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# Expectations of Cross-Sector Collaboration in Cultural and Arts Education

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**Abstract:** The promotion of dialogues between youth and older adults in the field of cultural education remains one of the most important educational policy tasks in Germany. After all, intergenerational, cultural projects can make an important contribution to reducing ageism, promoting personal development, and dealing with social challenges. Close collaboration between actors from different sectors (school, cultural associations, administration, etc.) is needed to secure such programmes. However, this presupposes that the expectations that the involved actors have regarding the collaboration are transparently examined, discussed and adjusted within the collaborative network in advance. Therefore, the aim is to identify initial indications of different expectations of collaboration between actors from various sectors. In order to answer the research question, 24 semi-structured interviews were conducted in combination with ego-centred network maps in six German municipalities with actors from different fields (schools, administration, cultural associations, etc.). The data were then interpreted using qualitative content analysis. Our results show that actors participate with expectations ranging from different degrees of closeness and distance to the other involved actors. These results allow the first systematisation of individual expectations of actors at the beginning of a collaboration.

**Keywords:** cross-sector collaboration; expectations; cultural and arts education

## 1. Introduction

In the public, political and scientific discourses, an increasing interest in cultural and arts education has been observed for several years (Liebau 2018; European Commission 2009). This is not surprising, however, as cultural education is said to have many positive effects, such as promoting equal opportunities and social participation (Kelb and Taube 2014; da Silva et al. 2014), reducing educational disadvantage (German Bundestag 2007) and promoting political engagement (Fobel and Kolleck 2021; Glover et al. 2005). Furthermore, cultural education offers the advantage of creating dialogues between generations (German Bundestag 2007; Fricke 2013; Whiteland 2012; Lokon et al. 2012; Radermacher 2013). Finally, intergenerational similarities and differences can be communicated through cultural projects so that children and young people, as well as adults, gain a view beyond their generation and thus also new perspectives (Fricke 2013; George et al. 2011; Whiteland 2012). In this way, ageism can be reduced (Anderson et al. 2017), and traits such as empathy, a sense of social justice and solidarity can be fostered (Anderson et al. 2017; Teruel et al. 2019; Hallam 2010; George et al. 2011). Additionally, through intergenerational and cultural programmes academic performance of young people can be improved (Lokon et al. 2012), and community-building can be stimulated (Keefe 2020).

Despite multiple positive impacts, intergenerational cultural offerings cannot be seen as self-sustaining. Attracting participants of different ages for such projects is still considered a major challenge. In order to counteract this problem, collaboration and networking structures with different professions and from different sectors (school, extracurricular

education, social work, etc.) need to be expanded upon (Fricke 2013). Consequently, the promotion of cross-sector collaborations is essential to secure cultural infrastructures (German Bundestag 2007; Carlisle 2011) and thus also to foster intergenerational dialogues (German Bundestag 2007; Whiteland 2012; Lokon et al. 2012). In order to ensure a successful collaborative relationship between stakeholders from various sectors, the expectations of the actors involved must be discussed and adjusted during the network formation (Babiak and Thibault 2009; Mischkowski et al. 2017). Otherwise, a lack of congruence and fulfilment of the participants' expectations can lead to tensions and conflicts (Babiak and Thibault 2009).

Although expectations are an important soft factor for fostering collaborations and network structures in the context of cultural and arts education, this topic has been neglected in the empirical research landscape so far. Instead, more theoretical reflections (Weber and Mayer 2011; Le Ber and Branzei 2010) and only a few empirical studies on how different expectations influence collaborations can be found in the literature (e.g., Ergen and Seeliger 2018; Mischkowski et al. 2017; Kölle and Quercia 2021). In relation to cultural education, there are particularly contributions on the expectations of different professions regarding the content and output of training in the cultural sector (e.g., Baneviciute and Kudoviene 2015; Ravindran and Kalpana 2012), on the expectations of art and music teachers (e.g., Collins 2016; Chen 2017) or on the connection between expectations and cultural programs (e.g., Abdinagoro 2017; Kwon et al. 2011). Just a few pieces of literature also focus on expectations of collaborations in connection with cultural and arts education (Adams 2014; Peters 2002). According to Adams (2014), who examined art partnerships between teachers and cultural practitioners, there are different expectations of the behaviour of the partners. Referring to Peters (2002), for example, stakeholders have the expectation and imagination that collaboration between different institutions will strengthen the respective organisations. Furthermore, the participants of the cultural project anticipate mutual respect and understanding in the collaboration. Cultural programmes and collaboration can thus be seen as stressful and challenging when expectations of the joint work are not realised, triggering feelings of vulnerability (Peters 2002). At this point, it becomes apparent that different expectations can exist, which also can have an impact on cross-sector collaboration.

The aim of this article is to identify indications of different expectations that exist when actors from various professions and sectors enter into collaborative relationships, to make an important contribution to sustaining intergenerational projects in the field of cultural and arts education. Based on this, the question arises as to how strongly the expectations of collaboration differ between actors from various sectors (administration, schools, associations, etc.) and how these different expectations influence the formation of social networks in the context of cultural and arts education. In order to answer this question, a brief theoretical introduction to cross-sector collaboration and network building as well as to the qualities of collaboration will be given first. This is followed by a description of the data collection, the type of data material and the data analysis. Five subcategories emerged during the analysis. These are examined in more detail in the Section 4. Finally, the results are discussed, and conclusions are drawn.

## 2. Theoretical Foundations of Collaboration and Its Difficulties

*2.1. Basic Theoretical Assumptions about Cross-Sector Collaboration and the Significance of Expectations*

Collaboration is more than merely individuals being present: "Collaboration does not just happen because individuals are co-present; individuals must make a conscious, continued effort to coordinate their language and activity with respect to shared knowledge" (Roschelle and Teasley 1995, p. 94).

Studies show that participation in collaborative relationships has benefits, particularly in working and moving forward more efficiently as well as in gaining and gathering resources (Bruce and Ricketts 2008). For example, Whent (1994) proved in his study that teachers significantly increased the amount of collaborating and sharing of resources amongst each other through team-building processes and assigned tasks.

Triandis (1977), as an early theorist, shed more light on collaborative behaviour. Individuals' goals and motivations substantially contribute to the nature of joint behaviour in the group. In addition, a closer look at the importance of the relationship between behaviour, goals and motivation provides more insight into the reasons for participation. Finally, it also illuminates the lack of collaboration in particular situations. Successful collaboration is not only dependent on effectiveness and efficiency but also on the satisfaction of the participants or the perceived success (Deutsch 1949). The answer to how to overcome the tendency to compete against each other is the establishment of "mutually beneficial partnerships with other actors in the system" (Bruce and Ricketts 2008, p. 66). This is called "co-opetition" (Zineldin 2004, p. 780), describing "a business situation in which independent parties co-operate with one another and co-ordinate their activities, thereby collaborating to achieve mutual goals, but at the same time compete with each other as well as with other firms" (ibid.). What is meant by "mutually beneficial partnerships" is connected to a cost–benefit ratio: On the one hand, independent actors might know that participating in a planned collaborative project costs resources such as time and energy, on the other hand, it allows benefits such as building partnerships that foster the sharing of resources and competencies, for example. That means the involved actors gauge what they could lose and what they could win through working with each other. Actors will mainly join the networking and team-building process if they feel a sense of balance through the cost–benefit ratio. This means not only that they have individual goals and ideas about what they want to achieve but also how they want to work together. This depends on the experiences the participants have already had with collaboration and what possible barriers they can imagine (Pastoors and Ebert 2019).

Bryson et al. (2006) define cross-sector collaboration as "the linking or sharing of information, resources, activities, and capabilities by organizations in two or more sectors to jointly achieve an outcome that could not be achieved by organizations in one sector separately" (p. 44). Following Schütz's understanding of successful interaction and communication, a certain degree of congruence of tasks and goals of the participants is considered an essential prerequisite for successful cross-sectoral collaboration in the long term (Weber et al. 2022). If this congruence does not exist and the expectations of stakeholders are not met, tensions and conflicts may arise and jeopardise cross-sectoral collaboration (Weber and Mayer 2011; Min 2017). According to Bryson et al. (2006), different goals and conflicting expectations can be considered the cause of many conflicts. This is particularly the case when actors have different statuses, for example, due to organisational size, funding or reputation. At the same time, expectations are crucial for the development and maintenance of social interactions because people behave based on their ideas of what others will do. This means that behaviour can directly be affected by expectations (Cigarini et al. 2020). Basically, we understand expectations as subjective probabilities and assumptions that are made about the actions of a person or the development of a situation (Manski 2004). Moreover, these aspects often lead to mistrust and premature failure of partnerships (Le Ber and Branzei 2010). Schweitzer (1998) attributes the problems that can arise when actors from different sectors work together primarily to the divergence of goals due to professional and systemic factors. Simultaneously, the integration of different and the development of new knowledge is essential due to complex social challenges. Therefore, a certain ability for dialogue between actors of different professional groups, organisations and institutions is required (Vollmer 2016).

## 2.2. Theoretical Model of Forms of Collaboration

Several researchers have already investigated forms of collaboration; some refer to it as team learning behaviour. An overview of the three basic forms will be briefly given in what follows.

The first one, sharing, is understood as "the process of communicating knowledge, competencies, opinions or creative thoughts" (Decuyper et al. 2010, p. 116) between actors who were previously unknown to each other or not aware that they are involved actors in

a collaboration. This is a very basic process, but collaborative learning can also consist of more than exchanging knowledge, competencies and creativity (ibid.).

The second one, co-construction, is defined as "the mutual process of developing shared knowledge and building shared meaning by refining, building on, or modifying an original offer in some way" (Baker 1994). Co-construction is based on the process of sharing while taking "the interaction one step further as they engage in repeated cycles of [ . . . ] questioning, concretizing, and completing the shared knowledge, competencies, opinions or creative thoughts" (Decuyper et al. 2010, p. 116). Co-construction also means that the actors strive for interpersonal congruence. They broaden each other's patterns of thought, language and action (London et al. 2005) in a way that crystallises in shared knowledge and meaning.

Constructive conflict, as a third form of collaboration, is seen as "a process of negotiation or dialogue that uncovers diversity in identity, opinion, etc." (Decuyper et al. 2010, p. 117). What is meant is a conflict or an elaborate discussion that comes from diversity and open communication, leading to further communication and a preliminary agreement. Generally speaking, constructive conflicts enable fundamental transformations as they contribute to leaving the "comfort-zone". The constructiveness of a conflict and thereby also the potential for transformation is determined by its nature; affective/relational conflict on the one side and cognitive/task conflict on the other side (de Dreu and Weingart 2003). For example, Jehn (1995) found that moderate levels of task conflicts can promote collaborative performance, in contrast to relational conflicts, which seem to be obstructive to it. van den Bossche et al. (2006) add that especially constructive conflicts which help integrate different viewpoints lead to more collaborative performance and learning. In summary, a group of collaborative actors only learns how to be and act as a team in the space of ongoing tension between "conflict" and "harmony" (Wildemeersch 2007).

### 3. Study Design and Methodological Approach

This study used qualitative methods to gather and interpret data to serve the explorative character of the research question. In the context of the study, a total of 24 semi-structured interviews were conducted in six German municipalities. During every interview, an ego-centred network map was used to create a narrative-generating atmosphere. The data were audio-recorded, transcribed, and subsequently analysed using qualitative content analysis according to Kuckartz and McWhertor (2014).

*3.1. Case Description, Data Collection and Sampling*

In this study, we interviewed 24 actors from a total of six different municipalities and regions in Germany (*n* = 24). We selected four people from each of the six municipalities and regions. The four urban municipalities and two rural regions are undergoing a two-year consultation process accompanied by our cooperation partner, the Federal Academy for Cultural Education Wolfenbüttel. The aim is to build and strengthen cultural education collaborations and networks in order to open up more opportunities for participation for locals. In each municipality, a fixed team of actors is involved in the process of network building. The team is located in various sectors such as the municipal (education) administration, education coordination, extracurricular cultural work, schools and the independent art and culture scene. Thus, there are institutions represented that focus on children and youth (e.g., schools), art and cultural associations in which older people are more likely to be involved as well as cultural institutions, which offer programmes for different generations. This is fundamental for the development of collaborative, intergenerational projects in the field of cultural and arts education. In order to identify actors who have relevant information as well as potentially interesting perspectives for answering the research questions (Gorden 1978), preliminary conversations were held with our cooperation partner as well as with the official applicant for the consultation. Afterwards, we contacted the potential interview partners by email. For the recruitment selection, we used purposive sampling (Flick 2019): Relevance, variance and potential of the cases are the selection criteria to achieve maximum

variation. This means that we chose the interviewees by ensuring a maximal cross-sector variation of cases represented in the data. Due to the limited numbers of actors involved in the consultation process and the fact that not in all municipal teams, actors from all mentioned sectors were represented, the maximum variation was already reached with four respondents per municipality, each of a different sector. The data collection took place between September and November 2018.

### 3.2. Interview Guide

The theory-based, semi-standardised guide, in combination with Kahn and Antonucci (1980), hierarchical mapping technique, included questions about the subjective requirements and perceptions that respondents associate with their participation in the project. Semi-structured interviews offer the advantage of structuring the conversation thematically while still being flexible and open to unexpected information from the respondent. The openly formulated guiding questions were supplemented by prepared, open-ended follow-up questions to create a narrative flow and support the respondents in answering according to their knowledge and experience. Finally, guided interviews allow for readjustment of the specific question formulations and follow-up questions to adequately use the communication space between interviewer and interviewee (Strauss and Corbin 2010). The guide was divided into five sections. As an opening question, the interviewees were given the opportunity to talk about themselves and their professional activities. This allowed for a more detailed identification of which sections (formal education, arts, etc.) each interviewee was located in. The identification allowed for longer narratives. In the second thematic area, intentions to cooperate were discussed. Accordingly, they were asked about their motives for participating in the collaboration and what role or position they see in the network formed. Subsequently, the hierarchical mapping technique, based on Kahn and Antonucci (1980), was used in the interview. For this purpose, the participants were given ego-centred network maps. Several concentric circles were depicted on them. In the centre of the circles was the term "ego". The participants were asked to put people from the collaborative projects on the map. The further away the respective partners are from ego, the less importance is attributed to this person for the respondent's own professional activity. This method offers the advantage of stimulating more narratives and visualising the interviewee's network (Hollstein and Pfeffer 2010). Another central aspect of the interview was the expectations, goals, and ideas about collaborations within the emerging network structure. For example, we asked them how they envisage the collaboration with the other participating members. In the case that the interviewee did not respond much to this openly formulated guiding question, we asked open-ended follow-up questions as needed, such as how they think this should precisely work or which agreements would make sense in their point of view. Finally, they were asked about their wishes and needs with regards to being able to work more closely with their cooperation partners.

The guideline was tested and adapted in three interviews in advance. The interviews lasted between 27 and 78 min. They were recorded on tape and then transcribed according to the rules of Dresing and Pehl (2018).

### 3.3. Data Analysis

For the analysis of the data, we used the qualitative content analysis following Kuckartz and McWhertor (2014) as well as the analysis programme MAXQDA. In order to develop a category system, the first step is to gain an overview of the data material, which includes the summary of cases. Then, the main categories that were identified as recurring topics from the material were developed through an inductive approach to the material. In addition to other categories, the main category, "expectations of the type of collaboration", was formed and defined in a codebook. The next step was to test the codebook. Thus, to ensure intercoder reliability (Kuckartz and McWhertor 2014), two people independently coded the relevant material using the same category system. Afterwards, we compared whether we had assigned the same interview section to the same category

and made minimal adjustments to the codebook at the end. In the following phase, the complete material was coded. Subsequently, five subcategories were formed and defined from the coded text passages for the category "expectations of the type of collaboration" (see Table 1). During the further analysis, subcategory-based summaries were written, and their interrelationships were explored.

**Table 1.** Summary of the five dimensions of the codebook.

| Main Category | Subcategory | Description |
|---|---|---|
| Expectations of the type of collaboration | 1. Information and exchange | This includes statements of expectations that are primarily about the mere exchange of information. |
| | 2. Promotion of transparency | Statements about the expectation of promoting transparency and openness in relation to the work performed and its content are coded here. |
| | 3. Support through experience and resources | Statements are coded here that go beyond mere information sharing and the promotion of transparency to include mutual support through lessons already learned and the sharing of available resources. |
| | 4. Respect and appreciation | This category contains the statements of respondents who expect mutual respect and appreciation and consider them necessary for the success of the collaboration. |
| | 5. Room for criticism and friction | This category includes statements from interviewees who explicitly want a framework in which criticism can be voiced and points of friction can be discussed in order to be able to shape the collaboration with a deeper mutual understanding. |

## 4. Results

The evaluation revealed five dimensions of expectations in the municipalities, which are presented below.

### 4.1. Information and Exchange

The evaluation shows that many respondents expect to exchange information with each other within the scope of collaboration. They expect an overall improvement in work processes through a faster finding of solutions and easier generation of offers. More mutual information and exchange should create an organisational link that has been missing up until now. This expectation is connected to communication "between administration, independent providers and partners" (B4_2) so that new ideas can emerge and other perspectives can be taken. Therefore, the interviewees consider exchange and mutual information to be indispensable. Moreover, the exchange is seen as the basis of collaboration and goes together with trust:

> And otherwise, as I said, trusting each other, thinking of the other, informing each other. That is one of the first things you have to do, should do. (B4_4)

Through communicating and sharing information, a basis is laid for the planned collaboration. A leap of faith is granted through the assumption that a relationship and consequently a level of trust will develop through mutual exchange. However, it remains open to what extent the leap of faith is granted. The reason is that the expectation of exchange and information implies rather factual, a situational collaboration that does not necessarily involve a personal level. The use of the words "have to" and "should" also indicates a more general expectation rather than targeted ideas of personal exchange.

The following quote also illustrates the more professional and work-related focus expressed by many respondents. An exchange about problems and the current situation of others should prevent them from possibly getting into a similar problem situation

themselves. Current projects or trends can be followed through mutual exchange, while above all, one's own ideas can continue to be implemented, and advantages can be used:

> So, as I said, to achieve personal goals/It means to get in touch with everyone here, to learn from them, to hear their problems or what they are working on, what actually moves them. (B4_4)

The expectations mentioned are closely connected to individual and normative goals and do not reveal a group-related perspective.

### 4.2. Promotion of Transparency

Another expectation is to promote transparency of work performed among those who have had little insight into cultural and arts education practices so far. The interviewees do not only want to agree on overall conditions such as financial security but also want to gain an insight into the content:

> Well, let's put it this way, we still have the problem that the municipality often cannot perceive our work, however culture is somehow less measurable, perhaps like other administrative work, so they actually have a hard time understanding, what do they [cultural actors] actually do all day? (B4_3)

Cultural education actors are seen as invisible or not perceived as possible network partners. According to one of the interviewees, this is due to the difficulty of making cultural activities and their outcomes measurable. Therefore, it also remains hidden when and whereby cultural education is successful. The interviewee adopts an attitude of demarcation toward municipal administration and politics and assumes that other actors have negative impressions of cultural practice. This creates the normative impression that actors from cultural programmes and the administration can neither assess what they can expect from each other nor work together. Therefore, some of the respondents, especially from the cultural work sector, wish for more transparency. This expectation reveals the more fundamental problem that negative expectations and assumptions about one another exist and lead to mutual demarcation. Hence, transparency about motives, goals and concerns cannot be created. At the same time, however, this expectation is also associated with the hope of finding common themes and goals more easily and reducing interpersonal conflicts. Due to different perceptions and contradictory approaches, transparency has largely been prevented so far.

> I think we still have different perceptions. Maybe sometimes they are not correct at all. Maybe it's a distorted picture. And I think that would be important to find out first. (B3_4)

The statements show that the expectation of promoting transparency goes beyond a mere exchange of information. Due to various factors, such as different perceptions, there is still uncertainty about one another, which tends to lead to mutual reticence. This makes it more difficult to establish a common, successful working culture.

### 4.3. Support through Experience and Resources

The interviewees also mention expectations that go beyond mutual exchange and include support through experience and resources. The actors are in a mutually dependent relationship through their respective competencies and their access to resources. They depend on mutual support of these competencies and resources in order to be successful together. The interviewees expect a kind of exchange, e.g., offers of cultural education in exchange for funding and structuring:

> They need us, what we can offer, and we need the municipalities to ultimately finance us and to structure us. That would be good, yes. (B3_6)

Mutual support would be necessary for the development of municipal collaborative structures of cultural education. At the same time, the support does not seem to be

existentially urgent ("That would be good, yes"). On the basis of the data, it can be observed that a balancing act takes place between the need for financial security and conflict avoidance: "I have some problem with X and then I extract things" (B1_1). This quote is meant to illustrate that the loss of financial support is accepted if a well-balanced relationship does not develop between the actors involved. Instead of entering into a conversation, a deeper discussion is avoided by withdrawing. More detailed interpretations can be found in Section 4.5. Other actors, on the other hand, are more specific about their needs and the support they expect:

> I would like to work more sustainably with the schools, that is not my strength. My strength is the work with the children and the conceptual work. The work in between costs me a lot of energy and I would like to optimise that. I have the feeling that I'm simply wasting too much energy on it, or that perhaps I have less energy in this area than I usually have. I expect help and relief in that area. (B3_1)

Mutual support, as well as positive experiences, are often emphasised as a prerequisite for continuous motivation. At the same time, it is expected that the participants show a similarly distinct initiative, which does not seem to be the case so far:

> And I also hope that I don't have to make the experience now: Yes, that's right, I have to call and write an email again. And write: "Hey, don't we want to meet again?" [ . . . ] So I expect a little bit that someone comes up to me. (B1_4)

In general, the lack of common connection points between the institutions and sectors involved in the collaboration is seen as challenging. Therefore, some interviewees expect individual actors to adopt a linking function:

> For us it is about creativity, about theatre itself and not always only about this pedagogical aspect, whereas school rather wants this pedagogical aspect, therefore/sometimes it fits together, sometimes it doesn't and [ . . . ] the district youth worker could also, for example, establish a bit more of a connection. (B4_6)

This statement suggests that taking on certain tasks is expected from persons with a certain professional background. For example, as interviewee B4_6 states, the district youth worker could be seen as a link between culture and pedagogy and thus act as a mediator for these two areas. Since the quote also illustrates the different goals of cultural education and pedagogy, the suspicion arises that there might be no common points of intersection and also no expectation to interact with each other. It is possible that neither the actors of cultural education nor those of pedagogy expect to approach each other but that they suppose another actor to be responsible, in this case, the district youth worker.

### 4.4. Respect and Appreciation

An expectation that goes beyond mutual support through experience and resources is the expectation of respect and appreciation. However, while one interviewee expects the effort of mutual respect even if "the chemistry does not fit" (B3_6), another interviewee views mutual sympathy as the basis of a joint venture:

> Are there two who can't stand each other at all? Then this project probably won't go any further. (B1_6)

Other interviewees expect encounters to happen at eye level with each other as well with as a sense of belonging and acceptance, which had already been "worked out quite well" (B1_2) in the early phase of the collaboration. Closely linked to respect is the issue of appreciation; in particular, the value of the cultural work performed should be made more visible to politicians and administrators. Otherwise, no long-term collaborative structures are considered possible:

> First and foremost there must be an immaterial respect for the work and that one sees that something is being done, there are people who are committed and for

those who doubt whether it is good, they should just take a look and should also ask their questions and then they can also judge whether it is good or not. (B3_3)

In order to be able to work together across sectors, it is necessary to fundamentally work on the appreciation of culture and cultural education. The agreement of important decision-makers in the municipality is seen as essential for this. Existing doubts about cultural education impede mutual respect and a benevolent attitude. As a result, the actors remain reserved towards each other because they do not expect appreciation but also do not receive any for their work. According to the respondents, respect for the work performed in the cultural sector is still lacking.

*4.5. Room for Criticism and Friction*

Critical feedback and space for the discussion of points of friction is another expectation extracted from the interviews. The selection of actors participating in the collaborative project happened on the basis of their proximity or distance from each other:

We also tried to make it as neutral as possible, so not just a circle of friends around you. It's kind of clear that we know them all, but nevertheless it's also important to us that there can be critical feedback and we selected a little bit according to that. (B4_3)

This statement makes it seem as if all potential people had been assessed and evaluated for their suitability to work together. It stands out that the interviewee distinguishes between "we" and "they". This reveals a certain power dynamic. The actors are not necessarily concerned with mutual support, but with the support of a "we"—self-centred patterns of thinking are revealed, which include some actors and exclude others. It remains open whether the expectation of critical feedback should serve in the pursuit of common goals and common progress or if the own goals of the actors who are included in the so-called "we" are the primary focus.

Few interviewees also expect an open culture of conflict, which is practised, for example, by discussing points of friction that arise:

Well, I would have wished that this discussion could have been discussed. Because I found it intense, but not somehow inappropriate. For example, I thought we should have finished this discussion with [name of actor], so that everyone could really understand what the other person was like: What makes him tick? What is his point of view? What does he expect from the others? And vice versa. So that is what we should have done, I think we should have allowed ourselves more space. (B3_4)

This shows that the actors have different points of view and expectations of collaboration but consider conflicts and points of friction necessary so that expectations can be adjusted.

I think that there needs to be a greater culture of conflict, because at the moment when conflicts arose, it was very clear that those responsible saw themselves a bit cornered by this, which is a shame, because the criticism that arises or the innovative and passionate ideas that develop would, I think, be what could take the whole thing further. (B2_6)

Collaborations cannot always be well-balanced in order to be fruitful. Our study shows that they are built to pursue common goals. However, in order for these goals, as well as the product of the collaboration, to be satisfactorily achieved, there needs to be a space for critical discussion and debate. Thereby, mutual points of view can become visible, and appropriate compromises for the group of actors can eventually be reached. This expectation is countered by the desire for comfort, as the following statement illustrates:

It's a bit like that, that's how our round was, you actually want to agree with yourself that you do a lot and that there are good ideas, but to plunge into this

focal point and to argue sometimes, that's still a bit far away. I think that would do the matter good. (B2_6)

Only a few actors openly refer to what they see as a necessary conflict culture. These actors are mainly located in the independent art and culture scene. In contrast to the other participants, they are less strong or not at all bound to an institution and thus possibly more willing to settle conflicts since they have to adhere to fewer institutional guidelines. At the same time, they are also more dependent on a solution that is satisfactory to them because they cannot withdraw to an institutional framework. To sum it up, there are first hints that the expectation of having room for criticism and friction might depend on the sector and profession of the interviewee.

## 5. Discussion

In our study, we asked which expectations actors from different professions and sectors have at the beginning of collaborating within municipal collaborative projects in the link of cultural and arts education. Addressing this question is important to develop the first indicators for the extension of collaboration and collaborative networks in the cultural sector and thus also for securing intergenerational cultural programs. Therefore, we focused on the actors to be able to map individual perspectives that are often neglected in the context of collaboration at the beginning, although expectations, as Beckert (2016) states, motivate real decisions and can lead to a conflict of interests among actors. Based on our results, we can say that expectations also play an important role in establishing collaborations and collaborative networks and, thus also, intergenerational and cultural programmes. In summary, the interviewed actors have different expectations regarding the collaboration. These expectations are associated with different degrees of closeness and distance to the other actors, which will be described in more detail below.

Our findings show that the actors already have expectations of the respective form of collaboration at the very beginning of network building. The expectations we identified support the forms of collaboration that Decuyper et al. (2010); Baker (1994) and van den Bossche et al. (2006) described theoretically (sharing, co-construction, constructive conflict). In the context of our analysis, expectations are composed of experiences already made in the past (Beckert 2016) as well as wishes for the near future of working together. Expectations might also be linked to obstacles and barriers, some of which the actors already know. Due to the already known obstacles, the actors steer their expectations in certain directions. For example, they talk about their own inability to contact other actors and therefore participate in the collaboration to find someone who can help them overcome the difficulty or even take over the task without having to take action themselves.

In our study, we were able to illustrate that mutual information and close exchange is one expectation. At the same time, there are indications that the relationship between the participants is, however, more factual and less focused on the personal level. In this way, a certain distance between the respective collaborative partners from other sectors is maintained. Consequently, expectations of collaboration with the respective actors are found on a continuum between proximity and distance. Finally, the desire for a close relationship to support each other and exchange resources is there. At the same time, a personal relationship is avoided so that conversations remain on a factual, professional level. It is a basal process that is primarily initiated to be able to pursue individual goals within the framework of collaboration. As Meeuwissen et al. (2020) conclude, a group of actors who have joined a common project will not automatically share responsibility and see themselves as a unit, e.g., a team. This also applies to the expectation "information and exchange" in our study. Mere mutual information and exchange with each individual following its own goals rather hinders the development and handling of shared goals and thus also group cohesion (Chen et al. 2022). Moreover, this threatens cross-sector collaborations in the field of cultural education, which is, however, considered to be an elementary component for securing cultural projects and attracting new cultural project participants of different ages (Fricke 2013).

The categories "promoting transparency", "support through experiences and resources", and "respect and appreciation" point in the direction of co-construction (Baker 1994). All these three dimensions of expectation involve an active process of participants as well as the refinement and adaptation of behaviour and offerings. Through active engagement with the other person, co-construction can lead to more group and team learning processes. Furthermore, it can also lead to more satisfaction with the ongoing collaborative course and the degree of innovation in the group process (Meeuwissen et al. 2020). Involvement in collaboration and network building is linked to the more normative expectation of promoting transparency, hoping that this will compensate for difficulties such as measuring cultural work and education. The dimension of "support through experience and resources", in turn, shows that it is not expected that mere transparency will be sufficient for the development of network structures but that actual mutual support through experience and resources is necessary for this. Simultaneously, the self-centeredness of some actors is evident here. Similarly, actors who have a certain canon of resources are addressed by assuming a mediating position between actors who do not. Nonetheless, mutual support is seen as a leading antecedence of group- and teamwork quality as it refers to mutual help and encouragement, which is supposed to foster strong relationships among the participating group members (Chen et al. 2022). The expectation of "respect and appreciation" goes beyond this and includes respect and appreciation but is partially impeded due to doubts that some actors have towards others (e.g., cultural actors towards political actors and vice versa). The expectation of "room for criticism and friction" follows the "constructive conflict" form of collaboration (van den Bossche et al. 2006). Constructive conflict offers potential for further development and can, for example, substantially promote teamwork in cross-sectoral groups (Meeuwissen et al. 2020). According to statements in this category, conflicts that arise previous to the collaboration should be given space and discussed so that expectations can be adjusted to one another and the concerns of those involved actually become visible. However, depending on the power structure in the groups of actors, there is a "we" and "they", which will hamper an open discussion of conflicts. In complementing the current state of research, our study shows that the successful formation of collaborations and collaborative networks depends on the particular expectations of individual actors. This is due to because these expectations influence the behaviour, the decisions and the contact between the involved actors in an early stage of the collaboration.

The literature mainly identifies three different forms of collaboration. This is also broadly in line with our study, although we did not analyse the forms by themselves but rather the expectations of the forms. They are based on the actors' ideas, wishes, prior experiences and known challenges. Our study reveals expectations which are in line with the forms of collaboration already named in the literature but in a differentiated form. In particular, the form of "co-construction" (Baker 1994) is divided into "promotion of transparency", "support through experience and resources", and "respect and appreciation".

## 6. Conclusions

In summary, our analysis offers new empirical aspects to the question of what expectations exist at the beginning of the collaboration in the context of cultural and arts education. It should be noted that the results can only be generalised to a limited extent and are not representative, as this is a qualitative study. For further research on the topic, more studies with other research methods, also of a quantitative nature, are necessary. In further studies, the focus on intergenerational programmes should be examined more closely in order to be able to support and advance the establishment of such programmes with well-founded, empirical results. This could be performed, for example, by focusing research in this area not primarily on the side of suppliers but also explicitly on the side of the target groups in order to obtain more insight into how the suppliers and their collaborative structures are estimated to be able to meet intergenerational needs.

Another focus which could be laid in further research concerns the development of forms of collaboration over time. To our knowledge, there are no empirical approaches

that follow a longitudinal view in this area of research. Raes et al. (2015) also note that. As we analysed the expectations at the beginning of the collaboration and collaborative network building in cultural and arts education, the second phase of data collection could concentrate on the question of to what extent these expectations are still present or changed at a later date and to what extent the expectations of the forms developed to actual forms of collaboration.

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