

# **Experience by artists in broedplaatsen Trav12 and de Biotoop of the creative city Groningen and its dynamics**

Bachelors Project

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## Abstract

Literature describes the existence of different experienced 'worlds' in the creative process of a city, with each their interests in creativity in the city and their own set of abilities within this creative process. So-called middlegrounds can connect these worlds and make their interests line up better. Certain sources imply and state that broedplaatsen can fulfill this position. However, there is little literature on how these dynamics are experienced by the artists in these broedplaatsen themselves. Consequently, this research will look into these dynamics in the context of the creative city Groningen.

To answer this, a qualitative approach is taken, with mainly in-depth interviews with artists and an additional small policy document analysis of the creative policies of the municipality of Groningen to be able to present the creative city context in which these experienced and perceived dynamics take place.

The results mainly include that there seems to be a substantial gap between the idea of what creativity can bring a society between artists and the municipality and the consequential facilitation of the municipality in this. As well as the manner of organisation matters in the broedplaats being a middleground or not. Future research suggestions include looking into networks in the networks of subsidized music talent coaches and sub-renting in broedplaatsen.

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## Introduction

The concept of the creative city has become a popularized trend in policymaking in the last decade and has become close to being normalized (Beaumont, 2016). This is caused by the global competition for creative industries to keep their city “unique and particular enough” as a consequence of commodification and a highly competitive economy (Colomb 2012, p.142; Harvey, 2001), as well as the constant search for the working class to differentiate themselves from the traditional working class. The creative city concept supplies this according to Florida (2008;2010), as it would create a fertile ground for the creative class to innovate and subsequently bring wealth and economic growth.

The concept however has often been critiqued, as the logic behind the concept and the consequences for application have been seen as way more involved and bigger than they are. As well as that it could be stated that these policies were used by and for certain groups of urban elites, without having any too few benefits for low-income and general societal classes, as well as deprived neighborhoods (Beaumont, 2016). Kunzmann (2010) even refers to it as the ‘creative city fever’.

This phenomenon is also recognized in the use of temporary uses spaces, one of which are so-called creative ‘breeding grounds’ or in Dutch ‘broedplaatsen’. These spaces do have the capacity to become a great benefit to contemporary urban culture, this includes that they can have highly successful, innovative, and inclusive effects (SUC, 2003). However, just as the general concept of the creative city, the societal and cultural benefits are contested by capitalist benefits. This is expressed by the use of these spaces for cities their place marketing, as well as the pressure of urban development where these empty spaces could be used for. This in turn undermines the experimental nature and existence of these spaces (Colomb, 2012). These different interests come in interaction with each other in the so-called ‘middleground’ of the creative process in the city, and literature considers broedplaatsen as one of these middlegrounds (Jakob and van Heur, 2015).

Colomb (2012) consequently poses the question of what the implications and meaning of these policy systems are on the users and uses of these spaces. Especially as these theories mentioned above are mainly written from an economic capitalist perspective and not focused directly upon these creative classes, only as them being producers. In this paper these questions are expressed as what the consequences of this instrumentalization of this temporary use of creative workers for policy objectives will be for the users of these places, and poses whether these temporary users are thus mere ‘gap-fillers’ until the capitalist market has a new purpose for the place and can return to the regulatory urban planning.

The expression of these concerns by the users and for their uses themselves can be found in the realm of the right to the (creative) city (Novy & Colomb, 2012). An outing of these concerns by the users and for their uses can be classified as expressions of the right to the creative city idea. The right to the (creative) city idea involves that different way than relying on top-down capitalism means as a way development of space is possible (Berfelde, 2021).

Some of the ‘members of the creative class’, mainly artists, have become a powerful voice in the battle against the current way of urban order. One in which current-day neoliberal practices in policy agendas are coming under pressure, especially the ones involving the creative city idea as a way to complement and quickly fix these practices (Novy & Colomb, 2012).

The paper by Novy and Colomb (2012) further specifically addresses the need to further research how these ‘creatives’ can use their position in the creative city to express their concerns regarding the creative city policies.

This paper will investigate these questions posed above in the context of the municipality of Groningen. One of the ways that Groningen presents itself is as a ‘city of talent’ (Groningen, 2020a), which insinuates that the municipality has a creative city policy approach. Accordingly, the municipality has certain policy documents that align with this idea.

## **Research question**

The research gaps presented in the first part of the introduction and the context of the municipality of Groningen area present the following research question:

How do artists in Trav12 and de Biotoop experience the influences of creative city policies on their creative practices and how are their interests represented in the middleground of the creative city Groningen?

The following sub-questions help to answer the main research question:

- What are the creative city policies of the city of Groningen?
- How do artists experience the influences of creative city policies on their creative practices?
- How are the interests of artists represented in the middleground?

## **Structure of thesis**

The thesis is structured in the following manner. Starting with the theoretical framework, which contains an overarching conceptual model of these theories as well. Thereafter, the methodology section explains the way that the research was conducted, the choices made in this, and some background to the case study locations. After that the results are represented of the research, and whereafter the discussion of these results takes place, future research suggestions are given, strengths and weaknesses of the research are pointed out and a conclusion is given to the research.

# Theoretical framework

## 1. – the creative city

The creative city concept holds the use of 'creativity' in urban policy, this is as the people in the creative sector create beneficial externalities for a society, which is the consequential underlying interest and idea behind creativity in the city region. The concept originates from the work of Richard Florida (2002a; 2002b; 2002c; 2003; 2007), Mellander and Stollerick (Florida et al., 2008; 2010), which has had a large influence upon policy practices regarding creativity aspects according to Borén and Young (2012). The central notion of this work is that for city regions to develop to become a successful city region, they must become 'attractive' to the group of creatives, as they create these externalities that are an indispensable component of this success (Borén & Young, 2012).

### 1.1 - Creative city dynamics

The city can be an interesting place in terms of creativity for both artists and policymakers as partly stated above. Consequently, there is not just one stakeholder in the idea of creativity in a particular city. Therefore, certain dynamics come into play. To explain these effects on and experiences of and behavior between stakeholders whereunder artists, an interaction model is needed that includes these factors. It also needs to be able to be placed in different cities, as the context of these also decides how the creative process plays out. Cohendet, Grandadam, and Simon (2010) gives one of these models, which is commonly used to better understand the dynamics of creativity and their embeddedness in space. It explains the dynamics of the transferring of knowledge within the creative city, however in doing so the dynamics between different actors are also explained.

It divides the creative processes in an 'innovative milieu', a city with these characteristics which are implied by certain municipalities to be theirs, into three so-called 'worlds'; the upperground, middleground, and underground. Each one is characterized by a unique set of characteristics that that 'world' has. Each 'world' has its kind of abilities and interests in the creative process in the city (Cohendet et al., 2010).

A 'language barrier' exists between the upper and underground meaning that they cannot communicate directly in terms of their interests, also indicated by Borén and Young (2012) around their concept of the need for translation of ideas between these 'worlds', that comes to be as of the corporate logic of standardization where these 'creatives' don't fit into, this formal 'world' is indicated in the theory as the 'upperground'. This 'world' has the ability, which the under and middleground don't have, of either exposure of expressions of creativity to the economic market by firms, as well as government bodies that have regulatory power over creative processes. The 'creatives' share a set of tacit norms between themselves, which are outside of the interests of commercialized and industrialized economic activities. This informal 'world' is indicated in the theory as the 'underground' (Cohendet et al., 2010).

These commercial and industrial worlds have an interest in the innovation knowledge that comes from these *undergrounds*. This knowledge can't however be directly conveyed from the *underground* to the *upperground* as of the different *languages* stated above, and there consequently is an intermediary needed. There is a group of people that can do this, which are termed to be in the *middleground* 'world'. This also means that these *middlegrounds* can communicate between both 'worlds' (Cohendet et al., 2010).

### 2.0 – Middleground

Lange and Schüßler (2018) address that the middleground has the function of a mediating role between the interests of the *upperground* and the *underground*. This is partly described by Cohendet et al. (2010) as the need for translation between the 'languages' between these 'worlds'. This is also a need described by Borén and Young (2012), as indicated in part one of the

theoretical framework, as the need for translation and the difference between the ideas of creativity of the upper and underground, being the differences in interests.

Consequently, middlegrounds have certain characteristics that create a situation for mediation, and thus also translation that is intertwined in the mediation, that constitutes them. These characteristics for mediation are a combination of space, place, and collective of actors, which form a phenomenon wherein interactions and (temporary) exchanges are facilitated between the upper and underground (Lange & Schüßler, 2018). This creates a setting wherein genuine and active translation of these interests can happen between the upper and underground, as this genuine and active part is vital, contrary to passive transmission (Borén & Young, 2012). Lange and Schüßler (2018), however, indicate that there is little research on how they come to mediate. Additionally, the middleground can become a conflicted arena when the *underground* interests are politically not represented well enough (Verschelden et al., 2012).

According to Jakob and van Heur (2015) these middlegrounds “range from arts and cultural councils, policy networks, economic development agencies, foundations and unions to artist collectives, cultural centres, creative industries incubators, festivals, and tradeshows”(p.357).

### **2.1 – Artist’s struggles / precariousness**

To be able to understand these dynamics themselves, for mediation and experience of creative policies, an understanding of artists’ daily ordinary struggles of precariousness in the creative sector is important. This precarity holds very low pay, working long unpaid hours, and grim working conditions (Alacovska, 2018). Alacovska (2018) puts this precariousness as an enduring factor that impacts the artists’ whole lives, regardless of age.

### **2.2 – Temporary use spaces**

One of the places where this creativity takes place is temporary use spaces. These are spaces that were no longer in use and vacant and have been taken into use by individuals with the purpose of creative activities, who use the space temporarily. Becker (2010) explains that these places are suitable for creative workers, because of certain characteristics of this group.

Madanipour (2017) emphasizes the low-cost nature of these spaces which in turn offer possibilities that would otherwise not be possible, because of the too high costs. As stated in 2.1, this is one of the factors of precarity which artists are involved with.

### **2.3 – Broedplaatsen**

Broedplaatsen are, under certain conditions, one of those places that can fall under these temporary spaces. These so-called broedplaatsen are not clearly defined in literature, therefore a definition based on some of its functions is given. Alagic and de Zwart (2022) state that broedplaatsen are, amongst other aspects, spaces for creative workers which simultaneously, are a business space, a network, a social facility, a part of the cultural infrastructure, not always but often a form of vacancy management.

This also holds that such a broedplaats has ‘results’ for the creative workers themselves, as well as the surroundings. For the creative workers themselves it holds that the place has the function of a working place, and social functions which have further benefits.

The main driver behind the results of the social function is physical closeness between creative workers (Wijngaarden, Hitters & Bhansing, 2020; Drake, 2003). This first of has a consequence of a certain social atmosphere called ‘buzz’, practically being a network of weak social ties. This is good for exposure to innovative new ideas of each other and the existence of ‘barter economies’ in which informal help and work is exchanged. Secondly, the stimulation of formation of businesses and trustful relationships. This in turn causes the saving of time, and effort, as of the

physical closeness between these relations, as well as quick informal face-to-face interactions. Thirdly, it closes the gap between formal education and the creative labor market, as schools generally don't provide the needed entrepreneurial and creative learning. These places often exchange best practices in entrepreneurship as well as the tacit knowledge in this (Wijngaarden et al., 2020; Drake, 2003).

These social aspects could function on the concept of 'hope', as these seemingly overlap with the idea of hope presented by Alacovska (2018) for dealing with the precariousness of being an artist mentioned in 2.1. This concept holds that these places also function as a way of mentally coping with the precariousness of the creative sector. Which consequently results in comradeship, helping each other, and forming social and political movements.

For the surroundings broedplaatsen can have important roles in society, which vary in ways of this, and these kinds of spaces as a community can be part of the different chains of value creation (Alagic & de Zwart, 2022).

### **2.3.1 - Broedplaats middleground attributes**

Broedplaatsen organize, plan, and facilitate space, in a physical way as well as a mental way, with and towards the other 'worlds' outside of the underground world. This organization, planning, and facilitating make it possible for creative practices to take place, and how well this is done influences again how well these creative workers can carry out their practices (Alagic & de Zwart, 2022).

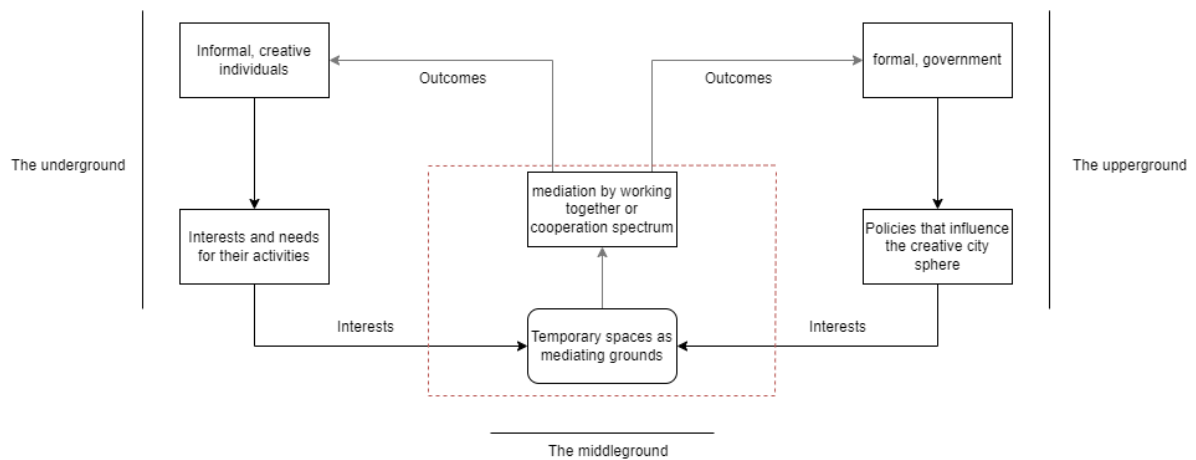
The extent to how well this is done is dependent upon the concept of resilience; The more the creative place can represent itself positively in society and have worth for external stakeholders, the better it can represent the interests of the artists towards the upperground (Alagic & de Zwart, 2022). This means that a broedplaats creates its own cultural value, as well as creating value in its surroundings; being the economy, wellbeing, and spatial development.

Initiators of broedplaatsen are often artists themselves (Alagic & de Zwart, 2022). This indicates a form of organization, being self-organization. One of the aspects of self-organization is that self-organization is a process of struggling and improvisation to bring each other's interests in line, and commitment to organize themselves consequently. Differences in the success of self-organization also lay in the density and extent of social networks of these organizations, and to what extent they were developed or even developed before the broedplaats existence (Uitermark, 2015). Thus, the historical information of the space is of importance to understanding the organization of such a place.



## Conceptual model

The conceptual model shows in red what this research will look at, being the middleground dynamics, in relation to its context being outside of the red rectangle. The main concept behind conceptual model one is based on the work of Cohendet et al. (2010).



(image 1: made by Author)

It shows the different actors in the creative process in a city, who interact in the middleground in terms of their interests. The dynamics of this middleground consequently can be between cooperation and conflict as indicated by Verschelden et al. (2012). The 'outcomes' refer to the outcomes of the mediation, which consequently have a result on the parties their interests and needs being further fulfilled or not.

## Methodology

### Approach

A qualitative approach was taken in this research, as the goals of the research are to increase the understanding of concepts and experiences. This corresponds with the goal of the research which looks at the experiences of artists of policies and perceptions and experiences on the representation of interests in the middleground.

Furthermore, a case study method is chosen as this research tries to look at the dynamics within the creative city, not just describe them, by looking at two cases. This is of importance as the boundaries between the context and the phenomena are for at least some part unknown (Punch, 2014). The specific type being collective case study, as the research looks at two cases to also try to contribute to theory by generalization, by adding to conceptualization (Punch 2014).

### Case selection

Recently a protest happened in Groningen (20 Januari 2024), in which it was i.e. indicated that the amount of creative 'broedplaatsen' are limited and that most of these spaces are within the Trav12 and de Biotoop buildings (Scheffer, 2024). Consequently, this research will look at these two broedplaats locations, as they are perceived as important in at least the number of spaces.

<u>Broedplaats location</u>	<b>De Biotoop</b>	<b>Trav12</b>
<u>Location</u>	Haren, municipality Groningen	Groningen, municipality Groningen
<u>short term future</u>	Insured until 2028.	Insured until the coming 4 months.
<u>Long term future</u>	Unknown	Unknown
<u>Ownership location</u>	Municipality, was previously owned by Rijksuniversiteit Groningen.	Municipality
<u>Functions</u>	Studio, office, and living functions.	Studio, office, and living functions.
<u>Amount of people</u>	more than 100 entrepreneurs, 150 artists, and 180 inhabitants.	Smaller in number of users than de Biotoop.
<u>Major organisation(s)</u>	CareX and a user's association	CareX

### Primary data

Semi-structured in-depth interviews were chosen as the interviewing method to interview the artists, to answer sub research question 2 and 3. This method is chosen, as it allows for a balance between exploration allowed for by flexibility and understanding the complexity of their experience and perceptions in context, and on the other side still being able to generalize to a degree, by recognition of patterns and themes. This is important to understand the experiences and perceptions of artists embedded in the context in which the research is interested.

The interviews lasted between 30 and 90 minutes. Seven artists were interviewed and with one additional artist the researcher had a talk (Bram), which followed much of the ideas of a semi-structured in-depth interview. The interviews were conducted following the interview guide (Appendix B), consent forms were used (Appendix A), and the interviews, except the one with Bram, were recorded. The used quotes were translated from Dutch to English.

### Secondary data

To answer sub-question 1, a document analysis of the creative policy documents of the municipality of Groningen is given (Appendix D). This is done to be able to present the creative city context in which these experienced and perceived dynamics of the artists take place (Clifford

et al., 2016). The policy document was executed by summarizing why these policy documents are there and what the goals are of the policies; the goals of the creative city Groningen.

The following two policy documents are selected, as they are the policy documents on creative city policies themselves in Groningen, indicating the municipality's ideas behind them.

<b>Policy document name</b>	<b>Contents of document</b>
Aanpak broedplaatsen Gemeente Groningen, 12 mei 2020	Policy document on broedplaatsen in the municipality of Groningen, which expresses their ambitions on broedplaatsen in the wider framework of policy documents that include art and culture.
Kadernota Cultuur 2021-2028	Policy document on culture and art ambitions of the municipality of Groningen.

### **Participant recruitment**

Participants were selected based on whether they worked in the creative sector from their creativity for themselves and worked in one of the selected broedplaatsen. This was done since there is not one definition that identifies what and who an artist is (Kartunnen, 1998), and thus this self-proclamation is used as this is often used in the selection of artists for studies. However, the interview with Bram was not selected in this manner, this was done based on the position in an organization of de Biotoop, to be able to specifically get more information about this organization.

Participant selection differed at the two locations. Participants at the Biotoop location were selected using convenience sampling, in which the researcher emailed artists who the researcher suspected could identify as artists based on their websites. However, Bram was selected based on opportunistic sampling. Participants at the Trav12 location were selected using opportunistic sampling, in which the researcher visited the place to recruit participants. Jesse was, however, selected based on snowball sampling from this opportunistic sampling.

### **Data analysis**

Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2013) describe the process of qualitative data analysis as having three components that are intertwined. These components are data reduction, data display, drawing and verifying conclusions. Data reduction is done in stages going through summarizing, coding, adding interpretations, finding themes and patterns, and finally by conceptualizing and giving explanations. Data display holds summarizing and organizing of data to be able to have oversight over the data. Drawing and verifying conclusions holds the drawing on conclusions on the above-mentioned steps.

The interviews were transcribed after the interviews, and notes were taken during the interview. Consequently, these interviews were coded in an inductive manner that came up from the interviewees data (Appendix C). Which were used in the drawing of results.

### **Ethics and data management**

The GDPR (2016) was followed for this research and any situations relating to personal data of this research. A consent form was used to inform the interview participants of their rights, what their data would be used for, what the research entailed, and the goal of the research (appendix A). Participants had the right to check their data used in the research process, and revoke access whenever the participants wanted. Integrity and confidentiality were of high priority whilst handling the personal data. Accordingly, the data was anonymized as much as possible. Personal data used in the research will be minimized as much as possible, according to the characteristics of the research. The data of the participants was only used for this research.

The recorded interviews were transferred as soon as possible from the phone and onto the safe storage location. Security of the data was ensured by storing the data in an encrypted format and only accessing this data in a secure environment. This secure environment holds that the data will only be accessed on the researcher's computer behind an encrypted section of storage. Only safe networks were used when accessing the data.

### Interview participants

Participants at both locations their pseudonyms and occupations are the following.

<b>Name (pseudonym)</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Occupation</b>
Ruben (27)	Biotoop	Paintings, drawings, and teacher
Mees (79)	Biotoop	Filmmaker, illustrator
Bram	Biotoop	X (is part of user's association organization)
Sophie (12)	Trav12	Fine art at elementary school
Thijs (18)	Trav12	multimedia or interdisciplinary maker
Anna (43)	Trav12	Producer, and DJ
Jesse (77)	Trav12	Producer, and other activities surrounding music
Sara (28)	Trav12	Illustrator

## Results

### Policy context creative city Groningen

The overarching ideas of the policy documents of creative policies of the municipality of Groningen are the following;

First of all, art and culture have direct benefits for residents of Groningen, as they, according to the municipality, contribute to; the living quality in Groningen of residents, the expression and formation of the identity of residents, societal inclusivity in these cultural contributions, and addressing societal challenges innovatively.

Secondly, by having a diverse and cultural offering of high quality, it can strengthen the economy, and make the city more attractive. With the addition that the development and retaining of talent is important in this.

The broedplaatsen policy adds to these goals two challenges of broedplaatsen, being: The challenge of artists of getting a suitable workspace in the municipality, caused by little spaces being available. And the other is the above-average growth of the creative sector over the last couple of years.

### How do artists in broedplaatsen experience the influences of creative city policies on their creative practice?

#### Experience of creative city policies

The way that the municipality is experienced in the creative sector is primarily through funding and support of creative practices, and real estate owner of usable spaces for creative practices, which both come down to the municipality having a certain societal role regarding culture and art. Ruben explains this role of the municipality towards society:

*“I think many people agree that cities benefit from creativity. Imagine a living environment where only very successful companies work. How much room is there for experiment?”*

*“And so I think that artist.. they must be given the space to do that... ...And not completely safe, but as long as it makes money it is good. No, they must have some space to do creative experiments that sometimes succeed and sometimes fail. Because only then.. Look, if you leave everything to the market, everyone will just make the same thing. And that's another Vincent van Gogh or something, you know?”*

- Ruben

As Ruben indicates creativity in a society creates certain benefits, but they don't necessarily create direct financial outcomes for the artists creating these benefits. Thus, a body must come in that has a responsibility towards the society, which can fund and support these creative practices to gain these benefits for the society, being a governmental body.

The real estate role of the municipality relates to this, as it owns a portion of buildings that are and could be utilized for creative practices, and has the power to decide whether the building will stay or that it will be used for different purposes and the artists have to move out. The ways of funding art and culture were seen as important for funding and complimentary support, provided by different national to municipal government bodies, as well as nongovernmental funds.

#### Perceived current policy obstacles in the facilitation of middlegrounds, in Groningen

There is a perceived discrepancy between what the artists perceive the worth that creativity can bring society to be, and what they perceive the consequential priority of culture and art of the municipality to be. Anna explains this seeming contradiction;

*“Let's just say this is about culture. It is often brushed aside as a fun, creative thing. But I also think nowadays we are... We are increasingly talking about our mental state and so on. And that it is a lot more important than how much money we actually make. I have the impression that the municipality is still lagging behind in this regard.”*

- Anna

Jesse mentions, however, that he does notice an increase in cultural activities on the streets, however, he also still perceives this gap mentioned above. This critique is also noticed in factors that influence their working environment. This is experienced in the following aspects.

The first one is the general decrease of the culture and art budget of governmental bodies since 2009. Thijs indicates that this decrease is complimented by another aspect. The decrease of governmental funding, especially what's left over after the big names in the cultural sector for the smaller cultural producers, and the little to no increase in income in his case ticket prices.

The second is that there are too little number of suitable workspaces for artists in the municipality Groningen. With the associated worry that when they must move out, there are too few of these suitable spaces that have low enough costs for the usage of the space, and creative worth in Groningen is lost as some people must stop or shrink their business activities. Thijs expresses a part of this worry:

*“You know, if we are kicked out of the building. The supply of studio spaces is shokingly low here in the city.”*

*“Because I probably won't find a space like this for the same money next year. That is impossible. So I know I just have to shrink.”*

- Thijs

Thijs indicated here their outlook for when he must move out of the current suitable creative workspaces. Thijs furthermore gave insight into an abandonment of policy associated with this described issue of the stock of workspaces. This policy, the so-called 'atelierbeleid', entailed the existence of a quota for the number of studio spaces for creative workers, with the responsibility being at the municipality itself. In 1992 (Ateliers in Groningen, 2023), however, this responsibility was conveyed to social housing corporations. Which had the consequence of a diminishing stock of working spaces, as well as increasing waiting lists for these workspaces.

*“But I recently read an article, I believe it was on OOG, OOG TV. But a Dutch artist also said there, he was already registered, but then you can wait more than ten years before you have a studio space.”*

Thijs thus indicates the extent of these waiting lists to be long. Accordingly, he mentioned that the other option is vacancy management. However, this has the downside of having little to no rights which artists that rent in social housing to vacancy management do have.

The third is a perceived gap by the interviewees at the Trav12 location in communication channels with the municipality of the perceived value by the artists of the creative activities in Groningen. It is perceived that the municipality doesn't have insight into what the needs are of the place, as well as what kind of creative value there is within.

Fourth, opportunities in the creative sector are perceived to be lost by the municipality. First of is there are multiple schools in the creative sector, however, after they are done studying there are not enough suitable and affordable workspaces for these people to stay in Groningen and consequently move somewhere else. Thus, losing the value created by this schooling as these people must move somewhere else.

Another is the future removal of the festival terrain Suikerunie, where Paradigm, one of the big-name festivals of the Netherlands, is organized. Anna mentioned this as being a missed opportunity, as this is the only terrain in Groningen that can take this amount of people, being necessary for such a big festival.

The final is the limitation indicated by Anna of municipal subsidized talent programs, in which these talent programs have already existing network of connections. This consequently leads to only these people being chosen for these programs, and other talents outside of these groups not getting chosen.

This experienced gap as viewed by artists, as indicated above, consequently forms a perceived obstacle in the facilitation of governmental bodies in the existence and formation of middlegrounds and middleground dynamics. This aligns with the perception of Sara that the municipality and artists are in separate 'worlds' with differentiating interests.

#### Perceived policy opportunities in the facilitation of middlegrounds, in Groningen

Groningen has, however, some aspects that are unique to the municipality and can be used to its advantage in the formation of middlegrounds, in which in turn the municipality could take or intensify its facilitating role.

The first one is the differentiating culture of Groningen compared to other Dutch 'cultural cities'. Thijs and Mees indicate that Groningen cultural sector is distinct from these other cities in that it's not competitive but rather comradely.

*"And I have the idea, perhaps it is also a bit of the northern mentality, that not everyone is so competitive about each other. That you also like to help each other and that the entire cultural sector is growing and doing well."*

- Mees

Thijs extends on this, by explaining that this is caused by the relatively isolated geographical location to the other cultural cities. This causes the cultural workers to be more dependent on each other and know everyone quickly because of this sector being small. Which in turn causes cross-pollination.

The second is the festival Paradigm, as mentioned in the paragraph above, is one of the big-name festivals in the Netherlands. It is nationally and internationally known. Besides this, Anna indicates that all ages, not only the younger ages, participate in this festival.

The third is de Biotoop. This is as it's seen as a successful broedplaats. A whole system is created, which is perceived to hold a lot of value. Additionally, it's seen as important as it provides many artists with a studio space.

### **How are the interests of artists in broedplaatsen represented in the middleground?**

#### Representation of interests

How the broedplaats locations Trav12 and de Biotoop were organized differed as experienced by the artists.

De Biotoop exists out of two organisations, CareX and a self-organized users association. In which both CareX and are in contact with the municipality for the representation of the place. CareX is an anti-squatting housing organization, which primarily rents out and manages the physical building. Furthermore, organisational wise intern, someone from CareX selects new users and the user's association has formed a network of functions around this. Mees additionally gave indication of sub-renting being an important phenomenon in broedplaatsen.

The Trav12 location exists out of CareX and users have previously organised themselves shortly for their overarching interest towards the municipality. Here CareX only provides this physical aspect of rent and management, however including the selection of new people. Furthermore, more generally, Sara expressed the need for a mediator party between the earlier expressed perceived different 'worlds' of the municipality and artists.

At the Trav12 location, Anna was in direct contact with the municipality and explained that a group of users of Trav12 united themselves, to convey their interest towards the municipality.

#### Experience of broedplaats as middleground

At the Biotoop location, the participants Ruben and Mees had barely to no experience of the dynamics of the municipality. This contact was being managed for them, and the artists got updates from the organization. One of the directly noticed effects is the ensured staying time of two years before there is a chance that the users of the building must move out.

Ruben indicated the importance of the representation of the surroundings and society to create public support, consequently on why they should be supported and funded by a governmental body. Additionally, he mentioned that artists also have this responsibility towards society.

As mentioned above, at the Trav12 location Anna experienced this contact with the municipality. She explained that only through this self-organization they were able to convey their interest in staying in the building for longer until it was demolished. After this, they were allowed to stay longer and would be informed 4 months before the building would be demolished.

Sophie indicated that she additionally saw the importance of organization of the place towards its surroundings.

#### Perceived important factors broedplaats

Bram stated the most important factors for the formation of a broedplaats to be engagement/involvement of the users with each other and with the place, with all the users being selected upon that they don't differ too much, that there is at least some kind of shared denominator. This would consequently result in the feeling of responsibility and the formation of social networks being created, which serve to create social cohesion and cross-pollination. Organization of the place within is thus of high importance. The idea of Thijs and Sara also mention the importance of organization, they contribute that activities/interactions should be consistently organized within.

As well as the addition that the history of the building matters in the creation of such engagement. Thijs and Sara reflected upon this:

*"This building is just a bit cursed, let's put it that way. And like I said, this is the most important thing. Look, if you just know, well, you guys could be here somewhere for the next five years. Then you really start to make something of it. Then it makes sense."*

- Sara

Thus, for there to be the possibility for these aspects of a broedplaats to be created, future perspective is also of importance. Furthermore, low space usage costs are of high importance. As well as the space being suitable for the creative practices, that it allows for the artist to adapt the room/place to the needs of their purpose.

The user's association of de Biotoop is currently working with the municipality to change the broedplaatsenbeleid, and to make a guide on how to facilitate and create broedplaatsen. Additionally, Bram indicated the existence of a coalition of broedplaatsen.

Trav12 was consequently generally not seen as a broedplaats because of the lack of social cohesion and cross-pollination, however, de Biotoop very much was. This included that activities



are organized between users and for outsiders. Artists work together, there is social contact between the artists, furthermore, meeting people in the walkways was indicated. There is cross-pollination in terms of seeing each other in their creative process being indicated as inspiring, in terms of knowledge, helping each other, and doing projects for each other. The accompanying atmosphere is one which Ruben perceived as a positive buzz, a feeling of open experiment positive for creativity, and a creative atmosphere. Another aspect indicated by Ruben was that he acquired a job by meeting someone in de Biotoop, thus as of the existence of networks within de Biotoop. Besides the results of that its well organized within, the surroundings are also positive about the place being in their surroundings.

#### Future outlook for broedplaatsen in Groningen

Currently, the municipality is considering buying a building that is abandoned for its original purpose. One of the options that the interviewees spoke about being spoken about is the use of the building as a future broedplaats. Those interviewees were positive about the place and positive about the possibilities the building could bring if it would become reality.

## Discussion and conclusion

### Discussion

The experience of artists of creative city policies found in the results seems to align with the idea of the existence of different 'worlds' as described by Cohendet et al. (2010). The findings indicate a difference and/or a disconnection between the ideas of the creative city by the artists and the municipality. The abilities of the underground are perceived to not be utilized enough by the municipality. With one participant even expressing the existence of these 'worlds' and the need of a 3<sup>rd</sup> party mediator in this.

These findings, being in the context of Groningen, show the perceived obstacles and opportunities in policy by artists in the formation and/or existence of a middleground between these parties. These obstacles mainly include the decreasing culture and art budget of governmental bodies, too few suitable workspaces in municipality Groningen, a gap in communication between broedplaatsen and municipality, and perceived creative opportunities lost by the municipality. Opportunities in policy perceived by artists in the creation of middleground dynamics mainly include a distinct comradely 'culture' in the creative sector of Groningen which aligns with the ideas of Alacovska (2018), another being the highly appraised music festival Paradigm, and last de Biotoop as a highly valued broedplaats.

More direct experience of the policies includes the experience for the municipality as a source of financing and support of creative practices, and as real estate owner over possible usable spaces for creative practices. In coherence with the goals of the broedplaats policies of the municipality, these functions can be seen as the role that the municipality takes in fulfilling the idea of the creative city, as also indicated by Borén and Young (2012).

The interests of artists in broedplaatsen seem to be represented in the middleground through organization of the place, as in both places some sort of organization was applied in communication with the municipality. The findings align with the ideas of Alagic & de Zwart (2022); Furthermore, the better the place is organized internally, the better the place is to be able to function as a broedplaats. This is because the better the engagement/involvement of the users in the place is, which organization is a part of, the more positive broedplaatsen 'result' aspects it has. Additionally, the better this organization is in terms of being a broedplaats, the better the place is a broedplaats in its functions towards the artists themselves and the surroundings, as well as a middleground.

Consequently, the most important factor for the formation and existence of a broedplaats is perceived to be involvement/engagement, with consistent activities/interactions being organized or happening. Which are created by organization. Additionally, future perspective of the place is important for this to happen, for the artists to socially 'invest' in the place, and the history of the place is also influential in this. This aligns with the idea of Uitermark (2015). Another vital factor is low space usage costs, which corresponds with ideas of Madanipour (2017). As well as the need for the artists to be able to adapt their space for it to be suitable to their practices.

The main direct noticed result of communication with the municipality is insurance on the time which they are allowed to stay in the building. In the theoretical framework the uncertainty of artists and the role of such a broedplaats in it is covered by Alacovska (2018), which aligns with this experience of the artists in this manner. However, this being a result of middleground dynamics is barely to not represented in literature.

### Weaknesses and strengths of the research

Weaknesses of this study include; first, that many different sub-professions within the profession artist were interviewed, which resulted in a low representation of each of the sub-professions. Second, is the opportunistic and snowball sampling used, which thus could have led to sampling biases. Third is that with knowledge of the organization of the place from the organizational

bodies, the experiences of the artists could have been placed better into context. Fourthly, the study is very much embedded in the Groningen context, so not all results will be generalizable, especially since Groningen is a relatively special case as indicated in the findings, because of its relatively isolated location to other experienced 'creative cities'.

Strengths of the study include; First of all, almost all interviewees had some kind of insight and/or experience within the research subject. Secondly, many aspects could be expressed in the interviews by the artists, as the semi-structured interview method allowed for this exploration and for the researcher to ask follow-up questions. Thirdly, the inclusion of multiple case studies, to explore the experienced differences between the ways of organization of the places.

### **Future research suggestions**

To extent on the findings on the experience of artists in broedplaatsen of creative city policies on their creative practices, future research could be conducted upon the indicated music subsidized talent coaches selection in the already networks limitation to only the networks. More could be researched on these dynamics in the experienced obstacles and opportunities in the facilitation of the creation and improvement of middlegrounds.

To extent on the findings on the way of representation of the interests of artists in broedplaatsen in middlegrounds, more research could be conducted on the experience of artists of middleground dynamics who sub-rent in broedplaatsen. Interviewee [name] indicated that subrenting is an important part of broedplaatsen. This is thus another way of organization within broedplaatsen and thus could also have certain middleground dynamics.

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## Appendix A – Consent form

### Toestemmingsformulier

Rijksuniversiteit Groningen

Onderzoeksproject over “de ervaring van artiesten van creatief stadsbeleid in broedplaats locaties”

Ik ben Michiel, een bachelor student aan de Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, en studeer Technische Planologie. Ik ben op het moment bezig met een vak waarin ik een onderzoeksproject moet uitvoeren.

#### Het onderzoek

In dit onderzoek wil ik kijken naar hoe artiesten het beleid van de gemeente ervaren dat van toepassing is op hun creatieve activiteiten. Daarnaast wil het ook kijken naar de dynamieken tussen artiesten in broedplaats locaties en de gemeente. De bestaande theorieën achter deze dynamieken impliceren een bemiddelende functie van broedplaatsen tussen deze partijen. Het specifieke gedeelte hierbinnen wat ik wil onderzoeken met interviews zijn hoe artiesten hun waarde van creativiteit inzien voor de stad en/of gemeente, in vergelijking met de waarde die de gemeente in hun perceptie op deze activiteiten stelt. Daarnaast ook hoe artiesten dit proces van deze verschillende ideeën op creativiteit in de stad ervaren, en wat deze dynamiek voor artiesten betekent (/ of hierin wordt samengewerkt of dat er conflict is (of iets hiertussen); first used version).

De antwoorden op de interview vragen zullen door mij worden geanalyseerd en er zullen hieruit conclusies worden getrokken doormiddel van de in het onderzoek gebruikte theorieën.

#### Doel van het onderzoek

Dit zal uiteindelijk resulteren in een geschreven document en presentatie, die het directe doel dienen van de voltooiing van het vak, en een indirect doel om de academische kennis te vergroten, aangezien het uiteindelijke onderzoek zal worden geüpload naar een universitaire database waar al dit soort onderzoeksprojecten worden geüpload.

#### Data verkregen uit dit interview

De data wordt uitsluitend in geheimhouding door de onderzoeker en voor het onderzoek zelf gebruikt en kan bij uitzondering worden gedeeld met de universitaire begeleider van het onderzoeker.

De gegevens worden zoveel mogelijk geanonimiseerd; beperkingen hierin zijn het gebruik van pseudoniemnummers, de naam van de broedplaats waarin u zich bevindt, en informatie over uw sociale en culturele aspecten vanaf de informatie die u in het interview verstrekt.

Het gebruik van deze persoonsgegevens zal zo veel mogelijk worden geminimaliseerd, naar alleen het behoeven van het onderzoek.

De persoonlijke gegevens worden bewaard tot het cijfer ontvangen is of tot de datum van 6 juli, waarna de data wordt vernietigd. Ook wordt er veilig met de data omgegaan, door de data alleen op te slaan en te gebruiken in beveiligde omgevingen.

#### Rechten van de deelnemer

- Dat ik u op de hoogte heb gebracht over waarvoor ik u interview en wat het doel hiervan is.
- U kunt het interview op ieder moment stopzetten, hiervoor hoeft u geen enkele reden op te geven.
- Het recht om de gegevens en verwerkte gegevens in te zien en te verzoeken daarin wijzigingen aan te brengen wanneer u ervaart dat dezen niet uw mening weerspiegelen.
- U heeft het recht om onmiddellijke verwijdering van uw persoonsgegevens uit het onderzoek te verzoeken wanneer; de gegevens niet langer nodig zijn voor het onderzoek, wettelijke richtlijnen voor gegevensbescherming niet worden gevolgd, en wanneer u het niet eens bent met de transcriptie en/of interpretatie van de transcriptie van het interview.
- Het recht om de verwerking van de gegevens stop te zetten als u de transcriptie en/en interpretatie van deze transcriptie als onjuist ervaart.
- Het recht om bezwaar te maken tegen alles wat met de data in het onderzoek wordt gedaan.

#### Compensatie (z.o.z.)

Niet (eventueel een koekje of iets dergelijks)

**Vragen**

Heeft u nog vragen?

**Geef graag aan of u hiermee akkoord gaat:**

- Ik heb de informatie over het onderzoeksproject en het doel van de gegevensverwerking gelezen en begrepen.
- Ik heb de gelegenheid gekregen om vragen te stellen.
- Ik ga akkoord met vrijwillige deelname.
- Ik ben op de hoogte gebracht van mijn rechten.
- Ik begrijp dat ik me op elk moment kan terugtrekken zonder een reden op te geven.
- Ik begrijp hoe mijn gegevens worden verwerkt en beschermd.

Handtekening van de geïnterviewde voor akkoord van het bovenstaande: - Datum:

Handtekening van de interviewer, dat hij de geïnterviewde heb geïnformeerd over het bovenstaande: - Datum:



## Appendix B – interview guide

### Introduction

1. definieert u zichzelf als iemand die in de creatieve sector vanuit zijn eigen creativiteit werkt voor zichzelf?
2. Kunt u mij wat vertellen over uw creatieve activiteiten/werk?
3. Hoelang zit u al in deze broedplaats en heeft u in andere broedplaatsen gezeten?

### What is the function of this place for the artist

4. Wat gebeurt hier allemaal op een dag tot dag basis; Kunt u de broedplaats naar uw eigen idee omschrijven?

Probing;

- Sociale activiteiten
- Creatieve activiteiten
- Werk/niet werk verhouding

5. Wat voor een soort contact is ertussen degenen hier in de broedplaats?

Probing; wat voor een sfeer is er in de broedplaats

6. Wat voor een plek is deze broedplaats voor u als artiest, wat voor een functies en/of betekenis heeft het voor u?

Probing;

- Wat zijn factoren die belangrijk zijn voor uw creativiteit zelf?
- En wat zijn factoren die u toelaten om deze activiteiten uit te voeren?

7. Bent u betrokken bij creatieve projecten/initiatieven hier in de Broetop?

Probing; weet u af van creatieve projecten of initiatieven daar?

Zijn er vaak dit soort samenwerkingen in de broedplaats?

8. Wordt dit door bepaalde personen of organisaties mogelijk gemaakt?

Probing; hoe maken zij dit mogelijk en op welke vlakken?

### Functions

- The extent to which the place is considered a broedplaats and a middleground by the artist. This is indicated here by the reflection on the place and their interests.
- What the function of the broedplaats is for its artists and how important these functions are for the artists and the extent of representation of interests of the artists there.

### Experience of and opinion on creative city policies

9. Bent u bekend met het creatieve en broedplaatsen beleid van de gemeente Groningen?  
Alternative if not: of andere/meer algemene activiteiten van de gemeente die op een manier invloed hebben op uw creativiteit/waar u anderen over heeft gehoord?

10. Hoe denkt u dat broedplaatsen dialoog en begrip tussen beleidsmakers en artiesten kan faciliteren?

Probing; hoe zou dit beter kunnen?

- Hoe ziet dit er nu uit; hoe gaat dit nu?

11. Zou u kunnen noemen wat u van het beleid vindt en ervaart als artiest zijnde?

Probing; uit welke aspecten bestaat dit beleid voor u?

Hoe beïnvloedt het uw creatieve activiteiten?

Kunt u deze genoemde aspecten rank ordenen?

12. Wat is uw idee van wat artiesten de stad/omgeving zouden kunnen brengen?

Probing;

- Wat mist er in uw idee aan het beleid?
- Wat vindt u verkeerd en wat is er goed aan het beleid?
- Tot in hoeverre komt dit overeen met uw ervaring met het huidige beleid?

13. Vanuit uw perspectief, wat voor een rol heeft de gemeente in het ondersteunen en onderhouden van broedplaatsen voor creatieve activiteiten?

### **Functions**

- Indicating the perceptions and experiences of creative policies, the creative city, and its dynamics

### **Organisational dynamics broedplaats**

14. Zijn er in de Biotoop 'bepaalde organisaties, of mensen' die iets betekenen voor uw activiteiten in verband met dit beleid van de gemeente?

Probing; of in verband met bedrijven die (consequent) creatieve werken van artiesten kunnen financieren?

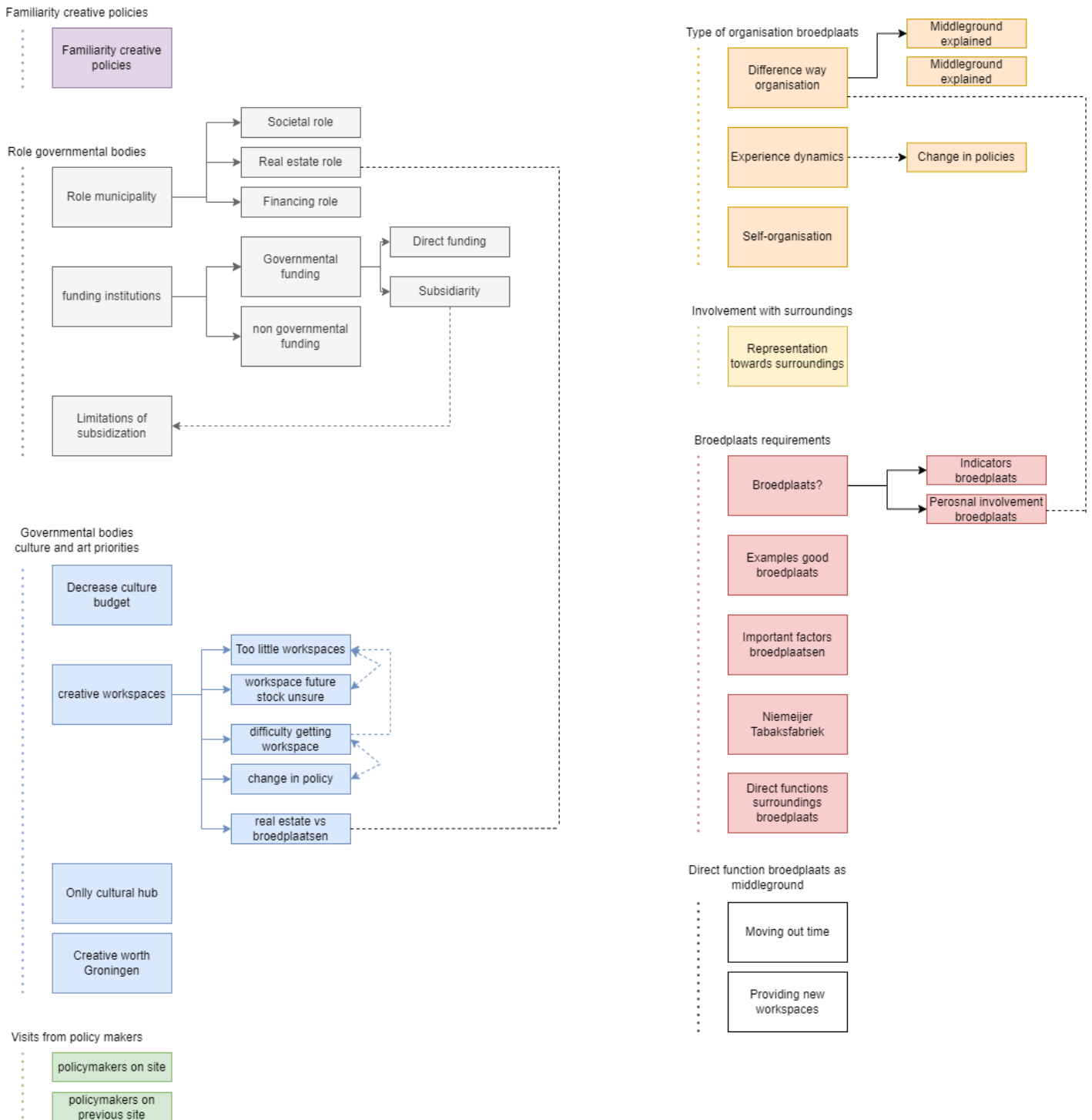
15. Wordt u meegenomen in hun/deze overwegingen?

16. Hoe (goed/niet goed) vindt u dat zij deze activiteiten uitvoeren (voor u als artiest in de broedplaats)?

### **Functions**

- What the dynamics are between the users, organizers, and the municipality and/or other parties.
- How this organization and dynamics are experienced by the artists

# Appendix C – coding tree



(Image 2: made by author)

## Appendix D – policy analysis

This policy document analysis will summarize the ideas behind the selected policies, as well as what goals of the policies as creative city policies are.

### Kadernota Cultuur 2021-2028

The document notes three ambitions on culture and art of the municipality.

The first one is “Art and culture for everyone”. This entails that the municipality sees culture as something that adds to the living quality of their inhabitants in an inclusive manner. The document extends on this by explaining that culture adds to the development of the identity of inhabitants, it can connect people within groups, connect people between groups, and could facilitate dialogue in this.

The second is that culture and art create a “vibrant city”. This entails that the municipality is vibrant with lively villages and neighborhoods. Which exists of the inhabitants and tourists experience of the municipality through its cultural aspects. This creation of value for this experience holds the existence of a cultural supply of high worth, which would consequently leads to an attractive city and culture and art strengthening the economy.

The third is the city being a “city of talent”. This is explained as that the municipality finds creative and artistic talent important for the life and cultural life in Groningen. In this the municipality perceives the development in these talents as important. In this the second aspect of high cultural supply is stressed, as well as the wide variety within this supply.

Thus, quickly summed up;

The general ideas and goals of the Culture and Art policy are:

- Direct benefits for residents Groningen:
  - Contributes to the living quality.
  - and expression and formation of the identity of residents.
  - as well as societal inclusivity by culture connecting people within groups, facilitating meetings with other societal groups, and facilitating dialogue between these groups.
  - A tool in societal challenges in an innovative manner.
- A cultural offering of high worth, that is diverse. That leads in turn to strengthening the economy and attractiveness of the city.
  - Development (and keeping) of talent that leads to this high worth of cultural offering.

### Aanpak broedplaatsen Gemeente Groningen, 12 mei 2020

The broedplaatsen policy mentions the following main ideas and goals; It holds the providing to creative, in doing so, they hope to: bind talent to the municipality, strengthen the economy, let broedplaatsen add to the living-, work- and accommodation environment of people in Groningen, and to take the opportunity of creativity in their ability to approach societal challenges in an innovative way.

These ideas and goals align with the policy document on culture and art.

Furthermore, the document mentions that another set of main points of the document are: that first of artists could have challenges in finding a suitable workspace within the municipality, due to the pressure on the real estate market. Secondly, that the main strategy for creating these suitable places is by changing already existing locations into suitable spaces. Third, is that the creative sector has grown in an above average manner in the last few years. It being indicated that the creative sector is important for the city, and that almost 5% of all jobs in Groningen are within this industry.