their vision, without constraints.	Valued highly. This is often compromised during a collaboration when expectations are not clearly set.	Acknowledged as important, but often limited to practical needs, such as branding.	Sometimes constraining it for branding alignment.
Trust	The artwork will not be changed. Conceptual and emotional trust.	Critical aspect for feeling respected, and to maintain motivation.	Operational trust. Belief in the artist's responsibility.	It is often given, but it rarely involves a deeper engagement after the collaboration.
Clarity of expectations	There is a need for clear communication for the beginning, and contracts to protect their creative perspective.	This is often not met. Ambiguity leads to crowding-out of intrinsic motivation.	Important to communicate the vision and the desired outcome.	Sometimes it is unclear or the expectations change throughout the process.
Shared vision	Ethical and aesthetic alignment. Co-creation is chosen over commission.	When this was present, the collaboration was fulfilling and stimulating on an intellectual level.	This is used to justify their artists selection.	Sometimes this is assumed rather than discussed, which leads to misalignments.
Cultural value	Art is seen as symbolic, socially and emotionally relevant for their expression.	Frustration when the artwork was used solely as decoration or for branding.	This is used to boost their internal culture, signal identity, and foster innovation.	This was realized when the artwork sparked dialogue between the employees.
Professionalism & communication	Respecting time, meeting deadlines, and clear updates. This is seen as obvious, but crucial.	This is not always reciprocated, especially after the artwork has been delivered.	It is appreciated. The clarity of the artistic process was valued.	This was not central to the evaluation, but it was appreciated.

Table 1: Overview results

5. Conclusion

This thesis examined the dynamics of a collaboration between artists and corporations with a specific focus on the research question: *What factors ensure that corporations and artists benefit mutually from their collaborations?* To address this question, a value-based theoretical framework was developed and applied to the data collection through 10 in-depth interviews with participants from both the organizational and artistic sides. These interviews allowed for an exploration of the motivations, tensions, expectations, and outcomes from both perspectives.

The findings revealed that, although **collaboration between a corporation and an artist** is becoming increasingly common, the success of such collaborations depends on the degree of respect for **creative autonomy, intrinsic motivation, and value alignment**. The findings also confirmed that both parties cite **artistic freedom** as important, but that they interpret the concept differently. For the artist, artistic freedom is deeply tied to **intrinsic motivation, authorship, and cultural value**. However, for corporations, artistic freedom is tied to **logistical constraints, internal culture building, and branding objectives**.

This research emphasizes that **mutual benefit** can be achieved when a collaboration is built on **shared values, reciprocity, and clear communication**. These findings align with the theoretical concepts of **crowding-in versus crowding-out** (Frey, 1997), **gift economies** (Zelizer, 1998), and the coexistence of **cultural and economic logics** (Eikhof & Haunschild, 2007). The **positive** experiences of artists in collaborations often involved projects that offered **trust, conceptual space, and acknowledgement of their vision**. When a project was **directive, transactional**, or when the corporation would **alter the final work**, the artist expressed a sense of **demotivation and dissatisfaction**.

The insights from this research have **several implications** for corporations. Organizations that wish to engage meaningfully with artists should integrate **value-based collaboration strategies** into their broader cultural and corporate social responsibility (CSR) agendas. They should not only focus on using art to decorate the workplace or to enhance their image, but the organizations should also use the collaborations to **foster empathy, authentic engagement, and internal innovation**. For artists, the research shows that it is important for the artist to clearly articulate their boundaries, expectations, and values when entering into a partnership with a corporation. Artists who were able to retain their creative autonomy reported greater satisfaction, but also professional and artistic growth. A collaboration that offered conceptual freedom and trust resulted in an artwork that was personally meaningful as well as socially impactful. Such partnership allowed artists to reach new audiences and engage with an new and unfamiliar context, which sparked intellectual stimulation and creative exploration.

This thesis contributes to the field of **cultural economics** by providing an analysis that uses empirical qualitative data to illustrate the **economic and cultural logics** that interact in the collaborations between an artist and a corporation (Eikhof & Haunschild, 2007). It also provides evidence from the real world on the dynamics that are described in the theories of **valuation** and the **gift economy** (Klamer, 1997; Throsby, 2000; Zelizer, 1998). By providing insights into the different motivations, practices, and expectations from both parties, the study highlights that collaborations are not only **functional partnerships for aesthetics** but also **negotiations of cultural, economic, and symbolic value**. It can provide a foundation for future partnerships between a corporation and an artist when it is structured with **mutual respect, durability, and greater sensitivity**.

That said, the **scope of the study is limited** by several factors. Firstly, the sample size was small, and it was drawn from **personal connections**. This introduces the possibility of selection bias. Although this approach yielded rich and trusting interviews, it does limit the **generalizability** of the results and may skew perspectives towards a more self-selected, experienced group of participants. As most of the artists were already well-established, it can likely influence how they managed value tensions and how they approached collaboration. Their insights may therefore differ from those of **emerging artists, artists from marginalized backgrounds**, or those who work in a different regional or disciplinary context.

Looking at these limitations, **future research should adopt a more diverse and systematic sampling strategy**, such as **snowball sampling**, to capture a broader range of voices. Next to that, studies could explore how collaborations unfold **across different industries, phases of an artist's career, or geographies**. It is also interesting to focus on early-career artists who may have less power during the negotiation and face a higher risk of crowding out their intrinsic motivation. Another important take for future research is to track collaborations **over time** through longitudinal studies. With a longitudinal study, future research could observe how relationships develop, whether the benefits or harms of a collaboration persist, and how value alignment evolves.

In conclusion, this research demonstrates that collaborations between artists and corporations are not merely commercial arrangements or aesthetic add-ons. Instead, they represent the intersection of a distinction between cultural and economic logics, where the success lies not in compromising, but in thoughtful integration. When these partnerships are guided by **mutual respect, recognition of different motivations, and open communication**, they have the potential to foster **authenticity, innovation, and cultural enrichment**. For

corporations as well as artists, it is essential to understand and honour these underlying logics, as they are crucial to building effective, ethical, and creatively sustainable partnerships.

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Appendix 1. Interview Guide

Interview guide for the business side

Introduction

1. Can you introduce yourself and tell me about what your current function entails?
2. Could you tell me more about your experience with collaboration with artists for corporate collections that you have created?

Attitude towards art

3. What is your attitude towards art?
4. What do you like about it?
5. What do you find the most important in your collaboration?

Collaboration

6. What is the company's main motivation for such collaborations?
7. What do you think are crucial steps to take to create a collaboration between an artist and the business side?
8. What are the expectations that the companies have when having a collaboration with an artist?
9. Did you ever talk about the experience for the artist afterward? If so, what was the feedback from them?
10. A lot of art collections are done for branding, how do you perceive this statement?

Valuation of important characteristics when collaborating

11. There is a presumption within the literature that has been recovered for this research that when there is a strong artistic motivation, which is called intrinsic motivation for the artist, the artist needs to be driven by this for the collaboration to work. What do you observe regarding this statement?
12. Do you recognize this in the experience?
13. How do you experience this?
14. What is a barrier to collaboration? Or was it a rather flowing collaboration?
15. Do you experience obstacles?
16. What are the outcomes of the collaboration? What do you find the most important in the collaboration?

17. Now that you have a list of the most important characteristics of collaborating, please distribute 100 points across these characteristics.

Interview guide for the artistic side

Introduction

1. Can you introduce yourself and tell me about what your current function entails?
2. What do you find the most important in your work in general?
3. Could you tell me more about your experience with collaboration with companies for corporate collections that you have created?

Collaboration

4. What were your expectations before the collaborations happened? Did you feel that these expectations were in line with reality?
5. Do the companies reach out to you?
6. What is your motivation behind collaborating with corporations?
7. Do you think there are negative consequences attached to collaborations with companies? If so, what would these negative outcomes be?

Valuation

8. There is a presumption within the literature that has been recovered for this research that when there is a strong artistic motivation, which is called intrinsic motivation for the artist, the artist needs to be driven by this for the collaboration to work. What do you observe regarding this statement?
9. Did you experience any crowding-out of your own interest?
10. Did you have constraints for your artistic autonomy?
11. What do you find the most important in collaboration with the businesses?
12. Listing a few of these qualities, let's distribute 100 points among these.
13. What are the positive take-aways for your collaborations with companies?

Appendix 2. List of interviewee

Business side	Occupation	Nationality	Date and place	Duration	Language
<i>Interviewee 1</i>	Art Manager of Company A, <i>in the financial sector</i>	Dutch	13.04.2025 – Microsoft Teams	35 minutes	Dutch
<i>Interviewee 2</i>	CEO of Company B, <i>focused on creating a creative (co)-working space</i>	Dutch	14.04.2025 – Microsoft Teams	57 minutes	Dutch
<i>Interviewee 3</i>	Curator of Company C, <i>in the financial sector</i>	Dutch	17.04.2025 – Microsoft Teams	32 minutes	Dutch
<i>Interviewee 4</i>	Art manager Company D, <i>in consultancy</i>	French	23.04.2025 – Microsoft Teams	32 minutes	English
<i>Interviewee 5</i>	CEO of Company E, <i>focusing on creative consultancy</i>	French	30.04.2025 – In person	41 minutes	Dutch

Artistic side	Occupation	Nationality	Date and place	Duration	Language
<i>Interviewee 1</i>	Visual artist	Dutch	10.04.2025 – Microsoft Teams	37 minutes	Dutch
<i>Interviewee 2</i>	Visual artist	Dutch	13.04.2025 – In person	40 minutes	Dutch
<i>Interviewee 3</i>	Visual artist	South-African	20.04.2025 – Microsoft Teams	42 minutes	English
<i>Interviewee 4</i>	Visual artist	South-African	24.04.2025 – Microsoft Teams	40 minutes	English
<i>Interviewee 5</i>	Visual artist	French	17.05.2025 – In person	47 minutes	English

Appendix 3. Code book

Code category	Codes
Collaboration	Branding Budget Commercial incentives Dialogue Mutual Partnerships Shared values
Outcome of collaboration	Artist benefit Benefit for companies Branding Communication Conflict Dialogue Clash of values Instrumentalization of art Marketing Negative consequences Outcome for artists Outcome Value – shared values or clash of values
Reasons to create art/Intrinsic artistic motivation	Art for expression Asking questions Internal urge Necessity (not intrinsic) – motivations for their collaboration – social support, financial support Thought process Understanding life
Artistic freedom	Constraints Creating Creation

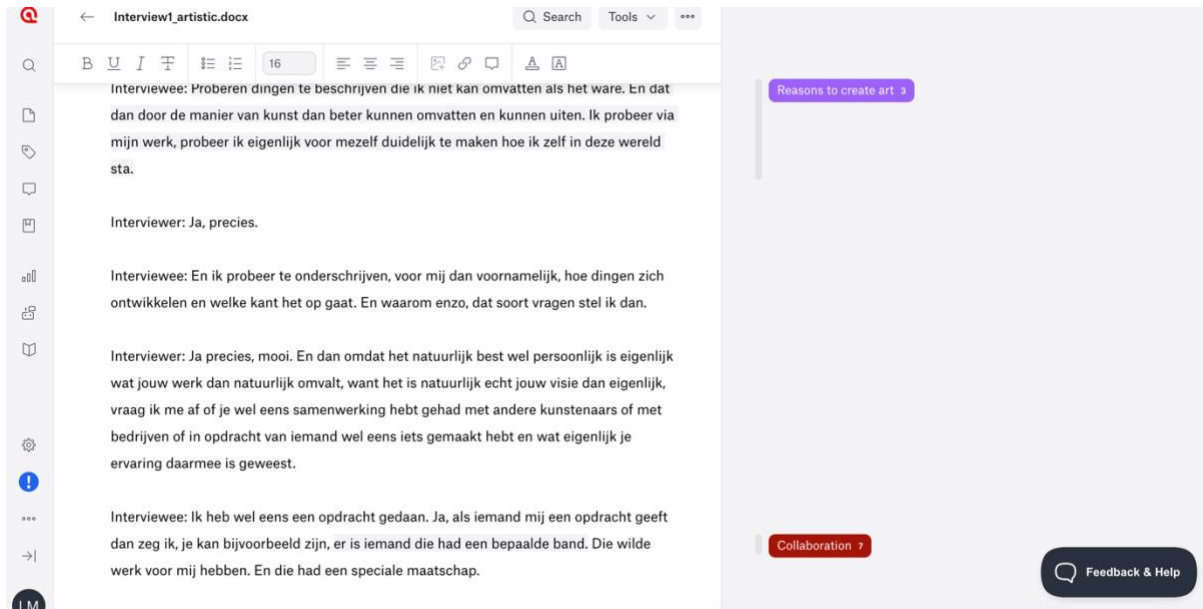
	<p>Freedom</p> <p>Guidelines</p> <p>Intrinsic motivation</p> <p>No constraints</p>
Steps to collaboration	<p>Negotiation</p> <p>Partner</p> <p>Selection process</p> <p>Shared values</p> <p>Steps</p>
Motivation for collaboration: for artists and for corporates – put as nr. 1	<p>Broader audience</p> <p>Chemistry</p> <p>Commission</p> <p>Mutual respect</p> <p>Reach bigger societal goal</p> <p>Response employees</p> <p>Shared values</p> <p>Time frame</p>
Getting a match	<p>Balance</p> <p>Communication</p> <p>Match</p> <p>Mutual respect</p> <p>Negotiation</p> <p>Partner selection</p> <p>Prior research</p> <p>Relationship</p> <p>Right fit</p> <p>Role division</p> <p>Shared vision</p> <p>Time frame</p>
Benefits for company	<p>Accessibility to culture</p> <p>Benefits for brand</p> <p>Contribution</p> <p>Dialogue</p>

	Employee branding Impact New insights Positive media Social contribution Starting conversations
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Appendix 4. Use of AI

It needs to be stated that this research was conducted without the help of AI. However, for analyzing a large part of the interviews, an AI-powered tool was used to help get an overview. This was Atlas. TI. This helped to analyze the qualitative data and have a good overview with quotes to go back to for the results. In Atlas. TI, the interviews were uploaded. Then all interviews were reviewed manually, and they were highlighted based on the code created in the codebook (Appendix 3). With the help of Atlas. TI, an easy overview was created to see what codes could be found in which interview. In doing so, the right quotation could be found to write the results to the best of my ability. For this, it is important to note that Atlas. TI did not create any coding for the codebook. It merely acted as a device to create an easy overview of quotations to go back to. An example of what was done, will be shown below.

Next to that, to ensure a cohesive storyline for the thesis, Grammarly was used. This was used to make sure that the tone of the thesis was coherent. It is important to note that, even though Grammarly suggested improvements, these were not always used, as I did not think that this would fit my way of explaining or that it would fit the thesis itself in language. This tool is integrated into Word, so no prompts were used for this.



Picture 3: Example of how Atlas. TI was used