

Between common ground and commercial gains: An examination of artists' negotiations in the Dutch pavilion at Expo 2025 in Osaka, Japan

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ABSTRACT

In the globalized world of today, the approach of culture as a tool for development explains the use of art in international relations. Defined as cultural diplomacy, nations use their cultural resources as a way of projecting a positive image and foster mutual understanding globally (Wang & Sun, 2012, p. 5). International exhibitions are a powerful tool to do so, as they serve as spaces to create collective identities and as displays of power (Bennett, 1988, p. 74; Villanueva Rivas, 2010, p. 47). Naturally, World Expos offer an excellent environment for nations to execute their cultural diplomacy strategies. Within such a context, culture is instrumentalized as a means of pursuing political interests, which raises questions about the autonomy of artists and their work. Therefore, this thesis examines how Dutch artists negotiate their position in the cultural programme of the Dutch pavilion at Expo 2025 in Osaka, Japan. Semi-structured interviews with involved artists, curators and a policy officer shed light on the use of culture in cultural diplomacy, restrictions and objectives of the cultural programme and artists' perceptions of participation. An inductive thematic analysis revealed the subordinate position of culture in the diplomatic context of the Dutch pavilion. In the six-month cultural programme, hosted in a small part of the pavilion, the theme Activating Common Ground suggests a focus on mutual understanding and collaboration between the Netherlands and Japan. This political strategy imposes symbolic boundaries for participating artists, who see their work contextualized into this narrative. Additionally, this strategy seems to conflict with the rest of the pavilion, where a positive image of the Netherlands is projected, leaving less room for dialogue. Commercial interests seem to be prioritized, and as a result space for culture gets limited both symbolically and physically, putting artists in a secondary position. The way artists perceive the use of culture in the context of Expo 2025 and their motivations for participating determine how they position themselves and deal with these limitations. Whereas some accept how the pavilion is not a place for their work but just see it as an opportunity for future work, others have a more ideological view of their art contributing to the narrative. It shows how both political and economic interests constitute the heteronomy of cultural production, and how artists have different approaches navigating the field. At the intersection of cultural policy and artistic practice, this research contributes to the understanding of the position of artists in these power structures and the role of temporary cultural spaces like Expo 2025.

KEYWORDS: *World Expo, cultural diplomacy, cultural production, artist autonomy, artists' careers*

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1. Introduction

In an era defined by globalization, the world is more interconnected than ever before. An intrinsic part of this process is the homogenization of global culture (Barnet & Cavanagh, 2014, p. 169). Quite simultaneously with the rise of globalization - mid to late nineteenth century – World Expos have offered a unique platform for nations to showcase technology, science and art (Roche, 1998, p. 70). The first World Expo, the Great Exhibition in London in 1851, marked a defining moment in Victorian age and celebrated the scientific, political and cultural significance of Great Britain (Bureau International des Expositions, n.d.; Johansen, 1996, p. 59). Historically, these mega-events were dominated by European and North-American nations (Smits & Jansen, 2012, p. 179). Reflecting this, World Expos were mainly hosted by these developed countries (Ye et al., 2012, p. 1091). Japan hosted the first World Expo in Asia in 1970, after participating in World Expos often reinforcing orientalist narratives alongside China (Bureau International des Expositions, n.d.; Mattelart, 1996, p. 113-114). From the late twentieth century onward, countries in the east and global south - e.g. China, South Korea - began to host World Expos and other large-scale events, reflecting a more global landscape.

Now that the World Expo, or Expo 2025, takes place in Japan again, it presents a unique opportunity for the Netherlands to celebrate 425 years of Japanese-Dutch relations (NL Expo, n.d.). Culture is one of the five main themes of the Dutch pavilion at Expo 2025 in Osaka, for which a cultural programme is curated by *Nieuwe Instituut*, the national museum for architecture, design and digital culture (Nieuwe Instituut, n.d.). The cultural programme of the Dutch pavilion is not just another artistic exhibition, but a product of the Netherlands' cultural diplomacy strategy (Molho, 2021, p. 468). This diplomacy deploys culture as a means of strengthening the position of the Netherlands on the global stage (Rijksoverheid, n.d.). In this sense, the cultural programme is not necessarily about showcasing art but about the execution of a diplomatic strategy for which culture is deployed. This instrumentalization raises questions about the process of cultural production within a diplomatic context.

There have been many studies focusing on cultural diplomacy on the global level, with a strong focus on the role of states as actors in international relations (Cummings, 2003, p. 1; Holden, 2013, p. 3; Papaioannou, 2017, p. 942). These studies usually focus on the strategic interests of nations and how cultural events like world exhibitions contribute to nation branding and international relations. Clarke (2014) theorises the role of cultural products in cultural diplomacy, emphasising the importance of understanding the way meaning is given to

the cultural products used in cultural diplomacy (p. 154). Alongside Clarke's study, many others are dedicated to cultural production in political contexts, drawing from theories of Bourdieu (1983/1993) and Becker (1982/2008). For example, Alexander (2008) studied how cultural fields are interpenetrated by other fields like political ones, revealing that governments play an increasingly present role in the production of culture through state support in the United Kingdom (p. 1416). While these studies offer valuable insights into the strategic aspects of cultural diplomacy, they often pay relatively little attention to the role of artists in the production of culture in such a context. Going further, more recent research shows how established artists respond to changing conventions in such heteronomous fields (Skaggs, 2022, p. 1). Holm (2019) addresses artistic autonomy in respect to bureaucratic cultural policy (p. 2). The current thesis adds to this perspective, with Expo 2025 as a temporary case on a micro-level to examine cultural production and artistic autonomy in a diplomatic context. The focus lies on the actor without whom art would not be considered art – the artist – in a context in which art seems to be subordinated to political interests (Becker, 1982/2008, p. 24). It contributes to the debate on artists' autonomy within heteronomous fields driven by these political or economic interests. By analysing how they negotiate their position within the cultural programme of the Dutch pavilion at Expo 2025, this thesis adds an important perspective on the dynamics of cultural production. It places itself at the intersection of cultural diplomacy, cultural production and artist's career development. The dynamics when cultural production stems from a governmental policy raise questions about the motivations behind artists' participation and the strategies they employ to navigate the institutional constraints that come with it. Therefore, this thesis aims to answer the following research question: *How do Dutch artists negotiate their position within the cultural programme of the Dutch pavilion at Expo 2025 in Osaka, Japan?*

By focusing on the production of culture in the Dutch pavilion at Expo 2025, this study sheds light on the tensions between artistic vision and political agency. With the rise of cultural diplomacy, art is increasingly deployed to serve political interests. It is important to critically examine what this means for the way artists work within these government-shaped institutions (Alexander, 2008, p. 1416). This thesis focuses on the role of artists in a world dominated by non-artistic actors. Its relevance lies in the visibility of the arts within the context of Expo 2025, which raises questions about who is allowed to speak on behalf of a country, and who is - whether consciously or not - excluded from the field. Understanding how artists position and navigate in the field contributes to the societal discourse on art in politics, national representation and agency in cultural production. I will discuss how

international exhibitions offer networking opportunities and institutional mentoring in the context of Expo 2025. It sheds light on a paradox: while events like Expo 2025 may provide international exposure, they do so within a highly politically regulated field that does not necessarily serve artistic interests.

Finally, this thesis becomes all the more urgent in light of the recent cuts in Dutch international cultural policy (de Volkskrant, 16 October 2024). With the government making structural cuts in subsidies, foreign cultural projects come under increasing pressure. It leads to more strategic decisions in favour of the government, which suggests there will be more hurdles for internationally oriented artists to overcome. This thesis provides an important insight into how governments play a role in cultural production, and therefore adds to current discussions within Dutch cultural policy on the international positioning of the cultural sector, the use of culture as a diplomatic tool and the role of the government as a commissioner of culture.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 Changing strategies in cultural diplomacy

Although the tendency in Europe is to see culture as a self-justifying value, ever since the 1980s, policymakers, artists and activists emphasized the potential impact culture can have (Matarasso and Landry, 1999, p. 15). Culture can have significant outcomes in social, economic and civic-governance domains such as gender equity and peacebuilding (Ware & Dunphy, 2020, p. 147). This has contributed to the idea of culture as a tool for development. More specifically, the arts are conceptualized in relation to international development (Clammer, 2015, preface). As a result of this shift, cultural producers, e.g., artists, today find themselves in these contexts where art is no longer valued just for intrinsic, aesthetic quality but as a way of pursuing political interests or as a force for economic development (Marcuse, 2007, p. 25). They are increasingly expected to contribute their work to social or political objectives (p. 21).

The impact of arts-based programmes in international development may explain the rise of international cultural relations. This concept refers to communicating of this culture internationally with the use of, among other activities, education exchanges, language teaching, art performances or museum exhibitions (Holden, 2013, p. 3). The era of cultural globalization has accelerated the need for nations to present themselves not only through economic or political means, but also through their cultural identities (Mark, 2009, p. 23). In this context, cultural globalization is no longer understood as the emergence of a uniform global culture, as envisioned in Marshall McLuhan's concept of the global village (1964), but is now seen as a multifaceted and dynamic process marked by the circulation and interaction of diverse cultural forms originating from a wide range of nations and regions (Crane, 2002, p. 1). It suggests cultural diplomacy as an important strategy in both projecting and negotiating national identity on the world stage. Marcuse (2007) connected globalization to the instrumentalization of arts, which suggests the importance of the cultural product in cultural diplomacy and centralizes the role of the artists in this process (p. 25). These artists are in a context where their art is deployed as a force for international relations through a cultural diplomacy strategy.

Cultural diplomacy can be defined as the strategic use of a nation's cultural resources and products – such as art, literature, music and film – to improve international relations and foster mutual understanding (Clarke, 2014, p. 147; Mark, 2009, p. 5). Through cultural diplomacy, artistic and cultural expressions are strategically used to foster international

relations, promote national identity and support soft power initiatives (Wang & Sun, 2012, p. 5). In his report for the British Council, Holden (2013) states the growing role of culture in international politics (p. 3). Inevitably, culture and international politics are in an interdependent relationship. Where cultural diplomacy is sometimes defined as a one-way strategy as when a government concentrates its efforts on branding its nation and projecting a positive image of a country, other research has emphasized that trends in many countries show that cultural diplomacy strategies move from simple cultural ‘projection’ and towards mutuality (Cummings, 2003, p. 1; Holden, 2013, p. 3). Collaboration, mutual understanding and learning are now major objectives in cultural diplomacy, complementing the traditional emphasis on showcasing, sending and influencing (Holden, 2013, p. 22). The more interactive, collaborative and experiential a strategy is, the more effective it will be (Jora, 2013, p. 51). The focus lies on the sense of ‘we’.

This approach can be viewed from an international relations perspective. The shift in cultural diplomacy is aligned with the constructivist approach as formulated by Villanueva Rivas (2010). According to constructivist theory, identities – in this case national identities – are not fixed but socially constructed in interaction with others. According to this view, cultural diplomacy can contribute to the formation of collective identities based on peace, understanding and diversity (Villanueva Rivas, 2010, p. 47). The emphasis on cooperation, shared values and learning in recent policy developments reflects this idea: that cultural exchange serves not only to improve one’s own image, but also to create a shared world of meaning together with other nations. Deploying cultural diplomacy as a dialogical process, where cultural products encourage mutual understanding rather than national branding, aligns with the constructivist belief that meaning and identity are always in the making.

These ideas thus provide not only an approach for understanding contemporary strategies in cultural diplomacy, but also an important framework for analysing institutional practices of cultural representation. The kind of strategy pursued by a government is reflected in a cultural product used in diplomatic events, and thus has implications for the artists involved in these cultural products. This thesis examines how the Netherlands’ cultural diplomacy strategy comes into practice through a cultural product and how it informs the position of artists involved in the production of culture. A concrete domain in which cultural diplomacy and the construction of collective identities visibly converge are international exhibitions (Macdonald, 1998, p. 4; Tutchener, 2013, p. 96). More specifically, world expositions, or world expos, have long served as prominent arenas where cultural diplomacy strategies are implemented and executed on a global stage (Smits & Jansen, 2012, p. 173).

These large-scale international events, organized and supervised by the Bureau International des Expositions, offer countries the opportunity to present themselves not only through technological innovation and economical status, but also through cultural narratives and symbolic representation (Harvey, 1995, p. 122). In this way, world expos can be understood within what Bennett (1988) terms the exhibitionary complex: a framework of institutions and cultural practices that serve to organize and display knowledge and power in a way that shapes public perception and behaviour (p. 74). His main argument is that in the nineteenth century, modern public cultural institutions like museums and world fairs represent a new kind of power: not private, but open for everyone. This public display became central to how modern power operated through exhibitions. The state, especially in the United Kingdom, became increasingly involved in providing these spectacles: though it often worked through intermediaries like boards of trustees, the state used cultural institutions to educate and civilize the public (Bennett, 1988, p. 79). This allowed governments to appear neutral while still exercising cultural and ideological influence. It encompasses sites such as museums, art galleries, (international) expositions, all of which utilize techniques of display to educate, discipline and civilize its audience. Although this shift is not limited, he uses the Great Exhibition of 1851 as an example to illustrate this shift (p. 78). Exhibitions became ‘the means for spreading the message of power within society’ (Pešić, 2013, p. 290).

At a world expo, a national pavilion functions as a branded environment: a purposefully designed and thematically constructed space intended to convey a positive and distinctive narrative about a country’s identity, values, and ambitions (Wang & Sun, 2012, p. 10). Historically, exhibitions play an increasingly important role in the formation of the modern state and are fundamental in its function as an educational and civilizing force (Bennett, 1988, p. 79). The involvement of the state in the provision of a spectacle like a world expo has steadily increased which reflects their perceived value as tools of governance and public engagement. Therefore, a world expo serves as a case to study how art is instrumentalized for political purposes and how it informs the production of culture.

Given that nowadays cultural diplomacy is more about mutual understanding rather than one-way nation branding projection, it comes to no surprise that the theme of the Dutch pavilion at Expo 2025 in Osaka, Japan is *Activating Common Ground* (NL Expo 2025, n.d.). This theme reflects not only on 425 years of cultural and economic relations between the Netherlands and Japan, but also the shift towards international relations strategies grounded in reciprocity and shared challenges, as seen in the studies by Holden (2013, p. 3) and Jora (2013, p. 51). Rather than presenting a fixed image of national identity, *Activating Common*

Ground suggests an invitation to dialogue, emphasizing common challenges such as climate change, energy transition and global health (NL Expo 2025, n.d.). These are issues that transcend borders and require collaborative solutions.

The cultural programme of the Dutch pavilion at Expo 2025, with its reciprocal cultural diplomacy strategy, serves as an institutional context in which artists operate. Within the execution of such a strategy, four kinds of stakeholders are identified: policymakers who are involved in setting the goals and funding priorities for cultural diplomacy activities; agents being institutions or individuals charged with implementing cultural diplomacy policy, such as curators and cultural organizations; cultural practitioners like artists, writers, performers and others who create cultural products and lastly consumers: individuals engaging with cultural products which are produced for or used in cultural diplomacy, who interpret and make meaning from these products (Clarke, 2014, p. 154).

Even though policy officers and curators play an essential role in studying cultural diplomacy – as they are responsible for implementing the policy – the focus of this thesis is on the position of artists. I do not necessarily examine the Netherlands' international cultural policy, but rather the positions of artists in this context. More specifically, how they negotiate their position in a field in which their work is subordinated to and instrumentalized for political objectives. By focusing on the experiences and perceptions of the artists themselves, this thesis offers a perspective that is rarely central in studies on both cultural production and cultural diplomacy: that of the artist as a central actor within a diplomatic context. Now that the use of culture in cultural diplomacy and its changing strategies have been defined, it asks for a theoretical approach towards the institutional context of Expo 2025, and what implications it has for the position of artists who operate within it.

2.2 Cultural production at Expo 2025: a collective activity

In cultural diplomacy, the cultural product itself, say the works of art, plays an increasingly important role as global economies become ever more driven by information and its circulation as a result from globalization (Feigenbaum, 2001, p. 7). Clarke (2014) theorizes the role of cultural products in cultural diplomacy from a cultural studies perspective (p. 154). From this perspective, in which the relationship between individuals, culture and society are questioned, he claims works of art presented in a diplomatic setting typically originate from artistic and cultural practices that operate independently of the state's effort to use them (Clarke, 2014, p. 149). However, in the case of a world expo, artistic work is contextualized for the purpose of representing a specific country. By an explicit use of artistic products for

cultural diplomacy objectives, the artworks exhibited or the performances programmed are no longer only the outcome of independent cultural production, but are shaped by diplomatic goals of the commissioning body and curators (Molho, 2021, p. 468). In this sense, art at Expo 2025 is a product of a broader system of collaboration between the various stakeholders that are involved in cultural diplomacy: artists, policy makers, cultural organizations and audience members (Clarke, 2014, p. 154). These participate in shaping the final message of the pavilion. It asks for a more relational understanding of cultural production, one that considers not only the artists, but the network involved with the production of culture. Especially because artists and their art are programmed specifically for the pavilion, thus with the cultural diplomacy objectives in mind.

Positioning the arts in a diplomatic context like Expo 2025 raises questions about the nature of cultural production. In a national pavilion at a world expo, art seems to function as a tool within a political strategy rather than an end in itself. Whereas Becker (1982/2008, p. 1) views the production of culture as an ‘Art World’ – a collective activity in which all artistic work involves different people – the position of culture in the Dutch pavilion at the expo is subordinated to a political agenda (Becker, 1982/2008, p. 1; Nicoletta, 2010, p. 499). Therefore, the cultural programme of the Dutch pavilion might not be an art world, but Becker’s theory does help to understand the dependencies and nature of cooperation within the programme. In cultural diplomacy, the art itself becomes an instrument of policy with the narrative of a nation guiding what is produced and displayed. Therefore, artists are not autonomous: they depend on all kinds of other people and the things that are provided by these people (Becker, 1982/2008, p. 14). The artist works in the centre of this network, and although the artist is defined as the person who performs the core activity without which the work would not be art, the work of all of the people involved in this network is essential for the production of art. This collaboration comes with constraints: when artists create something existing institutions cannot assimilate, whether the limits are practical or ideological, their work is just not exhibited. Therefore, artists adapt to what existing institutions can handle. They accept the constraints that come from their dependence on the members of the cooperative network in which they work (Becker, 1982/2008, p. 28). Conceptualising this in the context of Expo 2025, this means Dutch artists participating in the cultural programme of the Dutch pavilion have to take into consideration possible limitations or constraints of the pavilion. These constraints become all the more evident if we take a step back and view the cultural programme as a minor component of diplomacy, emphasizing its instrumentalizing, supporting role. Artists have to adapt to the practical limitations, such as financial costs or

dimensions of the artistic product, as well as the ideological constraints: their art has to fit into the political narrative the pavilion wants to tell. The artists' involvement with and dependence on these cooperative links with curators, policy officers and other members of the art world constrains the kind of art he can produce (Becker, 1982/2008, p. 26).

In an art world all cooperating stakeholders rely on artistic conventions to deal with these constraints. Conventions serve as 'the rules of the game'. They regulate the production of art, showing what it should look like or how it should be produced (Becker, 1982/2008, p. 29). They regulate the relation between the artist and the audience, and because these two share knowledge of and experience with the conventions invoked, the audience can make meanings of the work of art. Artists choose which strategy they want to follow within these conventions: they either conform quickly to the established art world, they stretch the boundaries of the imposed rules or they choose to not take part in the art world (Becker, 1982/2008, p. 227). The tension between artistic autonomy and political instrumentalization lies at the heart of the question to what extent an 'art world' as described by Becker still exists in diplomatic contexts like a national pavilion at a world expo. This thesis uses the concept of an art world and applies it to a domain in which art is not the final product, but a component of a broader diplomatic strategy.

2.3 Autonomy vs. heteronomy

What makes a world expo such an interesting case to examine cultural production in, is the intersection of institutions and individuals on the one hand, and of political versus symbolic activities on the other. The use of cultural products for political objectives can create tension in the cooperation between different actors involved in cultural diplomacy - artists, policymakers, cultural organizations and audiences (Merson, 2017, p. 49). In *Art Worlds* (1982/2008), Becker argues that when the government sees the potential of art to support political objectives, it may support artists to develop their project that indirectly serves the national interest. This financial support is appreciated or even indispensable as many artists are dependent on government subsidies and they would have to seek for this kind of support at other grantmakers, for them to realise their work (Becker, 1982/2008, p. 182; Léger, 2010, p. 462). Governments can withhold their financial support when the artist's work does not align with their objectives. One could argue that in this system, governments are in a dominant position as opposed to artists. Although Becker touches upon the shifting dynamics within cultural production when the government enters the art world, there is little emphasis on the dynamics between the different positions actors take within the production of culture

(Becker, 1982/2008, p. 185). Bourdieu's interest in issues relating to power and the reproduction of social inequalities complements Becker's art worlds in this sense (Bottero & Crossley, 2011, p. 99; Bourdieu, 1983/1993, p. 30). Just like Becker, Bourdieu claims that to understand art, we must look not only at the piece itself, but rather at the conditions of its production and reception. Using the concept of a field of cultural production, Bourdieu situates artistic works in the social conditions of its production, circulation and consumption (1983/1993, p. 30). It suggests that cultural production occurs within structured social spaces where different agents (e.g. artists, curators, policymakers) compete over legitimacy and influence.

In the context of an artistic field, Bourdieu (1983/1993) differentiates between the heteronomous and autonomous poles (p. 40). The heteronomous pole represents the part of a field engaged with relations with other fields and expressing their values, for example the impact of economic values. The autonomous pole is characterized by prioritizing artistic freedom, art as a self-justifying value, and success based on symbolic recognition rather than economic rewards. The tension between these poles shapes all positions in a field, as involved stakeholders must navigate between economic, political and artistic considerations.

Bourdieu argues that cultural producers in an autonomous field produce art to attain symbolic capital, while on the other hand, market-oriented artists in heteronomous fields produce art meant for mass consumption in exchange for economic capital (1983/1993, p. 41). In later research, he is criticized for viewing heteronomy mainly as an issue of the pressure of the commercial sector on the field of cultural production. Alexander (2008) claims that heteronomy of cultural production is driven by actions of the state while the impact of the commercial field comes second (p. 1428). This may imply, thus, that the political power is even more dominant than the commercial power. Alexander's later study demonstrated that today's neoliberalism can drive cultural production towards the heteronomous realm, not only through commercial pressures but also through political influences (2018, p. 31). As many cultural productions rely on external agents, they increasingly shift away from autonomous practices and become more dependent on external economic and political forces. Nowadays, world expos serve as arenas where commercial and political goals are strived to (Smits & Jansen, 2012, p. 173). Governments' objectives of participating in a world expo are political-economical (Kovačević et al., 2024, p. 245). The involvement of the Dutch Embassy as a dominant actor reinforces the shift towards heteronomy in this context, based on Alexander's findings. A world expo is a place where international cultural policy goals are pursued.

Therefore, the cultural programme of the Dutch pavilion is considered a rather heteronomous field of cultural production.

In heteronomous fields like international, nation-based exhibitions, where external interests such as politics or economics influence the production of culture, art is contextualised to promote heteronomous objectives. Bethwaite & Kangas (2019) give a striking example of this using the conceptual artist Andrei Monastyrski at the Russian pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2011. Even though his art shows autonomous characteristics - his work was not tied to a nation or politics, neither did work in the arts for financial interests - the heteronomous features in his art were emphasised (Bethwaite & Kangas, 2019, p. 39). World expos, universal exhibitions or World Fairs showcase the same dynamic, where art is often instrumentalised to serve national interests (Nicoletta, 2010, p. 499).

In this temporary heteronomous field, an important mechanism by which the space for artists is determined is the establishment of symbolic boundaries. Symbolic boundaries are social divisions that define who or what is enclosed within a given domain (Lamont et al., 2015, p. 850). These boundaries function as mechanisms of distinction and classification. They become visible in cultural attitudes, behaviours and in what is seen as legitimate. In the context of the pavilion, these boundaries function as criteria that determine who and what is considered appropriate or credible to be used to execute the cultural diplomacy strategy. The operation of such boundaries is not neutral, they are determined by dominant actors in the field. As the dominant actor in the field is the commissioning body, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, these boundaries are not only cultural in nature, but also politically oriented (Rijksoverheid, 4 April 2024). This is in line with Becker's notion of governments operating as distributors determining who and what gets access to the art world (Becker, 1982/2008, p. 182). These politically based symbolic boundaries manifest themselves in who is or is not selected to be programmed in the Dutch pavilion at Expo 2025. They have direct implications for the power relations within the field of cultural production. Such boundaries are a mechanism to control access to scarce resources - in this case international exposure, networking opportunities and institutional recognition (Lamont et al., 2015, p. 851; Lee et al., p. 10). Artists without legitimate symbolic capital - an established reputation, or more importantly, artistic work that serve the national interest - are excluded from the participation, no matter how relevant their work might be artistically. This points to a cultural hierarchy in which certain forms of symbolic capital are seen as more valuable than others. In the Bourdieusian way, these symbolic boundaries within the

heteronomous field would be art and artists that would deliver the most economical capital (Bourdieu, 1983/1993, p. 40). However, taking into account Alexander's extension of this notion about the interpenetration by not only the commercial field but also by the political field, the symbolic boundaries in this case are based on what art and artists deliver the strongest political message (Alexander, 2008, p. 1416).

When entering the heteronomous field in which political objectives are central, artists have to relate to the symbolic boundaries that stem from political-economic interests, as artists are never completely autonomous but dependent on other actors (Becker, 1982/2008, p. 14). Abbing (2002) goes further into the individual artist, describing that artists have an internalised belief that they should obtain autonomous, independent of heteronomous objectives like economical capital (p. 89).

Given that artists have this internalised belief, one would not expect them to operate in a heteronomous field like Expo 2025. Artists in heteronomous fields can only establish economical capital, and artists in autonomous fields can only establish symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1983/1993, p. 41). However, later research has proved these two forms of capital can be decoupled from the field, which means an artist can pursue symbolic capital in a heteronomous field, and economical capital in an autonomous field (Skaggs, 2022, p. 3). Artists deal, whether they want to or not, with conventions they may not like (p. 2). Abbing (2002) justly asks himself the question: 'why do certain artists seek recognition from the government while others prefer market rewards?' (p. 94). In the context of the Dutch pavilion at Expo 2025, it appears that while artists participate in a heteronomous field, their motivation to do so is not always exclusively economic or political. As Abbing (2002) describes, the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation among artists is complicated: artists are supposed to be selflessly dedicated to their art, but are at the same time receptive to recognition and external rewards, including symbolic and institutional recognition (p. 101). In the case of the expo, artists choose to move strategically within a heteronomous field to secure recognition or access to future opportunities. Thus, artists' position-taking within the pavilion does not appear to be a neutral act but a negotiation between beliefs and the conditions of the field in which they operate. Drawing back to Becker's art world, it resonates with the concept of conventions within the art world and the artists' choice which strategy they want to follow within these conventions: they either conform quickly to the established art world, they stretch the boundaries of the imposed rules or they choose to not take part in the art world (Becker, 1982/2008, p. 227).

2.4 Artists' career development

To define the role of Expo 2025 in the participating artists' careers, it is necessary to analyse the development of artists' careers. Many studies have been devoted to this subject. Artists' career development is defined as the development of artistic competencies in order to shape the direction of the artists' work, and the leveraging of their social capital (Bourdieu, 1986, as cited in Fillis et al., 2022, p. 135). It suggests social capital is an important factor of building an artistic career. Richardson et al. (2017) suggest global experience is one of the main requirements for sustaining social capital in the arts (p. 1840). The establishment of social capital helps to gain the visibility of the art market and its gatekeepers towards an artist's work (Janssen & Verboord, 2015, as cited in Fillis et al., 2022, p. 135). Another factor of artists' career development includes peer recognition as a form of symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1983/1993, p. 7; Plattner, 1998, as cited in Fillis et al., 2022, p. 135).

Despite the strategic considerations, the institutional relationships that come with participation in an exhibition can have considerable implications for artists' careers (Fillis et al., 2022, p. 133). Artists, regardless of whether they work closely with the state or operate independently, tend to define themselves in contrast to those who create art primarily for commercial purposes or 'artisan' production (Liu, 2024, p. 11). However, both exhibiting and non-exhibiting artists face significant challenges, particularly financial constraints and a lack of commercial and market experience (Lee et al., 2018, p. 18). Although some artists stick to the 'l'art pour l'art' ethos and to the symbolic recognition expressed in the autonomous pole of Bourdieu's field theory (1983/1993) and in the concept of the 'selfless' artist by Abbing (2002, p. 82), many recognize the practical challenge of professional survival (Lee et al., 2018, p. 18). Hence, they seek independence and control over exhibition opportunities as well as mentorship and business guidance. Acquiring symbolic capital, by participating in large-scale exhibitions for example, is crucial for gaining a higher position in the field of cultural production (Cotter, 2010, p. 12). This capital determines what opportunities an artist has to further develop his career.

As stated before, dominant actors within the production of culture like curators are responsible for the selection of artists who get access to the artistic field (Janssen & Verboord, 2015, p. 4). These gatekeepers are thus indirectly responsible for the development of an artist's career (p. 2). When the government is involved in the production of culture as a gatekeeper, its policy agents can protect or support particular types of artists and products (p. 8). They also serve as mentors, aiding the development of artists and business skills through strategic moves like establishing connections between artists and international exhibition

opportunities (Fillis et al., 2022, p. 137). In the case of Expo 2025, policy officers of the Dutch Embassy of the Netherlands in Japan can play a mentoring role artists can benefit from in light of their careers. Petrides & Fernandes suggest further research on the relationship between artists and institutional gatekeepers like curators in the context of large-scale exhibitions to examine its impact on participating artists' reputations (Petrides & Fernandes, 2020, p. 314).

In the late twentieth century, there was a revival of the world expo in western society (Roche, 1998, p. 1). However, whereas art biennials like the Venice Biennale are still regarded as an important showcase for artists, it seems international worlds exhibitions like Expo 2025 are places for diplomacy and commercialisation where art is downplayed (Johanson et al., 2022, p. 1; Nicoletta, 2010, p. 499). It poses the question of why artists participate in a national pavilion which serves as heteronomous field that is not about the showcase of art but rather about promoting a national identity using art (Nicoletta, 2010, p. 501).

3. Methodology

3.1 Research design

A qualitative approach was chosen for this thesis, as the aim is to gain insight into the experiences, perceptions and meaning actors give to their role within the cultural programme of the Dutch pavilion at Expo 2025. The thesis questions how artists understand, experience and negotiate their position as cultural makers within a diplomatic context in which culture is deployed. A qualitative approach is suitable for such a subjective and context-specific subject, it allows for respondents to explain what they think of or how they feel about something, and why (Tenny et al., 2022, p. 1).

Associated with a qualitative approach is the case study. The cultural programme of the Dutch pavilion at Expo 2025 serves as a case in which cultural diplomacy strategies are executed, culture is produced and power dynamics are put into practice. Case studies provide information from multiple sources which offers a holistic study of complex social networks and social meanings (Orum et al., 2016, p. 6). Since the social networks between actors involved in the cultural programme of the pavilion are examined in this thesis, the study was approached as a case study.

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews allow interviewers to modify questions, their order and the pace of the conversation in response to the interviewee's answers, which enables a more natural flow of dialogue (Qu & Dumay, 2011, p. 246). This approach is especially valuable for understanding the way interviewees perceive 'the social world under study' as Qu & Dumay described it. In the case of this thesis, the social world under study is the Dutch pavilion, and interviewees' perceptions of this world were discussed during the interviews. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews are particularly useful when asking probing questions about topics respondents might feel uncomfortable sharing their thoughts on in a focus group with peers (Adams, 2010, p. 367). This has merit in the political context of this thesis in which different - and potentially conflicting - interests are discussed. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews offer a solid base for thematic development. In the later process of analysing semi-structured interviews, themes that address my research question have become evident (Galletta, 2013, p. 121). Doing semi-structured interviews in combination with thematic analysis allowed me to explore complex patterns and to compare data between different groups of interviewees (Adeoye-Olatunde & Olenik, 2021, p. 1364). For example, it enabled me to later analyse differences between artists, or between artists working on an operational level and curators on a strategic level.

Hence, semi-structured interviews seem to offer the best way of collecting data to conduct a thematic analysis about how artists, curators and policy officers view the production of culture in this diplomatic context, and how they negotiate their position.

Despite the political context and its power dynamics being a central aspect of this thesis, I still chose to conduct a thematic analysis rather than a critical discourse analysis. Whereas critical discourse analysis focuses on the use of language in, say, the reproduction of power dynamics or ideologies, thematic analysis allows for an understanding of underlying themes in the experiences and perceptions of interviewees (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000, p. 447; Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84). The focus of this thesis does not lie on the linguistic aspect of power relations, but rather on artists' and others' perceptions of these relations. Therefore, a thematic analysis approach was preferred.

Taking into account the methodological guidelines of a Master's thesis, the length of the interviews ranged from 46 minutes to 1 hour and 9 minutes. Three of the eight interviews included in the analysis were conducted online, using Microsoft Teams. Although physical presence in interviews is often preferred because of the possibility to pick up non-verbal cues and build a more in-depth conversation, online interviewing was inevitable as some participants were not in the Netherlands at the time of interviewing (Lobe et al., 2022, p. 1).

For the semi-structured interviews, I developed three different interview guides tailored to the specific roles of the respondents: artists, curators and policy officers. These provided structure to discuss relevant topics systematically, while leaving room for follow-up questions. Although some of the content of the interview guides differed to match the perspectives of the different groups, I tried to remain as consistent as possible in the main questions. This way, the comparability between the interviews remains as high as possible. Before the first interview, I pilot tested the interview guide with a peer outside of the target group, who is also a cultural producer, to confirm the coverage and relevance of the questions and to test if I needed to reformulate any questions (Kallio et al., 2016, p. 2960). Afterwards, some of the questions still appeared to be too leading, so I revised and changed them to improve the quality of my data collection.

3.2 Sample

The main stakeholders in studying cultural diplomacy are cultural practitioners, policy makers, agents who implement the cultural diplomacy policy and individuals engaging with the cultural product (Clarke, 2014, p. 154). As this thesis focuses not necessarily on the implementation of the Netherlands' cultural policy, but rather on the ways artists navigate

within a field of production shaped by diplomatic interests, I decided to focus my sample on the artists. However, to gain understanding of the context in which these artists work, I still wanted to also include other actors within cultural diplomacy. Based on this approach and the theoretical framework, a sample consisting of artists, curators and a policy officer was formed in this thesis. The audience, a fourth actor within cultural diplomacy, was deliberately not included in the sample. On the one hand because I did not have direct access to the audience members of the Dutch pavilion at Expo 2025 in Osaka in Japan. On the other hand because the framework of this thesis does not include the meaning-making process of the audience or the impact of the programme, but rather the artists' positions in the process of cultural production in a diplomatic context. The aim of this thesis is to examine how artists negotiate their position, not necessarily how the cultural programme is received or what its impact is.

In total, I conducted nine interviews, eight of which are included in this thesis. All of the interviewees are professionals, which made the interviews 'expert interviews'. The participants were recruited through snowball sampling. Through a former colleague from my previous job as a fundraiser at the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam, I came in contact with the policy officer at the Dutch embassy in Tokyo, Japan, who is involved in the organisation of the cultural programme of the Dutch pavilion at the Expo 2025. With him, I discussed the approach of my thesis and he provided me with contact details of participating artists. After the research question and direction were refined, I invited seven artists for an interview. One of them eventually proved irrelevant to the research, one stopped responding and another one did not have time for an interview. After conducting interviews with three artists, I contacted the embassy official again to ask if he could put me in touch with three additional artists which led to a total of six artists, five of whom are included in this study. The sixth artist did not sign the consent form after the interview, neither did he give verbal consent, which made this data unusable.

These cultural practitioners all contribute in various ways to the cultural programme in the Dutch pavilion. The group includes professionals from different artistic backgrounds. In the context of this study, the specific medium or discipline in which they work is not relevant to the research question. For readability and consistency, all of these stakeholders are referred to as 'artists' in this thesis, even though they might not have identified themselves as ones (e.g., architects, choreographers).

Besides the artists, I interviewed two curators from Nieuwe Instituut, the national museum for architecture, design and digital culture, who are responsible for implementing the diplomacy strategy using cultural products curating the programme in the Dutch pavilion

(Clarke, 2014, p. 154; Nieuwe Instituut, n.d.). Finally, I interviewed my contact person at the Embassy of the Netherlands in Tokyo himself, to include the perspective from a strategic and diplomatic point of view as he is a policy officer coordinating the cultural programme. This provided me with insights about the context of the Dutch pavilion artists are contributing in. This way, this research offers insights into how cultural diplomacy informs artists and the dynamics of cultural production in this context, from multiple perspectives.

3.3 Operationalisation

The three slightly different interview guides were based on the same theoretical framework, including literature on cultural diplomacy, cultural production and artists' careers. Using these concepts, I formulated questions to research the position of artists within the context of the Dutch pavilion at Expo 2025.

In each interview, I began with an introduction in which I asked the interviewee to introduce themselves and their work, as well as the course of their career so far. They were also asked how their involvement in Expo 2025 had come about. This provided an opportunity to gather demographic details of the interviewee, put them at ease and let the conversation flow naturally.

Using cultural diplomacy as a starting point, I defined the context in which artists and other actors operate. Relying on the dilemma discussed by Matarasso & Landry (1999, p. 16), I asked interviewees how they viewed the role of culture as a tool for development. Questions like 'what role do you think art plays in the Dutch pavilion at Expo 2025?' allowed for an understanding of how interviewees see culture in the context of the pavilion, and at the same time provides insights into the cultural product at the expo (Clarke, 2014, p. 154). Follow-up questions gave room for reflecting on the use of culture in a broader sense. In the interviews with the policy officer and the two curators, I also focused on the implementation of the cultural diplomacy strategy within the cultural programme through its theme *Activating Common Ground*, based on the different interpretations of cultural diplomacy by Holden (2013, p. 3) and Cummings (2003, p. 1). Artists were asked about how their work reflects this theme in order to understand how their artistic work is used in the diplomatic context of the expo and what they think of it.

The second topic touched upon during the interviews was based on theories of cultural production. Based on the approaches of Becker (1982/2008) and Bourdieu (1983/1993), I developed interview questions to understand how artists deal with institutional and symbolic constraints imposed by a context like the expo. By asking artists about the process of their

contribution to the cultural programme, I gained understanding of the restrictions the process of cultural production can impose. Using follow-up questions, interviewees - especially artists - informed me about the symbolic and practical constraints of cultural production in this context. Going further, I explored how artists deal with these and whether they experience tension between their artistic vision and the limits of the pavilion. For example, I asked interviewees if they felt autonomous in their artistic contribution to the programme. By having artists give concrete examples of choices they had to make, it became clear how they balance between artistic expression and institutional expectations. Implementing the concept of distributors, I asked how artists viewed their relation with the curators and vice versa. Since distributors are essential actors in the production of culture, this was a valuable addition to the interview guide (Alexander, 2003, p. 62). Becker argues that governments, when acting as commissioners or funders, influence the kind of art that is made and shown (1982/2008, p. 165). Therefore, I included the question: ‘what does the involvement of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs mean to you?’.

The third section of the interviews concerned the impact of participation in Expo 2025 on artists’ careers. International exhibitions are described in the literature as moments of visibility that can contribute to expanding networks, gaining social and symbolic capital and accelerating career development (Fillis et al., 2022, p. 135). From this perspective, it was relevant to explore why artists decided to participate in the expo and how they view their participation within their professional practice. The interviews explicitly asked about why they participated in the cultural programme of the Dutch pavilion. The answers provided insight into the different considerations artists make, revealing their perception of the spectrum between the autonomous and heteronomous poles from Bourdieu’s (1983/1993) concept of a field, and how they navigate the exceptional economy of the arts described by Abbing (2002). Curators and a policy officer, fulfilling the role of gatekeepers or distributors, were asked how they saw the expo in the context of artists’ career development and what their role means in this. With these questions, I managed to understand how these actors serve as mentors opening doors for Dutch artists and how market opportunities for Dutch artists are embedded in the expo.

At the end of each interview, I asked the interviewee if there was anything they wanted to share I did not ask them about. This sometimes led to further, critical insights about topics that were relevant for the research question posed in this thesis. These insights, of course, have been included in the analysis. Finally, I thanked the interviewee for their time and insights.

3.4 Data analysis

After the interviews, the data was analysed. A thematic approach allowed me to understand the position of Dutch artists in the cultural programme of the Dutch pavilion at Expo 2025, and how they negotiate these. The thematic analysis was conducted according to the method of Braun & Clarke (2006) and is characterised by an inductive approach. The themes did not emerge from a predetermined theoretical framework, but were constructed from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 83). Codes and themes were generated without trying to make them fit within existing theories or assumptions. In this sense, the data was the starting point for the analysis: the patterns emerged from the material.

After conducting the interviews, all of them were transcribed. This process acted as an initial exploration of the material and allowed me to become familiar with the data. It already helped to properly understand the different perspectives on the dynamics within the production of culture. The transcripts were then uploaded to [Atlas.ti](#) to start the coding process. I thoroughly coded words and phrases. Again, the theoretical framework and the research question determined what quotes were actually relevant, but there were no predetermined themes that influenced the coding process. In this initial phase, I stayed as close as possible to the exact words of the interviewee. Where the exact words of the interviewee were relevant for the analysis, in-vivo coding was applied. This reinforced the inductive approach of the analysis. A total of 391 codes resulted from this coding process. Due to the extensive amount of data, some of the codes were very similar. To avoid duplication, these codes were transformed into one. Consequently, all of the codes were reviewed and grouped into categories. These would later serve as subthemes. This process resulted in 36 code groups, which were then revised to determine which groups emerged most in the transcripts. Not all code groups turned out to be relevant for answering the research question so these were excluded from thematizing the code groups. In the final phase of the analysis, the 27 remaining code groups could be categorized into four main themes arising from the transcripts. The code groups that formed these themes were included as subthemes. Based on the four themes, the results of the analysis were written. For a schematic overview of all themes and subthemes, see Appendix C. The results are presented in the next chapter.

3.5 Ethical considerations

For this thesis, I paid particular attention to the ethical aspects of the research process. As the thesis is based on interviews with participants actively and currently involved in the

cultural programme of the Dutch pavilion and their contribution had not always been finished yet, it was essential that their data was handled with care. Therefore, the entire research process was set up according to the guidelines prescribed by the Erasmus University Rotterdam. This means ‘performing truly independent research’, ‘ensuring to take into account the interests of the research subjects’ and ‘systematically considering possible consequences of the research and making deliberate choices on this’ (Erasmus University Rotterdam, 2020, n.d.).

An informed consent form, including information about the thesis, was submitted to the participant prior to each interview. This form was based on the standard format offered by Erasmus University Rotterdam, and I adapted it to the context and content of this thesis. The form explains the purpose of the study, the topics that were going to be discussed, the length of the interviews and all the conditions under which the information collected will be used. A crucial part of the form is the guarantee that the participant’s privacy will be protected at all times. All of the interviewees whose data is used in the analysis of this thesis have signed this form, giving explicit consent for participation and the use of their data in the study.

To ensure the privacy of the participants, all names have been anonymised in the analysis. This means that no direct identifying details were included, but ‘Artist 1’ or ‘Curator 2’ instead. Due to the fact that I examined a case in which the respondents know each other and the political context in which they work, personal details that could indirectly lead to recognition were deliberately omitted or modified. In addition, I explicitly and repeatedly stressed during the interviews that this thesis is an independent study of their perceptions, thoughts and opinions. To create a safe and open setting in which the interviewees felt free to express their thoughts, I emphasised the interview is for my Master’s thesis and not on behalf of any organisation or person concerned with Expo 2025.

Because of the political context of the topic, two of the interviewees expressed a preference to check how their quotes would be contextualised in this thesis. This member checking process contributed to the credibility of the study, ensuring the accuracy of the quotes and the context in which they are used (Candela, 2019, p. 620). One of them approved the quotations without adjustments. The other one indicated he wanted to make some modifications to his quotes, which, of course, I incorporated in the final version.

The processing and analysis of the data were conducted with respect for the integrity of the participants and the complexity of their positions within the cultural field. This way, this thesis seeks to contribute to academical, ethical valid research on cultural production in a diplomatic context.

4. Results

This chapter presents the findings that emerged from the eight semi-structured interviews with those involved in the cultural programme of the Dutch pavilion at Expo 2025. The thematic analysis was conducted using an inductive approach. Although the theoretical framework was used to interpret the data in relation to the literature, I deliberately did not explain or test the theory with the data, allowing for new findings. The interview transcripts were systematically read through and relevant information was coded, initially staying close to the actual words of the respondent. Subsequently, these codes were grouped into 36 topics. After reviewing these topics, regrouping them led to four themes that contribute to answering the research question posed in this thesis: ‘culture reflecting mutual understanding and collaboration’, ‘coping with restrictions of the Dutch pavilion’, ‘marketisation of culture’ and ‘perceptions of participation’.

4.1 Culture reflecting mutual understanding and collaboration

4.1.1 *The use of culture in diplomacy*

During the interviews, the narrative the cultural programme in the Dutch pavilion aims to tell its audience was discussed, and why. As the Dutch pavilion serves as a place to execute diplomacy strategies, the message expressed in the cultural programme is carefully developed based on political objectives. Going further, I asked artists to share their thoughts on how their project fits in this narrative. The interviews revealed that in the programme the focus lies not so much on promoting a national identity, but rather on establishing mutual understanding between Japan and The Netherlands.

When I asked Policy officer 1 of the Dutch embassy in Japan about the use of culture at the expo, he explained where it came from, from a general perspective: “you use culture to start a dialogue with your partner countries”¹. He stated that sometimes culture is the only channel of maintaining this dialogue. Curator 1 even expressed how sometimes culture is the last kind of relation there is, when a country’s other diplomatic relations are in jeopardy: “and often culture is the only relation left with a particular country with which all other diplomatic relations are complicated”². She used the example of the Hermitage, a museum in Amsterdam, stating the only relation left with Russia was through the cultural connection

¹ “je gebruikt kunst inderdaad om een dialoog aan te gaan met je partnerlanden”

² “En vaak is cultuur soms de enige relatie die er dan nog is...met een bepaald land waar alle andere diplomatieke relaties ingewikkeld mee zijn.”

between the museum in Saint Petersburg and its annex in Amsterdam. The relation, characterized as ‘art connects’, was terminated after the Russian attacks on Ukraine in February 2022 (NOS, 3 March 2022). The museum in Amsterdam lost their last lifeline with Russia with this termination.

What emerges from these statements is a striking confidence in the ability of culture to connect, especially when political or economic ties are under pressure. Interviewees speak of culture not as an optional addition to diplomacy, but as a necessary form of communication when other channels are omitted. The example Curator 1 uses of the severing of ties between the Hermitage in Amsterdam and Saint Petersburg is cited in this context not necessarily as fact, but as an illustration of what is at stake: if even cultural connections are terminated, no relations remain. Exactly in this sensitivity lies the power of culture to create space for contact, nuance and for acknowledging differences. This perspective reflects the result of the policy shift in the 1980s from art as a self-justifying value towards art as a tool for development (Matarasso & Landry, 1999, p. 15). This shift marked a turning point in the way governments and institutions understood culture: not just as an intrinsic value, but as a tool to address societal challenges. It has led to a concern about the danger of instrumentalisation, that the qualities of the arts will somehow be debased by other policy objectives (Matarasso & Landry, 1999, p. 16).

This concern is expressed by Artist 2: “I think... Look, the arts have been given less and less space in recent decades. It has to satisfy a lot of tick boxes so to speak. And serve a lot of social issues”³. She expresses how the consequence of this shift is that the essence of the arts does not get any space to be actually impactful. When culture is deployed as a diplomatic tool, as in the context of Expo 2025, the role of artists shifts from autonomous maker to strategic participant in a political discourse.

Policy officer 1 expressed his thoughts on the use of culture as a tool for development through cultural diplomacy, acknowledging the discourse of the concept in a subtle way:

Cultural diplomacy is not a dirty word, certainly not. It is a way of thanking your partners on a very simple level for the cooperation you have. It is also a way of being able to speak to each other in a context that is not the usual one, which sometimes gets

³ “Ik vind... Kijk, de kunst is natuurlijk de afgelopen decennia... steeds minder...heeft minder ruimte gekregen. Het moet veel... Het moet aan veel tick boxes voldoen, om maar zo te zeggen. En ook veel maatschappelijke kwesties dienen.”

you to very different conversations from the ones you normally have, so to speak.⁴
(Policy officer 1)

Policy officer 1's interpretation of cultural diplomacy shows that he sees cultural diplomacy not as a one-way street to convey national values, but as a relational tool to strengthen cooperation. His pragmatic approach - in which cultural diplomacy is 'a way to thank your partners' and 'can lead to different conversations' - points to a fundamental insight: that culture can do something that traditional diplomacy rarely can. The 'very different conversations' he refers to can contribute to the formation of collective identities, a concept from the constructivist approach of Villanueva Rivas (2010). He argues that cultural diplomacy can contribute to the formation of collective identities based on values, norms and interests (2010, p. 47). According to this approach, the identities and interests of actors are not fixed, but socially constructed and subject to cultural interaction. It is in the encounter through culture that new, shared identities can emerge. This is exactly what the cultural programme at Expo 2025 can accomplish: it opens a symbolic space in which such processes of identity formation can take place. This vision of cultural products as a diplomatic tool shows that cultural capital is deployed strategically. For artists, this means positioning themselves within a tension of expectations and interests. It shows how the policy-making of the cultural programme determines the conditions in which artists must position themselves.

4.1.2 Cultural diplomacy at Expo 2025: conflicting strategies

In the interviews, I touched upon the general use of art in international relations, but also of its use at Expo 2025. On the one hand, it is a stage to showcase art, but also as a place where nations are on display and commercial deals are made. Policy officer 1 shared how Expo 2025 serves as a place to execute the cultural diplomacy strategy as part of the International Cultural Policy of the Netherlands, describing the mega-event as a "behemoth" or "vehicle" for cultural diplomacy. This points not only to the scale and impact of the event, but also to the expo's ability to make policy tangible. His approach resonates with Bennett's (1988) concept of the exhibitionary complex, in which exhibitions are understood not as neutral stages but as organised spaces of power and representation. Within this complex, knowledge and cultural values are presented in the service of state purposes, aiming to

⁴ "...culturele diplomatie is geen vies woord, zeker niet. Het is een manier om je partners op een heel eenvoudig niveau te bedanken voor de samenwerking die je hebt. Het is ook een manier om elkaar te kunnen spreken in een context die niet de gebruikelijke is, waardoor je soms op hele andere gesprekken komt dan die je normaal hebt, zeg maar."

‘educate, discipline and civilize’ its audience (Bennett, 1988, p. 79). The policy officer places Expo 2025 in this complex: a state-supported spectacle in which diplomatic strategies are executed. The expo is a system in which countries move along, because visibility has itself become a value in this context.

The Dutch pavilion becomes not just a stage for national profiling, but also functions as an accessible way to start a dialogue with partner countries. When I asked Policy officer 1 again about the focus on mutual understanding in the cultural programme, he emphasized the cultural diplomacy strategy at Expo 2025 is not a ‘one-way street’, but instead goes both ways, just like the theme of the programme suggests. This implementation of the strategy in the context of the cultural programme reflects the shift in cultural diplomacy from one-way nation branding toward a more reciprocal model of mutual cultural exchange and understanding (Holden, 2013, p. 3). Cultural diplomacy seems to be not just a tool for strengthening the national image, but rather a way of engaging with each other and pointing out shared global challenges. Curator 1 expresses how she personally feels about the theme of common ground: “Instead of setting aside our differences you should instead utilize the differences. Because only then will you simply move forward”⁵. Cultural globalization is no longer understood as a process of cultural homogenization, but as a dynamic circulation of diverse forms of expression (Crane, 2002, p. 1). The pavilion reflects this by giving artistic initiatives from all disciplines a stage within the diplomatic narrative.

I asked the curators more about how this approach is reflected in the programme. Curator 2 told me the concept of the cultural programme is to present existing cultural collaborations between creatives from the Netherlands and Japan. This explains why one of the most important criteria when making the selection of artists was the existing link of either the art or the artist with Japan, stated by Curator 1. This approach makes the programme not just an export of Dutch culture, but presents how intercultural cultural collaboration can make art flourish. Curator 1 expressed how intercultural collaboration is of crucial importance for her personally and how the importance of the project transcends Osaka. She expresses the expo is a momentum to show this importance.

This focus on reciprocity is reflected in both the thematic content of the programme and the production of some of the featured projects that stem from existing collaborations between Dutch and Japanese artists. According to the two responsible curators, the job was to create a programme that reflects all cultural disciplines in the Dutch cultural field through an

⁵ “...in plaats van onze verschillen opzij te zetten, zou je de verschillen juist moeten benutten. Want alleen dan kom je gewoon verder.”

inclusive and diverse array of artistic projects. The theme of the programme *Activating Common Ground* emphasizes the interface of cultures, and more specifically the Japanese and Dutch. Artist 3 shared how his contribution to the programme reflects mutual understanding and collaboration between Japanese and Dutch culture thematically, but also productionally. He acknowledges the emphasis on ‘connecting’ by the embassy and explains how it resulted in his collaboration with a Japanese artist to create a cultural product to be programmed at Expo 2025.

However, Policy officer 1 expressed an interesting nuance. While he pointed out that the cultural programme is all about mutual understanding, he mentioned the so called ‘visitor’s experience’ in the Dutch pavilion:

If you look at the visitor’s experience, which is actually 80 to 90 percent of the building. There's a very clear, but also kind of easy to understand narrative about ... how the Dutch are dealing with for example the energy transition. That we are an innovative country.⁶ (Policy officer 1)

This showed a paradox between the cultural programme, which is committed to mutual understanding and cooperation, and the so-called ‘visitor’s experience’ in the Dutch pavilion, which reflects a more old-fashioned way of nation branding. Curator 1 made a similar statement, revealing there was a lot of money invested in this experience compared to the cultural programme. The division of space and budget between this nation branding visitor’s experience and the cultural programme that shows cultural collaboration between the Netherlands and Japan, shows the tension of how far the ambition of reciprocity extends when it must coexist with a strong nation branding discourse within the national pavilion. The cultural component seems to offer more room for the narrative about mutual collaboration, while the main space - physically and symbolically - adheres to a traditional form of soft power in which sending out a positive image is central.

The paradox can be understood using the theoretical distinction between traditional and contemporary forms of cultural diplomacy. Whereas Cummings (2003, p. 1) characterises cultural diplomacy as a strategy focused on nation branding and projecting a positive image of a country, Holden (2013, p. 3) points to a recent shift towards reciprocity and a focus on mutual understanding and international collaboration.

⁶ “als je naar de visitor’s experience kijkt, wat eigenlijk 80 tot 90 procent van het gebouw is. Daar is een heel duidelijk, maar ook wel makkelijk te begrijpen narratief over...hoe de Nederlanders omgaan met bijvoorbeeld de energietransitie. Dat we een innovatief land zijn”

This tension seems to show that cultural diplomacy is given less priority than other forms of diplomacy in practice. The cultural programme is designed as part of the Netherlands' international cultural policy strategy. Yet practice shows that this programme has to sacrifice space, visibility and budget in favour of the visitor's experience that shows more traditional diplomatic objectives, e.g., nation branding. Although the interviews stress the importance of mutual understanding, the cultural programme of the Dutch pavilion at Expo 2025 suggests that cultural diplomacy is subordinate to more traditional strategies of nation branding in the rest of the pavilion. This raises the question to what extent cultural diplomacy is actually used as an instrument within the diplomatic context of the expo, or mainly as an illustrating vehicle functioning alongside more dominant strategies. While the discourse within the programme speaks of equal collaboration and intercultural dialogue, it takes place in a context that seems to be symbolically subordinate to the general diplomatic strategy executed in the Dutch participation in Expo 2025.

4.2 Coping with restrictions of the Dutch pavilion

Following from the position of culture within the pavilion, a recurring theme in the interviews was the limited space for culture - both practical and symbolic. I asked the participating artists if they felt there were any restrictions they faced in their participation in the cultural programme, and if so, how they dealt with these.

4.2.1 Practical limitations

One of the most defining constraints for the cultural programme of the Dutch pavilion at the expo is its limited budget. All three of interviewees who work at a strategic level – the two curators and a policy officer – mentioned how financial resources are significantly lower than in previous editions. The rising construction and staff costs has had a direct impact on the scale and design of the pavilion. The smaller size of the pavilion affects not only the visibility and impact of the cultural programme, but also the practical possibilities of showing art or facilitating audience interaction.

Another important issue mentioned by several interviewees was the fact that the pavilion is used for commercial purposes during most days of the week. This means that from Monday to Thursday or Friday, there is virtually no space for any activities of the cultural programme in the pavilion. Initially, this caused friction between the artistic vision of the curators and the commissioning body of the pavilion, the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. The curators mentioned the initial expectations

were difficult to reconcile with the reality of cultural production. To meet the demands of the commissioner, the curators came up with a concept of six exhibitions when it suddenly appeared that commercial events were to take place during the week. Curator 1 explained that it initially sparked discussion, but she now sees it as a positive outcome: “And then occasionally we have an overlap on Friday or Saturday. And so actually that's really cool, has worked out really cool. And caused friction for a while. But then that can eventually lead to something else.”⁷

These two constraints led to the conclusion that the pavilion is not suitable for displaying art objects or to show any performances. Both in terms of scale and function, the space falls short of presenting cultural projects in their full scope. The curators decided to completely change the concept and switch to a flexible setup in which there was no room for art objects, but only in documenting form, on so-called ‘panels’. The emphasis thus shifted to communicating the project and the idea behind it rather than showing the work itself. One of the curators spoke of a ‘super beautiful concept’ that was ultimately born out of necessity. This shift highlights the extent to which the cultural programme had to adapt the dominant commercial purpose of the pavilion: not art itself, but a representation of it is given a place in the pavilion. It is a practical example of Nicoletta’s (2010) critique of the capitalist, commercial nature of expos and fairs downplaying the ability of art (p. 499). It shows how instrumentalization of culture manifests itself not only in the content of an artwork but also in the way it is presented. It comes under pressure from dominant commercial interests.

The practical limitations of the pavilion played a big role in the early process of selecting the artists whose project would be showcased in the pavilion. Curators had to consider the feasibility of the projects in their selection, revealed by Curator 1: “So those designers said: ‘yes I also have a nice idea. I want something with music or with sound.’ Yes super fun. But that's just not going to make it in this context.”⁸ Artists who wanted to present something that the pavilion could not facilitate were not selected, because it just was not feasible and also because of the amount of different artists they could choose from. This comment shows how participating artists do not create their work in a vacuum, but depend on collaboration with others within the larger production network of the expo. Artists take into account the limitations of the institution they produce art for - and with (Becker, 1982/2008, p. 28). In the case of the Dutch pavilion, artists adapt to the boundaries proposed by the

⁷ “En dan af en toe hebben we een overlap op vrijdag of zaterdag. En eigenlijk is dat dus ook heel tof, heeft dat heel tof uitgepakt. En leverde even frictie op. Maar dan kan dat uiteindelijk ook weer iets anders opleveren.”

⁸ “Dus die ontwerpers die zeiden: ‘Ja ik heb ook nog wel een leuk idee. Ik wil iets met muziek of met geluid.’ Ja super leuk. Maar dat gaat het gewoon niet redden in deze context.”

institution due to economical constraints and commercial priorities. Because of the different purposes of the space, Artist 4 was instructed by one of the curators to keep her project simple. She followed and developed a concept that was easy to install, requiring minimal construction time or technical effort. This illustrates how she chose not to break with the convention of the space, because if she would have, her work would probably not be shown at the pavilion. Breaking with existing conventions means less exposure for artists and their work as it would simply not be exhibited (Becker, 1982/2008, p. 35). In this case, the artist chose for conventional ease and success, rather than unconventional trouble which would have resulted in a lack of recognition.

4.2.2 Symbolic limitations

When the interviewees revealed what limitations they faced, all of them touched upon the cultural collaborations between the Netherlands and Japan. Therefore, a less practical but no less defining restriction of the programme at the Dutch pavilion is that all artistic projects had to have an existing link to Japan. This comes from the cultural diplomacy strategy discussed earlier in this chapter: mutual understanding and collaboration. Not only because of the desire for promoting intercultural cooperation, but also because projects that are already embedded in a Japanese network could more quickly lead to visible results. This symbolic boundary comes to the fore in a comment by Policy officer 1: “What was paid attention to is indeed whether they already have projects underway with Japan. That is one of the most important ones. And whether by having a presence in the pavilion, they can get a pump-up with that.”⁹. He means that artists who already possessed this ‘capital’ in the form of previous projects in collaboration with, or about Japanese culture or initiatives, had a greater chance of being selected. This criterion acted as a gateway that determined who was allowed to act as representative of the Dutch cultural sector in the context of the expo in Japan.

This practice can be understood as a symbolic boundary (Lamont et al., 2015, p. 850). The commissioners of the pavilion indirectly determine who gets access to certain positions within the field. Artists with existing cultural capital in a Japanese context were seen as more ‘suitable’ for the purposes of the pavilion. In part one of this chapter, I explained the purpose of the programme as showcasing Dutch-Japanese cultural collaboration. The selection process was thus based not only on artistic quality, but also on the degree to which artists were useful in telling this narrative of the Dutch pavilion, e.g., to which artists possessed the appropriate

⁹ “Waar op gelet is, is inderdaad of ze al projecten hebben lopen met Japan. Dat is een van de allerbelangrijkste. En of ze door de aanwezigheid in het paviljoen, of ze daarmee een pump-up kunnen krijgen.”

symbolic capital. In this process, the curators worked on behalf of the Dutch government, so they were in a position in which they had to translate policy goals into a cultural programme. Their role was not only to make a selection based on quality, but also on the relevance of artists with the diplomatic message.

The commissioners of the Dutch pavilion at Expo 2025, being the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, seem to be in a dominant position. In *Art Worlds*, Becker discusses how governments can sometimes serve as distributors or 'patrons' (1982/2008, p. 99). He argues that patrons, due to their dominant position and resources, are able to define what kind of culture gets produced and what doesn't. They are in the position to choose art and artists that fit with their interests. The Dutch government gives selected Dutch artists access to a government-owned exhibition space. This governmental body is part of the production of culture, e.g., the art world. As Becker argues, when a government enters the art world, it has the same influence as other members of the art world, but is the only one with the financial resources and international network, as well as the only one that aims to execute a diplomatic strategy (1982/2008, p. 185). Using their resources, they deploy artists to serve this strategy and the national interests. The artist is in a dependent position, as the government provides them with resources that would likely not be available otherwise (p. 182).

The cultural programme shows another paradox. On the one hand, artists and their projects are used to support and propagate the story of mutual collaboration and common ground. Their presence should show that the Netherlands is committed to cultural exchange and inclusivity. At the same time, there is hardly any space for the actual presentation of art and only artists who have a link with Japan are selected for this international stage. Artists are thus turned into a kind of vehicle for promoting a diplomatic message, while their work disappears into the margins.

These findings show how cultural diplomacy operates in practice: on the one hand, it shows its secondary position within a larger field of power, while on the other, it suggests how it depends on artists with a specific form of symbolic capital that resonates with the diplomacy strategy. This strategy acts as a selection mechanism that puts cultural production at the service of diplomatic, political utility. The observations contribute to the tension between autonomy of artists and instrumentalization of cultural products and illustrate the discourse of how states use culture to serve their interests, suppressing art's critical and emancipatory potential when it gets the space (Marcuse, 2007, p. 15). In the pavilion of a

globalised state like the Netherlands, culture is produced in ways that promote the state's values, at the expense of art's critical and transcendent potential.

4.3 Marketisation of culture

4.3.1 Commercial objectives of the Dutch pavilion

To gain a better understanding of the objectives of the Dutch cultural programme at Expo 2025, I asked Policy officer 1 about the importance of participating in an expo. He emphasized how important the relation between the Netherlands and Japan is economically, and how that is a reason for the Netherlands to participate in the expo:

Japan is an important country for the Netherlands. It is the second non-European investor in the Netherlands. More than 35,000 people have jobs thanks to Japanese investment. More than 800 companies in the Netherlands, established in one way or another. The Netherlands is just economically dependent on Japan.... it's clear that the Netherlands just sees [Expo 2025] as a platform for creating opportunities for companies but also for academia and the creative industry.¹⁰ (Policy officer 1)

The commercial interests surrounding the Dutch participation in the expo in Japan is touched upon in almost every interview. This, in combination with the fact that the cultural programme is given only limited space, shows that economic diplomacy is the priority. Curator 1 acknowledges this: "An expo in itself is not an art context.... It's really an economic business world"¹¹. She expresses how she is aware of this, and how it is even outside of her comfort zone.

Artist 2 expresses similar thoughts, but from a more critical point of view. She even questions if the expo is a place for her as an artist because of the commercial interests. The way the showcase of cultural projects has to make way for business-to-business events during the week makes clear where the emphasis is. From a broader view, she argues how nowadays, culture needs to tick many boxes in order to be relevant and how art has to serve societal issues. She emphasizes that while she does not agree, this is simply how current politics work:

¹⁰ "Japan is een belangrijk land voor Nederland. Het is de tweede niet-Europese investeerder in Nederland. Meer dan 35.000 mensen hebben werk dankzij Japanse investering. Meer dan 800 bedrijven in Nederland, die gevestigd zijn op een of andere manier. Dus Nederland is economisch afhankelijk van Japan.... Het is duidelijk dat Nederland dit ziet als iets waar veel kansen in zitten voor bedrijven maar ook voor academici en de creatieve industrie."

¹¹ "Een expo op zichzelf is natuurlijk geen kunstcontext....Het is ook geen kunstwereld. Het is echt een economische wereld. En dat is echt een hele andere wereld."

“I think anyway that the value of art or how the value of everything in this society is scaled for its economic importance.”¹²

This comment by the artist resonates with Abbing’s theory about the art world operating according to a paradox: although art is culturally and symbolically valued, it is often economically devalued. Artists internalize a belief in the exceptional status of art, that it should be made for its own sake, not for money (Abbing, 2002, p. 90). However, they are not selfless, which is why they choose to adapt to the restrictions an art world inevitably brings along (Becker, 1982/2008, p. 28). The artist is not supposed to be motivated by money, yet they function in a society that assigns value primarily through commerce (Abbing, 2002, p. 42). The artist’s remark that in society everything, including art, is measured in economic terms reflects the tension Abbing explores. In a context where economical profit often determines worth, art is at odds with dominant value systems. Abbing describes this as the exceptional economy of the arts: a space in which non-economic values like authenticity, originality or cultural meaning dominate, while artists are expected to survive in an economy that doesn’t reward these values materially (p. 282). The artist’s statement can be read as a critique of society’s commodification of culture. Further comments by the artist reveal how she and other artists are in a less dominant position due to the fact that art is seen as something that is not economically profitable: “We do not bring in money, we cost money ... So you have no voice in fact.”¹³

The comment exposes the power relations within the field of cultural production, in this case the cultural programme of the Dutch pavilion. She basically suggests that if a contribution to a field does not accumulate economical capital, it is in a less dominant position. She implicitly refers to the interpenetration of the field of cultural production by the economical field (Alexander, 2008, p. 1416). The artist’s perception of her subordinate position reveals how the tension between the artistic and commercial objectives is embedded at the level of the individual artist.

Artist 3 shares a different view. He shares how he believes that art is not about profit, but rather about welfare, thinking and judgement, without it getting political or profitable. In that sense, he is the typical artist that Abbing (2002) describes, as his statements reflect a more idealistic view of art, rooted in the idea that artistic expression contributed to the intellectual wellbeing of society without measurable economic returns. By explicitly distancing himself from both political and commercial objectives, he shares a vision of art that

¹² “Ik denk sowieso dat de waarde van kunst of hoe de waarde van alles in deze maatschappij wordt om zijn economische belang ingeschaald.”

¹³ “Wij brengen geen geld in het laatje, wij kosten geld.... Dus heb je geen stem in feite.”

resonates with the autonomous pole of Bourdieu's cultural field: art for art's sake, guided by internal standards rather than external recognition (Bourdieu, 1983/1993, p. 40).

To draw back to the context of Expo 2025, it reinforces the idea of the expo as a heteronomous field in which artists - sometimes within the autonomous pole - operate. The field of the Dutch pavilion is not necessarily about the showcase of art, but rather about a presentation of culture. I would say that Artist 3 is more likely to break with conventions within the cultural programme than, say, Artist 4, because his motivation for participating does not stem so much from its ability to create new networking opportunities or international exposure, so he will be less receptive for the objectives of the pavilion and the demands of its audience.

4.3.2 Creating commercial opportunities for artists

The commercial interests are not only reflected in the content of the cultural programme, but also in the way artists are strategically positioned in the international business network. The deployment of Dutch artists at Expo 2025 not only fulfils a cultural-diplomatic function in which values such as exchange and collaboration are propagated, but is also expressly intended to increase their visibility in Japan and around the world and stimulate possible collaborations. Their presence should lead not only to cultural but also commercial connections, as Curator 2 stated in the interview. Curator 1 shared how the cultural programme also provides business opportunities for the programmed Dutch artists: "I actually hope that it enables them to make relationships and network.... There will certainly be a business component to that as well."¹⁴

This statement illustrates well how the deployment of artists at Expo 2025 brings both opportunities and tensions at the same time. On the one hand, the programme offers valuable opportunities for artists to develop new networks and possibly obtain commissions or collaborations, but on the other hand, it shows that the deployment of Dutch artists is not about the art, but about the commercial potential of these artists. Artist 2 shares her critical thoughts regarding this tension, using the lack of space for art to illustrate her point:

Yes, but also that art becomes... It's a kind of greenwashing. I don't know if there's a word for that in art too ... art really is in the very last place. And it just then has to

¹⁴ "Hoop ik eigenlijk dat het ze in staat stelt om relaties en een netwerk te maken.... Ja, daar zal zeker ook een zakelijke component aan zitten"

struggle somewhere in between ... so it is used to make the show, without giving it a space to actually live up to that show.¹⁵ (Artist 2)

Artist 2's statement points to the subordinate position of art within the cultural programme of the Dutch pavilion. It shows that the production of culture is not autonomous, as it is not so much about the artistic values but rather about the commercial profit it might provide. This is explicitly acknowledged by Curator 2: "[Dutch fashion designer], we kind of plugged that, like 'I think that's really cool to sell' Now you see all the images: that there really is a huge collection being sold there. That's nice."¹⁶ The field of cultural production is interpenetrated, as Alexander (2008, p. 1416) called it, by the economical field. It shows that accumulation of economic capital is being the dominant objective in the cultural programme.

In his field theory, Bourdieu distinguishes between autonomous and heteronomous poles within a field. These comments by the artist and the curator suggest that the cultural programme is characterised by heteronomy. It resonates with Alexander's argument that through the involvement of the state, cultural fields shift towards heteronomy (2018, p. 67). Going further, the term 'greenwashing' Artist 2 uses can be seen as an indication that art is merely instrumentally deployed to suggest a cultural status, with no actual space for artistic expression.

This reveals how artists contributing to the cultural programme of the pavilion have to operate in a field that is shaped by interests from outside the field of cultural production. The focus on commercial profit illustrates Bourdieu's argument that fields are not completely isolated, but that power relations and logics of dominant fields within the bigger field of power, such as economic or political fields, interpenetrate and influence the autonomy of cultural production (Alexander, 2018, p. 67; Bourdieu, 1983/1993, p. 41). It shows how artists' symbolic capital is deployed to reinforce other forms, like economic capital.

4.4 Perceptions of participation

During the interviews, artists gave insights into their motivation for taking part in Expo 2025. Additionally, the curators and Policy officer 1 explained how participation can contribute to the artists' careers. Whereas some of the artists see it as a stepping stone for

¹⁵ "Ja, maar ook dat kunst wordt... Het is een soort greenwashing. Ik weet niet of daar in de kunst ook een woord voor is... staat kunst echt op de allerlaatste plek. En moet het zich maar dan ergens tussen worstelen... Dus er wordt wel mee... Hoe noem je dat? De show gemaakt. Zonder dat het de ruimte krijgt ook daadwerkelijk die show waar te kunnen maken."

¹⁶ [Nederlandse modeontwerper], we hebben dat een beetje geplugd, van volgens mij is dat heel tof om te verkopen. Nu zie je alle beelden, dat er echt een enorme collectie wordt verkocht daar. Dat is ook mooi.

further projects or just as an opportunity for international exposure, others view their contribution to the programme in a more ideological way as a way of connecting with other cultures. These differences reflect different positionings within the field of the Dutch pavilion, based on their perceptions of the field and their motivations for participating.

4.4.1 Expo 2025 as a career opportunity

When asked about what participation in the expo means for artists and their careers, interviewees expressed diverse ideas. Artist 4 shared her thoughts on her participation and with it means for her career. She stresses that her motivation to participate does not stem so much from a desire to showcase her work, but rather from the networking opportunities her participation might bring along to put her work back on the international map:

“And that is why it is all the more important that you then go and do such a thing. It doesn’t have to be big, it can also be small, maybe it’s mainly for the stage.... This would be something I wanted to add to the CV. Hence, I did pursue it. And signed up.”¹⁷ (Artist 4)

Artist 2 shares a similar motivation for her participation, being more critical: “I have to tell you honestly, I didn't see any point in that whole Osaka expo thing at all.... But it offers opportunities for [the project]. It offers opportunities for [future projects].”¹⁸ The artists’ statements reveal a pragmatic attitude towards their participation in the expo. Both explicitly acknowledge that their motivation does not stem from an intrinsic artistic motive to contribute to the showcase of art at the pavilion, but rather from strategic considerations. For Artist 4, participation seems primarily a way to create international exposure. Multiple times during the interview, she describes the cultural programme as something “for the stage”¹⁹ rather than for the art, and how she is aware of this. When she mentioned this, I couldn’t help but think of Craig and Dubois’ article about art and commerce in which they argue that poets either write for ‘the page’ or ‘the stage’ (Craig & Dubois, 2010, p. 448). In part 2 of this chapter, I discussed how Artist 4 adapted to the conventions of the cultural programme. In the case of the artist’s contribution, it shows how she tries to adapt to the audience and other

¹⁷ “En daarom is het des te belangrijk dat je dan zo'n soort dingetje gaat doen. Het hoeft niet groot te zijn. Het kan ook klein zijn. Misschien is het vooral voor de bühne zoiets... Dan zou dit iets zijn wat ik aan het cv wilde toevoegen. Vandaar dat ik het wel heb doorgezet. En me gemeld.”

¹⁸ “Ik moet je eerlijk zeggen, ik zag helemaal geen brood in dat hele Osaka expo.... Maar het biedt kansen voor [het project]. Het biedt kansen voor [toekomstige projecten]”

¹⁹ “voor de bühne”

conventions of the field, to be as impactful as possible. Artist 2 even states she would not have participated if it were not for the future opportunities it brings her. Both see their participation in the expo as a vehicle, a means to achieve certain goals beyond the expo itself. The two curators and Policy officer 1 shared how this is exactly one of objectives of the cultural programme: to create opportunities, whether commercial or not, for participating artists. For example, Policy officer 1 stated participation in Expo 2025 is not bad for an artist's portfolio, which aligns with the statement Curator 2 made which I discussed earlier.

The examples illustrate the way artists position themselves within the cultural programme is dependent on their motivation. Artist 4 mentioned she wanted to be the crowd pleaser and thus she chose to contribute with work that, according to her, fits best with the objectives of the pavilion and the characteristics of the audience.

Artists' participation in an institution like Expo 2025 is valued as high-level publicity, the potential to build career-developing networks and exposure of their work (Lee et al., 2018, p. 133). Some artists show little interest in the commercialisation of their work and are primarily driven by 'psychic income', the intangible satisfaction of creative work (Lee et al., 2018, p. 134). Other artists, including Artist 2 and Artist 4 in this case, seek the art market to develop their careers. Their participation functions as an investment in symbolic capital: visibility, institutional recognition and network expansion. It shows how some artists take the role of not only a cultural producer, but also an entrepreneur. They acknowledge they operate in a field in which cultural value is measured against social returns. For these artists, Expo 2025 is not so much an artistic highlight, which is also reflected in the limited space art gets in the pavilion as discussed earlier in this chapter, but rather a stage that is utilised within a career strategy. It shows that the expo, despite their emphasis on the cultural products and the narrative to tell with these, also functions as marketplaces of symbolic exchange.

When I asked Artist 4 what the expo means in terms of her career, she mentioned how she wanted to collaborate with a Japanese artistic initiative, and how her participation opened doors for her. Because of the coordination and mediation of the Dutch Embassy in Japan, she got in touch with relevant parties, which would have been difficult without the institutional context of the expo. Here, the embassy's involvement acted as a kind of institutional gatekeeper, providing strategic access to new networks. This form of support, that stems from one of the objectives of the Dutch ICB²⁰, aligns with an essential component of institutions

²⁰ Internationaal Cultuurbeleid, International Cultural Policy.
<https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/internationale-culturele-samenwerking/internationaal-cultuurbeleid>

like the expo: the role of mentors, whereby artists are given opportunities through institutional support that would otherwise be not available (Lee et al., 2018, p. 137).

The example also illustrates how artists are dependent on gatekeepers in the production of culture. In the art world that is in this case the Dutch pavilion, the policy officer occupies a dominant position: he is one of the actors within the network with clear political goals and the only one with the resources artists use (Becker, 1982/2008, p. 185). His role is not neutral if we take into account the exhibitionary complex by Bennett (1988): it is embedded in diplomatic objectives in which art production is at the service of broader political interests (p. 74). His role also comes to the fore in the interview with Artist 3. He, as described earlier, worked together with a Japanese artist for Expo 2025 and in the interview he explains how this collaboration came about: “[policy officer] paired me with a Japanese artist, who I now work with”²¹.

The policy officer Artist 3 describes serves as a gatekeeper in the field of cultural production in the context of Expo 2025. He manages and provides artists’ access to networks, resources and visibility. Artist 3 mentioned he is ‘thankful’ for the way the policy officer provided a network opportunity by linking him to the Japanese artist. His experience shows how Expo 2025 functions not only as a stage for showcasing his work, but also as a momentum to engage in international collaboration.

4.4.2 A more ideological approach to participation

Where Artist 2 and Artist 4 approach their participation mainly as a strategic opportunity for their professional careers, Artists 1, 3 and 5 spoke about how they see their participation as an opportunity to contribute to showcasing Dutch culture and intercultural collaboration with Japan. Artist 5 explains how he feels recognised because of his contribution to the programme:

I also think it's very cool that we as a [artistic initiative], which is not always, shall I say, taken seriously in, certainly in a bit of a political sphere.... I do think it's cool that we as an [artistic initiative] do get the space for that in such a place.²² (Artist 5)

²¹ “toen hebben ze me eerst gekoppeld aan een Japanse [kunstenaar], waar ik nu mee samenwerk”

²² “Ja, ik vind het ook heel tof dat wij als [artistiek initiatief], wat toch niet altijd even, laat ik zo zeggen, serieus wordt genomen in, zeker in een beetje een politieke sferen. (...) dat ik het wel tof vind dat wij als [artistiek initiatief] daar wel de ruimte voor krijgen op zo'n plek.”

Artist 5's statement illustrates how some artists see their participation in the expo as an opportunity to showcase artistic work and to receive recognition within a heteronomous field that can usually be closed to his form of artistic work. His comment that his artistic work is not always taken seriously in political spheres, but is now being given a stage at a prestigious diplomatic exhibition, shows how he sees his contribution as symbolic recognition of his artistic significance.

It reflects one of the different motivations for artists to engage in institutional settings like the expo. Fillis et al. (2022) discuss different scientific contributions to artists' careers argued by other authors (p. 134). Artist 5's statement resonates with the described belief that artists are motivated in their work not primarily by financial reward, but by 'psychic income' or the non-monetary recognition (Honey et al., 1997 as cited in Fillis et al., 2022, p. 134). For Artist 5, his participation in Expo 2025 is valuable to him exactly because it gives him a sense of dignity. In this light, his comment also reflects an external reward like recognition (Abbing, 2002, p. 82). Abbing (2002) argues that artists are rarely completely 'selfless' or purely commercial, but most artists are on a spectrum between intrinsic motivation and external rewards. In this case, Artist 5 does not mention anything about financial rewards, but appreciates the recognition and visibility within a context where his work typically receives little dignity. This form of reward, symbolic or 'psychic', fits with what Abbing (2002) describes as external rewards that are not necessarily monetary, but neither does it stem from an intrinsic motivation. The fact that he labels his participation as "cool" because it gives his work a space to present on such a political stage points to the symbolic recognition within the field that might otherwise exclude him. It illustrates how artistic motivation is not separate from external structures but intertwined in them. In that sense, Artist 5 is not 'selfless' (Abbing, 2002, p. 82).

Other artists also show a more ideological approach to their participation in the cultural programme. When I asked Artist 3 about his participation, he revealed that his motivation to participate is driven by the substantive connection of his work to the diplomatic narrative of 'common ground' in the pavilion. As opposed to, for example, Artist 4, he sees his contribution as a substantive match with the pavilion's goals. It shows a more ideological approach to his participation: he participates because his work can make a substantive contribution to the cultural programme and its narrative. This makes his participation different from Artist 2 or Artist 4, who see the expo primarily as a stepping stone for their career. When we draw back to the scale Abbing (2002) describes, I would place Artists 2 and 4 are

more towards 'commercial' artists, and Artists 1, 3 and 5 are more leaning towards the 'selfless' artists (Abbing, 2002, p. 82).

This difference in attitude towards participation is striking. Artist 2 and Artist 4 acknowledge showcasing culture is in a second place after the political and commercial interests and, maybe therefore, see the expo not so much as an opportunity to showcase their work but rather as a vehicle to use in their future artistic projects. Artist 1 and Artist 3 are less critical of the expo as a place for presenting art. Artist 3 even states that it is smart that the Dutch participation in Expo 2025 includes a cultural track. At the same time, these artists hardly reflect on the expo's potential impact on their network.

These differences in artists' motivations and perceptions of their participation shows that their attitude towards participating in Expo 2025 is a determinant of how they negotiate their position within the cultural programme. Whereas some artists see participation as an opportunity for showcasing their work or international artistic collaboration, others see it merely as a high-level project to use 'on their cv' for future projects. These differences are not just personal preferences, but reflect the relationship between individual beliefs and the institutional context in which the artists operate. The way artists give meaning to their participation, as a strategic vehicle or a place to accumulate symbolic capital shows that artists' negotiation strategies in a heteronomous field like Expo 2025 cannot be separated from their perceptions of the field.

5. Conclusion

Answering the research question posed in this thesis requires understanding both the institutional context of the pavilion and the individual motivations and perceptions of artists. The diplomatic context of the pavilion determines in what kind of space artists have to position themselves, and the limitations that come with their participation show how artists have to adapt to restrictions or limitations of the pavilion which affects their 'window' of negotiation. The underlying economic objectives of the Dutch pavilion reveal that artists are part of a system of marketisation of culture, which defines their subordinate position as cultural producers. The distinction in motivation and perception among artists shows how they deal differently with this position. The analysis of interviews with artists, curators and policy staff gave insight into the strategy of the cultural programme, how the artists and their work reflect this strategy, what limitations artists had to face and how they did so, the underlying economic objectives of the Dutch pavilion and the artists' perception of their participation and its impact.

Within the cultural programme of the Dutch pavilion, the focus lies on mutual understanding and cultural collaboration between the Netherlands and Japan. This is expressed in the theme *Common Ground* and in the selection criteria for participating artists, who or whose work have an obvious link with Japanese culture. This cultural diplomacy strategy of presenting cultural collaboration comes to the fore both thematically, in the content of the artistic projects, and productionally, as some of the projects are produced as a collaboration between Dutch and Japanese artists. At the same time, it appears that this diplomatic ideal has to compete with more traditional forms of diplomacy, from outside of the cultural programme but within the pavilion. The visitor's experience, in which the emphasis lies on projecting a positive image of the Netherlands, seems to have higher priority in terms of budget and physical space in the pavilion.

The cultural diplomacy strategy led to symbolic boundaries, with curators - on behalf of the Dutch government - deciding which artists were selected for the programme based on their eligibility for execution of this strategy. In this selection process, culture is used to promote the Dutch values. Furthermore, the subordinate position of the cultural programme led to various constraints or limitations participating artists had to face. The relatively small budget for the Dutch pavilion affected the cultural programme. The space did not allow for any original art objects to be shown, thus the artistic work was presented by text and images. The way culture came in second place or, as one of the interviewees mentioned it 'in an

instrumentalizing role' shows how other objectives than artistic ones are dominant, at the expense of the art's potential to be challenging, moving or questioning. To a more or lesser extent, artists adapted to these limitations.

Going further on the position of culture in the Dutch pavilion and the implications for artists, the pavilion is characterised by commercial interests. The economical dependency of the Netherlands on Japan makes the Dutch participation in Expo 2025 in Osaka important for fostering this relation. As a result, the cultural component of the pavilion is not just aimed at displaying Dutch artistic quality, but functions as an instrument within the economic and diplomatic strategies. In the pavilion, culture seems to be deployed to support economic goals, a pattern that symbolises a broader societal trend in which art is increasingly valued for its economic benefit, and in which culture must contribute to something utilitarian instead of autonomous expression.

It became evident that the way artists negotiate their position within the cultural programme of the Dutch pavilion is related to their motivation and expectations of their participation and perceptions of the role that culture plays at Expo 2025. Some artists explicitly acknowledge that the expo offers hardly any space for autonomous art, and therefore see their participation mainly as a strategic step in their career. They use the visibility and networking and mentoring opportunities offered by the mega-event to strengthen their position in future projects. Other artists approach their participation less as a career move and more ideologically, as an opportunity to present their work meaningfully in light of the pavilion's theme. These artists think less in terms of returns or networking opportunities, they even doubt if it has an impact on their career path. They see their participation as a way of producing culture in a context in which their work can contribute to a narrative about cultural collaboration, without the political or societal component. This shows how also in heteronomous fields, artists can be in different positions between the 'selfless' and the 'commercial' ends of the scale depending on their perception of the field of production (Abbing, 2002, p. 83).

5.1 Discussion

The analysis shows that although a cultural diplomacy strategy based on presenting mutual collaboration of the Netherlands and Japan is indeed implemented in the cultural programme, it seems to be subordinate to the programme elsewhere in the pavilion. This raises questions about the position of cultural diplomacy in regards to other forms of diplomacy. It aligns with Alexander's (2008) critique on Bourdieu's field theory (1983).

Whereas he states cultural fields can be interpenetrated by commercial fields, Alexander goes further stating they can also be affected by political power (2008, p. 1416). The case of the Dutch pavilion shows that political objectives affect the field of cultural production. It implies that cultural diplomacy, focused on mutual understanding, cannot be separated from other political forces. The cultural product is deployed in a political context that pressures its autonomous value. However, the theory fails to shed any light on the underlying factors of the political objectives. Alexander (2008) makes a distinction between political and economic influences, but the findings of this thesis suggest the political objectives that shape the cultural programme come from economic interests. The results of this thesis blur these boundaries and points to a need for a more integrated understanding of how political and economic forces together constitute the heteronomy of cultural production.

Furthermore, the results show that artists have to face the tensions imposed by the Dutch pavilion indirectly, negotiating their position based on their motivation and perception of the field. It shows artistic positioning in heteronomous fields is dependent on multiple factors. This compliments Abbing's critique of how society employs the concept of the 'selfless' and 'commercial' artists (Abbing, 2002, p. 82). Many artists operate between these extremes, depending on their perceptions and the field in which they work.

The findings of this thesis make a significant contribution to current research in cultural production in heteronomous fields. This study shifts the focus to the positions of artists as active actors within political, diplomatic contexts. Through the analysis of experiences and perceptions of artists, curators and a policy officer, this thesis shows how cultural production has a complex position in cultural diplomacy, and how artists strategically navigate within this system. It offers empirical evidence for the existence of symbolic boundaries in diplomatic cultural production and nuances of the oppositions between the characteristics and ideologies of artists. Furthermore, this thesis places itself within existing literature on cultural production such as Bourdieu's field theory (1983) and the different approaches towards traditional and modern cultural diplomacy strategies. In doing so, the research contributes to a better understanding of how artistic interests are negotiated in international political and commercial contexts and provides new insights for further research on the role of artists within worlds where interests other than artistic ones are negotiated.

5.2 Limitations and suggestions for future research

Although this thesis offers new insights into how artists negotiate their position within heteronomous, politically driven fields, it has some limitations that should be taken into

account. Firstly, no policymakers directly involved in the development of the Netherlands' international cultural policy were interviewed. Although the policy officer from the Dutch Embassy in Japan – who offered strategic insights into the hows and whys of cultural policy in the context of Expo 2025 – was interviewed, a higher-level policymaker or politician might have been able to provide me with a more overarching view on the strategic role of culture within the broader diplomatic playing field. The study could have reflected more critically on how choices around the cultural programme of the Dutch pavilion were made and how they relate to more general diplomacy strategies. The absence of this perspective limits the analysis of the power relations and objectives behind the cultural programme, and leaves part of the institutional nature of the case unexplored.

Another important limitation of this study concerns the timing of the interviews with the artists. Some interviewees had already seen their contribution to the cultural programme of the pavilion realised or programmed, while others were still in the production stage of their work. The fact they did or did not have the experience of traveling to Osaka to see their work presented in the pavilion might have influenced their perceptions of the process. Artists who had already presented their work in the pavilion could already reflect on its outcomes, like networking opportunities or the impact on the audience. Future research would benefit from an approach in which all participants are interviewed before or, even better, after their participation.

To elaborate on suggestions for further research, this thesis shows how cultural events are formed by political and economic interests, confirming the lack of autonomy of the arts in heteronomous contexts. I would suggest to conduct further research on the impact of culture in a temporary field like a world expo, incorporating a theoretical approach of heritage and the ephemerality of heritage. Whereas this research focused on the diplomatic function of artists' participation in Expo 2025, a more longitudinal approach could provide insights into the impact, or lack thereof, of such cultural contributions to a diplomatic space. During a world expo, countries profile themselves and their position in the world through temporary cultural presentations. Particularly in the context of cultural diplomacy, where cultural representation and international relations intersect, the ephemerality of heritage seems to present a paradox: a short-term, temporary platform is used to establish and maintain long-term relations. Using the concept of ephemeral landscapes, Atha (2018) argues how the most ephemeral phenomena can generate significant meaning (p. 124). As with the Kam Tin Jiao Festival, where the meaning of ritual lies not in the permanent building but in the temporary construction of a temporary cultural space, future research could explore the extent to which

the Dutch pavilion or any other at a world expo acts as a temporary stage for the creation of collective identity and for intercultural dialogue. A longitudinal approach might show whether cultural products in these temporary presentations actually impacts human communities and relations between them, or illustrate how quickly such efforts fade. Policymakers, curators and artists would benefit from such a study to consider the role of culture in international positioning of the Netherlands, especially as financial resources become scarcer and expectations higher.

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Appendix A: Interview guides

GENERAL

About the interview

- Thank you for participating
- The interview will last 45-60 minutes
- Refer to the informed consent document
- Ask permission to record the interview
- Introduce myself
- The aim of the research
- Conditions for the interview
- You can always choose not to answer

ARTISTS

Introduction

- Can you introduce yourself and your work?
- Can you tell me what your artistic career has been like so far?
- How did your participation in Expo 2025 come about?
- What role do you play in the cultural programme of the Dutch Pavilion at the World Expo Osaka 2025?

Cultural diplomacy at Expo 2025

- What role do you think the exhibition of art plays at the World Expo?
- What goals do you think the cultural programme of the Dutch pavilion aims for? What makes you think that?
 - How do these influence your way of working for the pavilion?
- In what ways do you think your art and the way you work aligns (or not) with these goals?
- How do you perceive your freedom to contribute your own ideas about the cultural programme?
- The World Expo is a place for diplomacy. In your contribution to the Dutch pavilion, have you encountered any diplomatic ideas that came into play?

- How does this play a role in the way you work?
- What is your opinion on the use of art as a tool for development in the context of the World Expo?
 - Do you think your art lends itself for this purpose?

The production of art at Expo 2025

- Can you take me through the usual process of producing artistic work for an exhibition, event or programme?
- Can you describe how you produce artistic work specifically for the Dutch pavilion?
 - Are there differences in this with ‘daily’ practice, or is this relatively the same as with other (international) exhibitions?
 - Where do you think this difference comes from?
- What do you think of the Dutch pavilion as a place for your specific art?
- How would you describe your relationship with the curators of the pavilion?
- The Dutch pavilion is coordinated by the Dutch Embassy in Japan and the Ministry of BZ and OCW are the commissioners. How do you experience their involvement?
 - Does this involvement mean anything for you?
- Do you have the idea you have autonomy to create for the pavilion?
 - How do you deal with this?
 - How does this freedom differ from other (international) exhibitions?
 - In what way(s) are you guided by curators?
- What conditions do the artistic products have to meet?
- To what extent do you feel your work relies on collaboration with curators and policy officers?
 - Could you reflect on what these relationships mean for possibilities and the final product within the pavilion?
- How important are the objectives/goals of the pavilion for you, personally?
 - How is this reflected in the way you work?
 - And in your work itself?
- How would you describe the most common themes that emerge in the cultural programme of the Dutch pavilion?

Artists’ career development

- Do you think your participation influences your career?

- What makes you think this?
- Do you think other people than yourself are involved in this influence?
- How do you see the role of curators in this influence in the context of the World Expo and your career?
 - How does this dynamic shape the way you position yourself towards the curators?
 - How does this differ from other exhibitions?

CURATORS

Introduction

- Can you introduce yourself?
- Can you tell me what your career has been like so far?
- How did your work for Expo 2025 come about?
- What role do you play in the cultural programme of the Dutch Pavilion at the World Expo Osaka 2025?

Cultural diplomacy at Expo 2025

- What role do you think the exhibition of art plays at Expo 2025?
- What goals do you think the cultural programme of the Dutch pavilion aims for? What makes you think that?
 - How do these affect your way of working for this project?
 - How do you think these goals are reflected in the cultural programme?
- How do you see the artists and their work relating to these broader goals of the Dutch pavilion?
 - Why have these artists been selected?
 - What did you look for when selecting artists to contribute to the Dutch pavilion?
- Expo 2025 is a place for cultural diplomacy. In your involvement in the Dutch pavilion, have you encountered any diplomatic ideas that came into play?
 - How does this play a role in the way you work?
- What is your opinion on the use of art as a tool for development in the context of the World Expo?

- How do you think art lends itself for this purpose in the context of the Dutch pavilion?
- What do you think is most important when curating this Dutch pavilion?
 - How does it differ from curating other (international) exhibitions?

The production of art at Expo 2025

- Can you take me through the curation process of the Dutch pavilion?
 - Are there differences in this with ‘daily’ practice, or is this relatively the same as with other (international) exhibitions?
 - Where do you think this difference comes from?
- The theme of the Dutch pavilion is ‘Common Ground’. How does the cultural programme reflect this theme?
 - What topics are emphasized?
- How would you describe your relationship with the artists participating in the pavilion?
- The Dutch pavilion is coordinated by the Dutch Embassy in Japan and the Ministry of BZ and OCW are the commissioners. How do you experience their involvement?
- How much autonomy do artists have to create for the pavilion?
 - How do you deal with this?
 - How do you think this freedom differs from other (international) exhibitions?
 - In what way(s) do you guide the artists?
- What conditions do the artistic products have to meet?
- What are your thoughts on the collaboration of artists, curators and policy officers in the context of the pavilion?
 - Could you reflect on what these relationships mean for possibilities and the final product within the pavilion?
- How important are the objectives/goals of the pavilion for you, personally?
 - How is this reflected in the way you work?

Artists’ career development

- What do you think participating in the World Expo means for the artists’ careers?
 - What makes you think this?
 - What do you think your role is from this perspective?

- What is the impact of the involvement of the governmental body that is the Dutch Embassy, according to you?
- What do you think your work as a curator for the pavilion means for your career?
 - What makes you think this?
 - Do you think other people than yourself are involved in this influence?
 - How does this shape the way you position yourself towards other actors in the cultural programme of the Dutch pavilion?
 - How does this differ from other exhibitions?

POLICY OFFICERS

Introduction

- Can you introduce yourself?
- Can you tell me what your career has been like so far?
- How did your work for Expo 2025 come about?
- What role do you play in the cultural programme of the Dutch Pavilion at the World Expo Osaka 2025?

Cultural diplomacy at Expo 2025

- What role do you think the exhibition of art plays at Expo 2025?
- What goals do you think the cultural programme of the Dutch pavilion aims for? What makes you think that?
 - How do these affect your way of working for this project?
 - How do you think these goals are reflected in the cultural programme?
- How do you see the artists and their work relating to these broader goals of the Dutch pavilion?
 - Why have these artists been selected?
 - What did you look for when selecting artists to contribute to the Dutch pavilion?
- Expo 2025 is a place for cultural diplomacy. In your involvement in the Dutch pavilion, have you encountered any diplomatic ideas that came into play?
 - How does this play a role in the way you work?
- What is your opinion on the use of art as a tool for development in the context of Expo 2025?

- How do you think art lends itself for this purpose in the context of the Dutch pavilion?

The production of art at Expo 2025

- Can you take me through the process of developing the cultural programme the Dutch pavilion?
- The theme of the Dutch pavilion is ‘Common Ground’. Why?
 - How does the cultural programme reflect this theme?
 - What topics are emphasized?
- How would you describe your relationship with the artists participating in the pavilion?
- The Dutch pavilion is coordinated by the Dutch Embassy in Japan and the Ministry of BZ and OCW are the commissioners. How do you experience your involvement?
- How much autonomy do artists have to create for the pavilion?
 - How do you deal with this?
 - In what way(s) do you guide the artists?
- What conditions do the artistic products have to meet?
- What are your thoughts on the collaboration of artists, curators and policy officers in the context of the pavilion?
 - Could you reflect on what these relationships mean for possibilities and the final product within the pavilion?
- How important are the objectives/goals of the pavilion for you, personally?
 - How is this reflected in the way you work?

Artists’ career development

- What do you think participating in Expo 2025 means for the artists’ careers?
 - What makes you think this?
 - What do you think your role is from this perspective?
 - What is the impact of your involvement as a policy officer?
- What do you think your work as a policy officer means for your career?
 - What makes you think this?
 - Do you think other people than yourself are involved in this influence?
 - How does this shape the way you position yourself towards other actors in the cultural programme of the Dutch pavilion?

- How does this differ from other exhibitions?

Appendix B: List of participants

Participants and interview length	
Policy officer 1	Policy officer – 56:21
Curator 1	Curator – 1:00:25
Curator 2	Curator – 1:05:02
Artist 1	Artist – 1:05:25
Artist 2	Artist – 1:09:50
Artist 3	Artist – 48:38
Artist 4	Artist – 55:33
Artist 5	Artist – 46:12
Artist 6*	Artist – 48:42

* interview excluded from analysis

Appendix C: Themes and subthemes

Culture reflecting mutual understanding and collaboration	Coping with restrictions of the Dutch pavilion	Marketisation of culture	Perceptions of participation
Belang van deelname Nederland aan Expo 2025	Aanpassen aan beperkingen Expo	Expo is een commerciële plek	Expo als momentum voor verdere ontwikkeling
Common Ground in programma	Artistieke vrijheid	Geld speelt een rol in het programma	Expo biedt kansen
Culturele uitwisseling in twee richtingen	Belangen tussen verschillende projecten in programma	Kunst als middel	Naamsbekendheid
Diversiteit in programma	Cultuur buiten het paviljoen	Kunst als zelfrechtvaardigende waarde	
Inclusiviteit in programma	Onduidelijkheid over deelname Expo	Kunst op de tweede plek	
Nederlandse makers verbinden aan Japan en Japanse makers	Paviljoen is klein	Zakelijke kansen voor Nederlandse makers	
Kunstenaars werk gaat over wederzijds begrip	Paviljoen is niet geschikt voor het tonen van kunst		
	Programma is te highbrow voor het publiek dat het aantrekt		
	Publiek als beperking		

	Samenwerking ministeries curatoren		
	Uitvoerbaarheid speelt rol in selectie		