

The value of culture

Towards a new cultural awareness in Brabant

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Tilburg, 3 December 2012

Document number: 12.067

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1 Terms of reference and explanation

Reasons

The Province of Noord Brabant is reflecting on the matter of the knowledge required to form a good picture of how the cultural infrastructure in Brabant functions. To this end, there is a need for a coordinating analysis of 'the value of culture'. This analysis must be based on 'Brabant's Agenda (*De Agenda van Brabant*)', the strategic vision formulated by the previous provincial government, and the translation of this vision in the current administrative agreement 'Ten for Brabant (*Tien voor Brabant*)'. In concrete terms, the analysis, or essay, should provide a picture of the contemporary assessment of culture (and possible alternatives) viewed in terms of its contribution to the sustainable economic, ecological and socio-cultural development of Brabant.

In 'Brabant's Agenda' the provincial government of Noord Brabant presents itself as a region of industrial knowledge and innovation, located in the heart of the North-West European Delta, which aspires to belong to the European top regions, in terms of economy. The spatial-economic policy may come first here but, by extension, Brabant's ecological, social and cultural qualities are explicitly included as essential preconditions. Alongside 'Spatial Development and Planning', 'Accessibility' and 'Regional Economic Policy', 'Culture' forms the fourth key 'task' of the province. This task primarily concerns the direct provincial responsibility for the cultural heritage, diversity and spread. But besides this, there is also the issue of a derived responsibility, in connection with the province's role as 'regional authority'. In this latter role, the province feels responsible for the 'linked interest' of culture in the broad sense, as being imperative for the success of Brabant's ambitions. Its role here mainly consists of identifying items and placing them on the agenda. In order to succeed at this, it must have a clear picture of the state of Brabant's cultural development. The key provincial task chiefly comprises collecting and interpreting data. The objective of this essay is, thus, to obtain a clear idea of the values that are, or could be, at issue. It will then be possible to use this information as an underlying structure for a review of the system used to gather data on how Brabant's cultural infrastructure functions.

Sources used

This essay is based on three types of sources.

In the first instance, use was made of general scientific, political and administrative literature on art and culture. A great deal has recently been published in the Netherlands and abroad on the changing assessment of art and culture, in connection with phenomena such as a far-reaching digitisation of communication and information, the global expansion of the cultural and entertainment economy, the increased importance of imagination and creativity in a rapidly changing network society, the increased cultural diversity, the increased thirst for cultural singularity in a context of globalisation, a government which is scaling down, and the changing relationship between professionals and society. For the purposes of this essay, analyses in which attempts are made to 'reassess' the 21st century landscape of art and culture were mainly looked at. What do the aforementioned shifts imply for how we assess, or are able to assess, art and culture from a social perspective? Texts by the Dutch government, the Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR), the European Union, the Council of Europe, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), and general philosophical, aesthetic and empirical scientific analyses have been studied. A list of the literature consulted has been included at the end of the essay.

In the second instance, the Brabant Centre for Sustainable Development (Telos) has drawn up a list of the national and international studies carried out on art and culture, concentrating on the more continuous and integrated forms of data collection which serve as a permanent source of evaluation of culture and cultural policy, as well as models developed for this purpose. A total of thirty research reports were examined. We see these studies and models as important indications of attempts to make public 'assessments' of art and culture on the basis of the principle: 'what's treasured is measured' (after 'Americans for the Arts', the organisation which is responsible for the National Arts Index in the USA, see Appendix V). This enables us, furthermore, to draw on a wealth of experience acquired during the setting up of data systems for measuring 'the state of the culture'. The work was carried out 'from top to bottom'. To begin with, attention was focused on more continuous and integrated forms of research, on the national, European or global scale. The way in which these studies questioned art and culture was subsequently looked at. What components of art and culture are examined, and how? On what aspects are these components assessed? On the basis of what underlying perspective? The results, with the related reference list, are included in Appendices I and II.

Finally, an independent 'bottom up' analysis was made of the knowledge questions which have emerged from Brabant's cultural sector. This analysis was carried out, separately from this essay, by the PON (Institute for Social Research in Brabant), at the request of the province. It was based chiefly on the PON's own research, discussion sessions with the cultural sector and interviews with experts. A separate report of this analysis was published by the PON. This bottom-up analysis reveals a general picture of the 'state of the culture' in Brabant, but it also shows the themes deemed important by Brabant's cultural sector in how culture is viewed. Those involved point to the importance of 'pluriformity', 'artistic quality', 'networking and cooperation', 'a public following and reach', 'spread', 'economic rate of return', 'talent development', 'participation and education', 'internationalisation' and 'innovation'. The themes collected identify the way in which the professional field of art and culture 'assesses' its own efforts. This study is included as Appendix III.

The 'culturalisation' of society and 'deculturalisation' of culture

Roughly speaking, the essay is built up as follows.

The text begins with a brief reflection on the present-day social debate on art and culture and the conflict perceptible in this debate. We subsequently show how some of this conflict is expressed in changes in the way in which art and culture have been evaluated/monitored over the ages. The economic assessment of art and culture is clearly increasing, alongside the classical social assessment. This brings us to a paradox which runs through this essay as a connecting thread. There is an increasing 'culturalisation' of society, in the sense that cultural qualities, in all shapes and forms (from the arts and heritage through entertainment and design to creativity and moral values in the broad sense) have become more and more important in social activities. At the same time, however, culture is also deculturalising to a certain extent. Regional cultural identities may once more be celebrated. Commonplace products stand out less and less because of their functional aspects and increasingly because of their cultural quality. Cultural values are becoming more rather than less important in the advancing modernisation of society. Art and culture are cause for prestigious exhibitions and massive gatherings. Culture is deployed as the motor of urban and regional development. The digital media feed a far-reaching hunger for new images and opinions and artistic forms of observing and imagining are invoked in order to arrive at new sources of economic growth. At the same time, however, because of this cultural excess, we have, paradoxically, lost sight of the intrinsic value and dynamics of the cultural-artistic dimension itself. There is even widespread irritation, as it were, if that intrinsic value is appealed to. Perhaps this has to do with the fact that, in the past, cultural professionals paid too little heed to their social legitimacy and took their supposed professional right too much for granted. In the context of an increasing cultural surfeit and the decreasing availability of public funds, the conclusion is obvious.

To a degree, this situation resembles that concerning our food. While we are engulfed by a surfeit of food, in an almost absurd number of forms and guises, at an almost absurd number of venues, so that our bodies can no longer cope with it, we have lost contact with the core values of our food. Not so long ago, the agricultural sector, which was equally convinced of its own right, considered this to be romantic nonsense. Now the fact that people want to relate more explicitly to how their food is produced and how its quality is calibrated has also got through to the supermarket. Perhaps we can use what we have learned from this in the social debate on art and culture: those with a short-sighted approach to short-term gains, or who close themselves off in their own institutional right, rapidly lose sight of the core values from which activities derive their deeper-lying social point or meaning. Sooner or later the price will have to be paid.

The need for a new story

What follows is a plea for an explicit 'reassessment' of the importance of the cultural-artistic interest, also and especially, in the monitoring of regional cultural development. If the province aspires to a strong role for art and culture as a 'linked interest' in Brabant's positioning as a top knowledge and innovation region, it will have to have a sharp picture of the intrinsic value and dynamics of this artistic, narrative, symbolic, meaning giving, imaginative sector. Where do we find this intrinsic value nowadays? Is it to be found in the celebration or protection of a Brabant identity or tradition? Does it lie in the promotion of an artistic quality or traditional workmanship? Or does intrinsic value perhaps currently lie more in the protection or even promotion of something like a cultural resilience, as a result of the increasing importance of, and pleasure in other, new, contrary, 'soft' experiences, points of view or realities? And how do you subsequently measure this value, in relation to social and economic interests and effects, among other things?

Mark you: this is not a plea for the restoration of the subsidy policy, without further ado. This essay does not propose a new cultural policy. It is an argument for the social, policy-related, and therefore, also research-related, anchoring of a number of core cultural values, on the regional scale. It will then be possible to relate the cultural sector to 'secondary' policy

objectives on the basis of these core values. The policy objectives in question include community building, the economic-spatial development, and the international appeal of Brabant. The core values could, in line with Brabant's Agenda, be sought in the social interest of an energetic, vigorous cultural-artistic sector, for the benefit of the sustainable development of Brabant as a network society. Examples include pluriformity, accessibility, continuity, freedom and talent development. These core values will then have to be anchored in the monitoring of Brabant's developments in some way, so that we always have the data we need to include the 'state of the culture' in the political and administrative debate.

The key concepts

Finally, I would like to reflect on the two key concepts in the title of this essay: 'value' and 'culture'. Either of these concepts would, on its own, be sufficient reason for extensive analyses but this is not the aim of this essay. A brief characterisation will suffice here.

For the purposes of this essay, 'value' is used in the broader sense of the word, that is, to mean 'interest', and, therefore, not the more limited 'economic' or 'numeric value' or the sociological 'norms and values'. The latter three meanings are all differentiations of an underlying interest, either in an economic or a numeric form, or in the form of rules or guidelines shared by groups or individuals. In this case, the crux of the matter is the underlying 'interest' of culture and not its externalisation in numbers, guidelines, standards or criteria (although we do ultimately provide a guide to this end).

By 'culture' we mean something broader than just 'art', although we do not interpret it so broadly as to include all human products as in the anthropological meaning of 'the human culture'. We see it as the broader domain of images, forms (both actual and performing), sounds and texts which are primarily produced and assessed for their symbolic or design significance. This therefore includes brass band and classical music, the Lion King and King Lear, fashion and pop music, and the visual arts and theatre. We interpret the line between art and culture as being gradual, these days having primarily to do with the place and significance of values of originality or quality. The more important the positions originality and quality occupy in production and assessment practices, subordinate to elements of popularity, profitability, functionality, emotionalism, respectability, traditional craftsmanship or social cohesion, the more we move in the direction of specialised 'art culture'. By this, we do not mean that the domain of the 'art culture' is the only thing which is important in the search for the core values of culture. This would be to sell short the many ways in which artistic, social and economic interests interact. More commercial or commission-driven contexts of art and culture can promote artistic innovation just as easily as ones that are more subsidised (and, some would claim, even better) because of the increased social and economic interest in new cultural forms and standpoints.

2 Art and culture in times of confusion

'More than quality'

Nowadays, anyone who takes stock of the social playing field in which the cultural domain has ended up, at the national rather than the regional scale, can only arrive at the conclusion that there is a great deal of confusion. It was, naturally, inevitable that the cultural sector would suffer its share of the cutbacks needed to finance the bank crisis and ensuing public debt crisis. But with a budget cut of almost 25%, no one can deny that there is more going on than just that.

The central policy letter sent in 2011 by the former Dutch State Secretary for Education, Culture and Science, published under the telling title of 'More than quality (*Meer dan quality*)', is clear as far as that goes. It speaks unreservedly of a policy shift. The cultural policy which arose in the post-war period no longer meets the requirements, as the letter puts it. As a result of social developments such as individualisation and increasing freedom of choice, support for the current method of financing has decreased. The cultural sector has become too dependent on government subsidies and, consequently, too detached from the general public and business practices. Cultural organisations must start to operate more independently of government funds and become more flexible and more powerful as a result.

The way in which the analysis in the State Secretary's policy letter is substantiated and elaborated can be questioned, which makes the underlying intentions difficult to assess. Are the scope and effect of the cutbacks really based on the wish to 'socialise' the cultural sector? Or has cunning use been made of a political situation and a prevailing sentiment to provide additional rationality for a plan which had already been forged?

In any event, it cannot be denied that the debate had already been 'brewing' for some time. Political conservative circles are not the only ones to have aired the opinion that the post-war cultural policy is ready for change. Now, at the beginning of the 21st century, the cultural landscape looks entirely different from when the current cultural policy arose. Incidentally, this is not necessarily the result of 'individualisation' and 'freedom of choice'. These interpretations are far too general for that and, according to some, even categorically incorrect. It has more to do with the fact that a cultural and media economy developed, in parallel with the post-war educational revolution and increasing prosperity, which, stimulated by the liberalisation of the world market and the digitisation of information and communication channels, caused fundamental changes in the political landscape. The new media economy created a 'cultural heterodoxy' with a more reciprocal relationship between 'the layman' and 'the expert', between 'here' and 'there' and between 'highbrow' and 'lowbrow'. In the words of the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman, the position of the cultural expert has changed from that of a 'legislator' to that of an 'interpreter'.

A brief review

There is, of course, nothing new in the existence of a cultural economy. Less than 100 years ago, at the beginning of the 20th century, in the Netherlands in particular, art and culture were

primarily a matter of economic activities between free citizens who commissioned private works from artists independently or in conjunction with others. From time immemorial, noble households, religious communities, states and city states, in their roles as public and/or religious powers, have also been components in that economy, sometimes in the form of a patronage. But there were also numerous initiatives to deploy the cultural sector for more collective objectives even in the previous century. The underlying assessments or validations could differ. There was, for example, the interest of an emergent nation state (which propagated unification and cultural formation domestically and national prestige and identity abroad), the ritual perception and reinforcement of one's own religious or social community, national civilisation or refinement, and the pacification or emancipation of an emergent urban proletariat. And, at the same time, there was a modern movement in the arts themselves which advocated the autonomy of the arts, a departure from traditional or classical opinions of beauty and workmanship, in favour of the free artistic experiment. There was general support for the intrinsic value of the world of text, image and sound, independently of rank, religion and/or social significance and the importance of the permanent search for the 'other'.

After the Second World War, this amalgam of mutually conflicting evaluations was given a place in an independent cultural policy in the systematic, rational build-up of the welfare state. Within this regime, the basic form of which has remained fundamentally unchanged since, those involved have consistently tried, in varying ratios, to link three objectives with each other. These objectives were: (1) the promotion of artistic quality (artistic policy, strictly speaking), (2) the promotion of public participation (spread policy) and (3) the presentation/perception of shared cultures (cultural policy in the broad sense). The substantive judgement of the arts was distanced from public policy. Thorbecke's grand liberal view of the autonomy of the arts and the wish to treat social and social-religious 'pillars' equally were reconciled in the notion of the central government keeping its distance when it came to substantive matters relating to culture. The artistic judgement was left to professionals. At first, the greater part of the organisation of activities remained in, or passed into, the hands of pillarised associations and foundations and, later, more 'general' ones. The whole was initially drenched in socio-cultural objectives of civilisation, edification, welfare and diversity. Later, on further depillarisation, the quality criterion was brought to the fore, for judgement by an increasingly autonomously organised professional field.

Anyone who goes looking for some kind of founding principle for the structure of Dutch cultural policy as an independent topic of government policy in the multiplicity of policy objectives and subobjectives, at least in the form of a 'promise', will ultimately, in my opinion, end up at the social educational function, at the importance people attach to a (national) cultural citizenship. We have already ascertained that, in its ultimate basic form, at any rate in the way in which it is established and defended in public policy, Dutch cultural policy has chiefly remained a continuation of a 19th century civilising or refining offensive. It aimed for art and culture as a source of social edification, enlightening, emancipation and the development of the refined individual/national taste. Investments in cultural policy have, naturally, also served other objectives, in various shapes and sizes, from the urge to distinguish oneself to a genuine aesthetic pleasure or the public safeguarding of one's own taste. But that is not what it is about here. The important thing is that, in the public monitoring/assessment of this policy, questions of participation, accessibility, reach and use have always played first fiddle. The judgement of the artistic quality of art and culture was seldom 'socialised'. Although there were heated public discussions about this now and again, these were generally incidental, usually about issues of a 'refined taste', and they were not really embedded in a cultural political framework. Only when it was the House of Representative's move, such as during the annual determination of the culture budget or a long-term formulation of a new policy document on culture, was there sometimes a slight chance of a cultural political debate.

Cultural policy as 'distribution policy'

I would like to put forward three points to support this observation. The first is the organisation and structure of the policy. One of the paradoxical consequences of the political and administrative non-involvement with substantive judgements, combined with the primacy of public associations and the autonomy of the arts, was that the substantive debate on the assessment of art and culture was actually delegated to an autonomously functioning professional field. There is no accounting for tastes, the message seemed to be, at least in the formal public debate. It was up to the professional circuit, in mutual agreement. The rest of the population had no say in the matter and simply had to accept its judgement. The public-political debate subsequently limited itself primarily to matters of distribution and of social and/or geographical and/or disciplinary spread. Cultural policy making became confined within an autonomously functioning expert circuit which ultimately had to demonstrate its social ties or significance by means of mechanisms of 'reach'. The social validation of the policy making process thus came to lie with the social spread or reach and not with cultural performance or ambition as such.

The second point is the policy-oriented research with which cultural policy making has already been surrounded for many years and the terms of reference which dominated in it. This research was designed with the explicit objective of investigating the performance and consequences of public cultural policy programs. The structure of the research therefore tells us something about the formal political administrative assessment on which policies were founded. From 1973 onwards, the founding, structure and working of the Netherlands Institute for Social Research (*Social en Cultureel Planbureau*, SCP) came into the picture, with the type of research which was carried out as a follow-up to this combined socio-cultural objective. The SCP's research has always focused on the reach of the arts, as a component of the search for the effectiveness of policy programs. And this effectiveness was thus sought in objectives relating to social reach. Contrary to the situation with regard to science and the universities, for example, art and culture have never given cause for public classifications in terms of artistic reputation or authority.

Thirdly, the current development indicates precisely when the system is out of balance, when the Achilles heel of the public cultural policy is affected, without there being a sufficiently powerful defence from the art and culture sector itself. This is the case as soon as serious public questions are raised regarding the independent authority of the artistic core from which the distribution is supposed to take place. The changing course in the cultural policy making program fits in with a broader movement of 'de-institutionalisation'. Many forms of 'expert power' (which were accepted until recently) whether they be the government, the police, the judiciary, the churches, science or the interests of nature, are subject to a process of 'desacralisation'. Their authority, which always went without saying, is now being questioned. The expert power upon which 'good taste' was based is being unmasked and exposed for what it is: a form of social power. Starting with the work of the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, the 'sociologisation' of art and culture has ultimately led to a radical 'desacralisation' of art and culture. That which pretends to be universal, as God or nature-given, now appears to be a personal opinion. What is striking is not so much the development as such, after all it is a result which was to be expected from the continuous rise in levels of prosperity and education and the far-reaching scientification and 'mediatisation' of society. The striking thing is rather the lack of a significant attempt by the domain of art and culture to come up with an alternative which appeals to the imagination.

The need for a new story in the interest of 'checks and balances'

We can conclude that public cultural policy making is extremely vulnerable to the validation paradox of public 'culture concerns', a point which has often been ascertained. Public cultural policy lacks collective support, at least if we measure this support by the actual use of the facilities resulting from it. This brings us back to the crucial question of audience reach. In the Netherlands, there have never been any serious attempts to break this validation paradox, for example, by equipping the cultural policy with other forms of assessment which are less dependent on 'the spread of refined taste'. As early as 2007, at the request of the State Secretary, the Council for Culture (*Raad van Cultuur*) recommended 'cultural citizenship' as the key focus of its advice.

The position of this essay is that, in the Netherlands, there is an urgent need for a new and enthusing story about the public value of art and culture, quite separate from social assent and related concrete utterances. This would enable the establishment of a relationship with other objectives (which are equally necessary as they are, to a certain extent, preconditions) such as social participation and economic effect, based on this independent assessment. After all, we do not measure the success of ecological policies primarily on the extent to which the various strata of the population actually enjoy recreational activities in nature reserves. Neither do we measure the success of economic policies on the basis of the labour market participations realised. Ultimately, the task of ecological policies has to do with core values of biodiversity and that of economic policies, with core values of national prosperity. Economic and ecological policies must, of course, also concern themselves with their social embedding, in order to achieve sufficient social involvement with their objectives and measures (in terms of a 'license to operate'). This is increasingly important in a network society. But it always conflicts, to a certain extent, with intrinsic economic and ecological values. It is precisely this tension which ensures the requisite 'checks and balances' which keep developments 'balanced'. Ecological policies have to concern themselves with both the values of biodiversity and social involvement. To lose sight of either will result in a cluttering of their ecological objectives or their social support. What 'checks and balances' can we deploy now, at the dawn of the 21st century, to enhance the assessment of culture in the tense relationship with broader social, economic and ecological objectives or preconditions?

3 The social value of culture

Public participation as a connecting thread

As has already been mentioned, the design of public research on the effects or the workings of culture is seen as an important indicator of the way in which culture and cultural policies are 'appreciated or assessed' in the public social sphere. The collection of ecological data tells us, or should tell us, what we deem important in nature and ecological policies (see the many types of 'ecological objectives' surveyed in this connection as criteria for 'biodiversity'), just as the collection of public economic data tells us how we assess our economy. Not only is the gross national product measured to this end, but also the functioning of the labour market, the presence of capital goods, and the level of education. Similarly, the character and magnitude of the public cultural data collected, and the way in which these are analysed, also tell us something about the way we guarantee the care for culture and, in turn, safeguard culture itself in the sense of its assessment.

If one looks at the structure and progress of cultural research from the second half of the 20th century onwards, from this perspective, one sees issues relating to public participation and audience reach running as a connecting thread throughout history. From the very first initiative to a more systematic scientific study of issues relating to cultural policy (the study carried out in the second half of the 1950s on 'Leisure pursuits in the Netherlands' [*Vrije-tijdsbesteding in Nederland*]), public research focused on questions such as who participated in cultural activities and used facilities and who did not, together with the reasons involved, particularly for the latter. Besides domain analyses relating to the number and spread of facilities such as theatres, museums, monuments, libraries, art study programmes and courses, etc., data collection concentrated primarily on the extent of participation and non-participation. When the SCP was set up in 1973, the policy area of culture (including the arts and media) was allocated to it under the common denominator of 'social and cultural welfare' and it duly became a topic of research, completely within the spirit of the age. Since 1984, the SCP has been making regular reports on the use by the Dutch population of public facilities in the field of culture and media under the chapter title 'Leisure, media and culture (*Vrijetijd, media en cultuur*)'. The analyses are derived from two data sets which have frequently been used in Dutch socio-cultural research from the 1970s onwards: the Supplementary Survey of the Use of Facilities (*Aanvullend Voorzieningenonderzoek*) and the Time Budget Study (*Tijdsbudgetonderzoek*). In the first instance, the structure of the data collection and analysis of the material collected is, pursuant to the prevailing doctrine of public finances, explained on the basis of distribution effects. At the same time, the approach also fitted in exceptionally well with the sociological tradition of stratification research from the beginning. This approach has subsequently been used, almost continuously, until this very day, to justify the research carried out by the SCP. The result is that, from the point of view of research, apart from the position of the CBS, and numerous incidental studies, the cultural policy area is definitively linked to and incorporated into a broader socio-cultural agenda.

Unequal benefit

The outcome of this research is, incidentally, wonderfully constant: the groups with the highest levels of education and income benefit disproportionately more from cultural subsidies than those with the least education and lowest income. Despite the general rise in these levels over the years, the gap between the groups seems to be widening rather than narrowing. In the future, groups with lower educational levels and income, and younger generations, will focus more on a broader commercial supply currently becoming available instead of on that which is publicly organised. Those looking for reasons will, roughly speaking, end up at the increasing importance of cultural competences, at the formation of these competences at a younger age and at the emergence of new cultural platforms within which these competences are formed and sustained. In their formative years, people come into contact with cultural domains, through their parents and peers, and build competences and make contacts in these domains (cultural and social capital) which they will carry with them their whole lives in their orientation to the cultural environment. The more far-reaching the competence built up, the less people will be inclined to change. This is why the post-war expansion of the cultural economy (both public and commercial) is resulting in an increasing assortment of tastes rather than a socio-cultural mixture. Because alternative, more broadly accessible cultural platforms, such as visual culture, pop music, musicals, media and entertainment, 'events' and digital media, have become available, new generations are developing alternative cultural competences, with the related forms of assessment, and are subsequently turning away even more strongly from traditional platforms, such as the visual arts, classical theatre and music, and books.

Beyond the spread

The persistence of the unequal benefit of the policy marked the bankruptcy of a cultural policy which based its social legitimacy on its social reach. While understandable from the standpoint of the tradition of the civilisation movement, at the beginning of the 21st century in an environment in which this civilising offensive is becoming less and less tenable, this blending of social and cultural agendas becomes all the more problematic. We no longer accept that others lay down what we should like. In a time in which the cultural dimension of our existence has become more important than ever, an appeal to artistic authority simply causes irritation. Let that authority prove him/her or itself in practice.

In the meantime, it is notable how post-war research largely passed over themes which could well have been the object of scientific study in the search for alternative forms of cultural assessment. One such theme is: how do forms of cultural participation help promote feelings of social confidence or well-being (based on the realisation that, among more highly educated people, a higher personal feeling of happiness goes hand in hand with a higher participation in the arts). A second is: how do different ways of organising and financing cultural policy contribute to the deepening, broadening or enhancement of the cultural-artistic productivity, diversity or quality?

4 The economic value of culture

New times, new markets

At the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, a new track arose in the social assessment of art and culture. It has broad and narrow variants, but in essence it is about the increasing significance of art, culture and creativity as sources of economic development.

The new assessment track is based on a number of developments. A Fordist economy, founded on principles of 'economics of scale' is making more and more room for a post-Fordist economy, founded on 'economics of scope'. The post-war educational revolution has led to a considerable rise in the socio-cultural levels of the population, with an accompanying broadening of interests in cultural-artistic activities and manifestations. The far-reaching liberalisation of world trade has given the audiovisual industry a significant expansive impulse. The rise in prosperity means that new consumption domains and consumer desires are coming within reach. As a result, a new multimedia economy is developing in which the production and spread of cultural 'content' mix and connect with new cultural experience platforms (musical, entertainment, events and dance). After all, the digitisation of information and communication channels leads to a far-reaching breach (hybridisation) in existing socio-cultural frameworks, to a consolidation and fragmentation of cultural audiences, to the creation of new cultural experience platforms (gaming, social media, augmented reality), to a mixing of production and consumption, to new forms of cultural entrepreneurship, to a reciprocal segmentation/organisation of cultural audiences (crowds, tribes), to a far-reaching 'desacralisation' of art and culture and to an increase in cultural reflectiveness.

Between 'culture' and 'creativity'

Notions of 'cultural industries', 'creative cities' and 'creative class' first blew over to the European continent from England, and later from the United States. Whereas the traditional European view was that artistry and market conflicted with one another and the idea of autonomy of the arts had primarily to be linked to a cultural-artistic sector protected by public funds, there were signals that markets do in fact have a place for artistic and creative 'originality'. The results could sometimes be even more innovative than in the setting of subsidised culture. There was an even more radical conviction that, in the future, the economic development and, in turn, the development of cities and regions would, to a considerable extent, depend on cultural creativity as a source of new wishes and desires and, thus, of new markets and audiences. Cultural-artistic ways of working and developing would then be of overriding importance for permanent innovation and, consequently, the resilience and viability of a regional economy.

As has already been mentioned, the new track has both broad and narrow variants. The narrow variants include the research in which attempts are made to link various characteristics of the regional cultural infrastructure to economic variables such as the size of cultural markets, the value of the surrounding real estate or the appeal of the local/regional labour market for more highly educated people. The American urban studies theorist Richard Florida's notion of the 'creative class', with the related idea of a 'war on talent' provides a new

boost for local/regional cultural policies. In the Netherlands, Gerard Marlet et al. used innovative methods to statistically link the quality of the cultural infrastructure to the economic development of cities. Both approaches provide a powerful impulse for the idea of the increasing economic importance of culture and creativity in the context of a developing knowledge economy.

The report published in 1995 by the UNESCO World Commission on Culture and Development, under the chairmanship of Javier Perez de Cuellar (with Claude Levi Strauss, among others as honorary members) undoubtedly belongs to the broader variants. The report, with its meaningful title of 'Our Creative Diversity' was intended to signify for the cultural domain what 'Our Common Future', a report published in 1987 by the Brundtland Commission, had been for the ecological domain. The report highlights the importance of cultural diversity, freedom and respect as sources of social development, not only in connection with the direct economic interests of emerging cultural economies, but more broadly, with basic values of identity, community and significance. Creativity, self-expression and cultural exploration are, thus, the basic characteristics of resilient communities, particularly in the context of far-reaching globalisation and post-modern times, when we can no longer fall back on metaphysical certainties.

Unfortunately, the broad track of 'culture and development' advocated by the UNESCO report, based on the broader development interest of a vigorous and diverse culture, was superseded over the years by the narrower track of 'creative industries' / 'creative cities'. Urban regions evolve from locations where the industrial economy is established, to integrated 'engines' of economic development, with local 'quality of life' and the related cultural infrastructure as critical factors. The latter are particularly important when it comes to the competition for a more mobile, highly qualified labour market. The cultural or creative economy, either in the form of large media conglomerates like Time Warner, Disney or Universal, or in the form of mutually 'networked' micro-companies, presents itself increasingly as an independent object of economic policy, alongside other sectors such as the chemical, food and high-tech industries. The broader cultural infrastructure of public facilities, of heritage and cultural study programmes and courses hitches a ride with the new economy in the guise of a 'linked interest'. It contributes to the preconditions required for the establishment of a creative and innovative climate, appealing to more highly educated people and to 'cultural entrepreneurship'.

In 2005, UNESCO formulated a 'Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions', but unfortunately, this convention has not had anything like the global response received by the concept of the 'creative industries'. This is partly because, in the literature, the convention rapidly called up the image of a defensive strategy by the Francophone world against a presumed Anglo-Saxon drive towards economic expansion ('UNESCO versus WTO'). Whereas the World Commission on Culture and Development deployed the notion of 'cultural diversity' primarily offensively (as a component of a social strategy of sustainable development), in the convention, 'cultural diversity' took on a more defensive meaning, as protection against globalisation processes (read 'economisation', read 'Americanisation').

The 'creative economy'

On the one hand, the breakthrough of the theme of the 'creative industries' / 'creative class' indeed opened a new vigorous assessment track, witness the manner in which a large part of the cultural infrastructure has swooped down on the new investment and subsidy opportunities. This not only concerns the concrete products of the cultural infrastructure, such as in the spheres of music, design, fashion, gaming and architecture. The entire cultural creative ecosystem, with its principles of autonomy, flexibility, exploration, self-organisation,

serendipity and network cooperation, is seen as having a decisive importance for a new economy in which economic growth will depend more than ever on permanent innovation. Studies yield evidence for positive correlations between the presence of a strong cultural infrastructure and real estate values (without making exactly clear what the underlying 'workings' of that correlation are) and between the presence of an active culturally creative class and higher values of economic growth (without making completely clear how this relationship works either).

Judging by the way cities all over the world, from Manchester and Helsinki to Shanghai and Taipei, are aiming to stimulate the related economy, this track ('creative industries' / 'creative cities') is now becoming a global one. Related to it, a movement to classify and analyse the underlying cultural creative economy more clearly is getting into its stride through organisations such as the EU, UNCTAD, the OECD, etc. A new field of expertise is developing, along with the related distribution of knowledge positions. The creative economy has recently been chosen as one of the top sectors in Dutch economic policy, with an emphasis on the role of architecture, design and gaming.

5 The cultural value of culture

Culture as economic sector?

At the same time, a nagging feeling still remains. Can we reduce art and culture to an economic sector or to the status of a linked interest: only of value as a component of an industrial policy, accountable in terms of its economic contribution? Are we not lapsing into the same mistake here as was made earlier with social validation? Searching for a new legitimacy for cultural policy, many parties have placed their hope in the new economic-spatial significance of art and culture, beyond the perhaps somewhat worn social spread policy. At the same time, however, there is a danger that one will again be shooting oneself in one's own foot. If culture is only of value because of the economic benefits to be had from it, the relationship can easily be reversed: only something which can prove itself to be of economic value is of cultural value. Why would the government then bother about it?

Furthermore, art and culture are difficult to organise as an independent economic sector, and difficult to compare with, for example, technological knowledge. The different forms of knowledge and creativity organise and manifest themselves differently. Artistic creativity has a different, more chaotic and diffuse working; its value is often only revealed after a circuitous route and a long time, sometimes decades after the death of the maker. Artistic associative 'knowledge' is troublesome to organise in a linear fashion. It arises through the confrontation/meeting between diverse worlds and impressions, on the basis of the 'emptiness' of the as yet unnamed. Artistic creativity develops from its connection with fields outside itself, such as a multiform urban nightlife environment, with 'empty' and thus strategically unfilled places, with new technological platforms. Artistic creativity does not ultimately allow itself to be locked up into strategic zones, even though this might give it a temporary boost. See the valuable studies carried out by the American economic geographer Ann Markusen et al. on the functioning of cultural-artistic ecosystems for more information on this connection.

But even more important is that, like the social track, the economic track is again losing sight of the intrinsic value of the dynamics of the cultural-artistic domain as such, as an exploratory space of forms and meanings, carried by self-willed individuals who, driven by the quest for the new or the 'other', do not immediately wish to tie themselves to this or that promise. It is losing sight of artistry as an 'empty space', which in the urge/compulsion to prove itself time and time again must conform to external expectations and projects, while wanting, equally stubbornly, to refuse. Like the social track, the economic track is in danger of losing sight of that single essential precondition for the economic valorisation of art and culture: the precondition of a lively cultural-artistic domain itself. By definition, a powerful creative industry (certainly if, as in the current top sector policy, it is narrowed to sectors of design, architecture and gaming) is not the same as a strong cultural-artistic domain. Although strong breeding places and cultural clusters may temporarily provide space for creative environments and, in doing so, reposition the underlying real estate, they do not guarantee a resilient or qualified underlying artistic domain.

Cultural core values

This brings us back to our point of departure. For the cultural sector to give a truly meaningful contribution to Brabant's sustainable development as a top industrial region, in a social, economic and spatial sense, it will have to be vigorous and resilient and able to bring about a permanent increase in talent and cultural innovation. A strong reciprocal interaction between cultural qualities on one side, and social and economic qualities on the other, will only be able to get off the ground if cultural interests can occupy an independent place of significance alongside social and economic interests; that is, if there can be reciprocity between the various corners of the 'sustainability triangle'. It is not a case of 'either - or', but of 'and-and'. What applies to the place and significance of the ecology and of knowledge, also applies to the place and significance of cultural imagination. Just as we have to search for new funding models for nature (because the old, public ones work inadequately and because we have to find new relationships between nature and society) we have to seek new funding and organisational forms for culture. As is the case for nature, for culture, we will have to base this search on a strong awareness of the core values at stake here, in order to arrive at a proportionate interaction with social and economic interests. How can the dance between the economy and culture be organised such that both are better off? Will it then be sufficient to link new revenue models to cultural end products or will we have to find a form of financing, or create funds, which can also be used to finance talent development and experimentation (that is, the broader artistic dynamics)? Is this perhaps where there is still a task for public government? Although the main theme of this essay is not the design of new relationships between culture and society, it *is* about the assessment schemes which may be able to point the way.

Imagination as a collective interest

In line with the scientific and policy-related literature about this, we could look for these assessment schemes, in the contemporary relevance of a high quality, pluriform and resilient cultural sector, able to permanently feed our views of the world with new images, shapes, sounds, texts or, in short, ways of seeing or meanings. We could base them on the relevance of the 'play', with images, shapes, texts and sounds, as a source of aesthetic and symbolic curiosity, flexibility and pleasure. Not because this is prescribed by some authoritatively formulated canon or other, or on the basis of a desire for social cohesion, good taste or economic gain, but because of the importance of and pleasure in cultural amazement as an independent source of development, orientation, identification, imagination, confidence and enrichment. And because of the value of art and culture as designer of alternative meanings and futures, as a platform for posing new, different, uncomfortable questions, to provide room for the imagination or exploration of new possibilities and meanings. In a rapidly changing network society, in which linear or absolute ways of thinking must make place for a simultaneousness of images, views, opinions and ideologies, there is a need for a certain familiarity in our association with multiple and uncertain impressions, realities and identities, beyond the fear of the unknown. In a situation in which old answers no longer work because we are facing a new category of issues, with 'wicked problems', untamed problems we have not yet even been able to formulate precisely, we need to rethink our ways of thinking and interpretational frameworks; we need to 'think the unthinkable'; we need imagination. Just as nowadays we aim at a more activist science, as a conscious search for alternative fragments of knowledge instead of a search for ultimate truths, more 'in cooperation with' rather than 'in isolation from' social practices, we should aim at art and culture as a conscious search for, and exploration of, alternative meanings, reasons and imaginations. Not sealed up in hermetic disciplines or in introvert academies, but in an active interaction with the social environment. Not focused purely on individual success, but based on the overall importance of artistic creativity from both the social and individual viewpoint.

If Brabant wishes to position itself as an industrial knowledge and innovation region, it is important that a strong feeling of mutual social involvement (the Brabant identity in the 'classical' sense) be combined with a high degree of cultural openness for, confidence in, or curiosity about surrounding and as yet unknown worlds. These diverse worlds can only be connected on the basis of an open and tolerant association with, and view of, culture, which focus on the unleashing of culture rather than its affirmative use. The Brabant identity should feature more as a 'playful' base and as a cultural seedbed than as an introvert authoritatively formulated canon. Only then will culture also be able to play a role as a breeding ground for social confidence or make an innovative contribution to the economy. At a time of increasing cultural diversity, there is a particular need for an open and relaxed association with culture, distanced, to a certain extent, from the rest of social life. Those who, from the very start, want to tie culture too tightly to economic or social objectives will discover that to do so is to destroy that which makes culture economically or socially interesting, that is, its 'emptiness', its insignificance, in short, its function as a 'useless' and thus 'free' source of play and experimentation. Furthermore, we will only be able to investigate the contribution of the cultural world to the social and economic worlds and vice versa on the basis of a good understanding of the intrinsic value of culture. After all, it is only then that we will know the criteria we need to enable us to assess that contribution.

For the record, this does not necessarily imply a plea for purely subsidised art. The unilaterality of that model has removed cultural practices too far from their public licence to operate. It implies that we will again identify the core values of a vigorous cultural-artistic domain and subsequently actually include these core values in the way we assess the state of culture. At the same time, we can investigate how these core values can best be realised or facilitated through policy making strategies (the importance of 'proof of principle').

The best of both worlds: Brabant as 'in between space'

There seems to be an eminently suitable breeding ground to this end in Brabant. The people of Brabant combine strong cultural ties with their own region (recent research has shown that this is even stronger among young people than older ones) with an equally strong orientation to new cultural forms and manifestations. Somehow, Brabant seems to have a kind of affinity with contemporary design, new digital platforms, new forms of animation, improvised music, pop music and dance, musicals, entertainment and cabaret, the new circus, texts in public spaces (*plekgedichten*) and absurdism. These new cultural forms and domains express themselves in the works of Paul van Kemenade and Guus Meeuwis to Tiesto, from John Körmeling and Joep van Lieshout to Gumbah, from Festival Mundial and Circo Circolo to the Efteling, to mention just a few. Many of the individuals involved in these cultural manifestations consciously seek contact with an audience. This is not so much because of a need for public recognition or 'social spread', but because the interaction with an audience acts as a source of artistic energy.

This Brabant affinity with new forms of cultural expression may have to do with its rich Roman Catholic past and related public visual culture (carnival, processions, fairs, the Way of the Cross, the landscape of churches, monasteries and convents, Roman Catholic mysticism, and images and the worship of saints) in a physical, visual and performing sense. There may also be a link with the absence of a strict cultural hierarchy (Brabant is located some distance from the national power bases) as a result of which scope arises for alternatives. And there may be a link with the time-honoured need for a rampant growth of talents on an impoverished sandy soil, or with the myths built up around it; or with the high density of cultural study programmes and courses, from the visual arts, gaming, animation, design and journalism to the performing arts. In any event, in Brabant there is a curiosity and openness with regard to new, public cultural manifestations, averse to cultural conventions and in close connection to an audience.

At least, that is the impression one gets when touring the Brabant cultural infrastructure. Isn't it about time we start substantiating this with figures?

6 Measuring the value of culture

Back to the research

Anyone who takes a look at the list of relevant policy themes formulated by the Brabant cultural sector (see Appendix III) and at the (inter)national landscape of cultural data systems and data models produced (see Appendix II), from the perspective developed here will see that we are still facing a challenge. In the national and international world of cultural research, attempts are being made to arrive at a tightened and comparable evaluation/classification of cultural activities. The general problem here is that, depending on the disciplinary background, those involved rapidly revert to a social and/or economic assessment of culture, without differentiating the workings of the cultural sector itself. There are, in principle, systematic guides to this end, but the underlying story or perspective is evidently not yet powerful enough to actually involve them in the analyses.

The social dimension

In keeping with the public emphasis on the social working of art and culture, the research carried out has traditionally paid a lot of attention to all kinds of forms of participation and consumption. These were expressed as variables relating to the frequency of use, whether or not including the invested time, finances and distance, and classified according to the various expressions of culture and establishments. They were often linked with background variables such as education, income, age, ethnicity and gender, as well as lifestyle and value orientations. We can characterise this domain in terms of the social effect or the social value of art and culture. In the research carried out among cultural establishments in Brabant, we come across interest in these dimensions in the form of the themes of 'A public following and Reach', 'Spread' and 'Participation and Education'. In national and international data systems, there is a rather considerable emphasis on participation in public-institutional cultural manifestations, without regard to informal and commercial manifestations which are more complicated to measure, so that these domains and the related types of audience disappear from view. For a comparison with general Dutch data, it is advisable to refer to the Use of Supplementary Facilities Study (*Aanvullend Voorzieningengebruikonderzoek, AVO*) and/or the Time-Budget Study (*Tijdsbudgetonderzoek, TBO*). This can be supplemented with more subjective data which tell us something about the perception of the cultural offer, such as that collected by the PON (for example, concerning accessibility, personal interest, experience with what is on offer, the perceived diversity, etc.). In order to be able to make meaningful statements about the relative position and significance of cultural participation in Brabant, the sample of the surveys will have to be increased. Such data give a picture of the social significance of art and culture, of the actual involvement of sections of the Brabant population and, thus, aspects of accessibility and support. For years, these data have been giving an impulse to thinking about more activating forms of audience reach, such as by means of the choice of locations, the use of ambassadors, the organisation of educational programmes, a more activating programme and the involvement of the audience ('co-creation'). In that sense, audience reach continues to

be an important indicator of the degree to which art and culture actually relate to their social environment, in the social sense, as a measurement of accessibility and involvement and, conversely, also to form an indicator of the social resilience of art and culture.

The economic dimension

As has already been mentioned, more and more attention has been paid to the economic value of art and culture in recent years. In the analysis carried out by PON, at Brabant's request, the interest in this value is evident from policy themes such as 'Economic rate of return' and 'Innovation'. There are, furthermore, various examples of the effects of these themes in national and international research literature. In comparison with their social equivalents, these studies usually have a more recent and therefore also a more incidental nature. A good recent exception is the Dutch 'Atlas for Municipalities (*Atlas voor Gemeenten*)'. Research literature also pays attention to public and private methods of funding art and culture, to the counting and mutual classification of companies, and to an analysis of direct and indirect employment effects. Some work has also been carried out on the contribution of art and culture to imports and exports and the gross national product. There is an almost permanent discussion going on about the demarcation of sectors of art and culture and about how to deal with publicly funded sectors, such as in the field of the visual and performing arts (versus the established cultural industries such as design, architecture, gaming and fashion). The most far reaching is an attempt by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to arrive at a 'Cultural Satellite Account' on the basis of the system of National Accounts. Those involved claimed to have delivered a comprehensive multi-criteria analysis of the cultural sector but, in fact, a social-economic approach ultimately dominated the analysis. The literature also contains various attempts to arrive at an integrated cost-benefit analysis of art and culture based on realistic market prices or an individual 'willingness to pay'. Because of their complexity, these studies often have a one-off character and, moreover, there is a discussion going on about the varying ways of monetising non-economic values (such as through the mechanism of house prices, transport costs, unearned income and payment preferences). In addition, regional economic studies have been carried out which attempt to analyse a regional cultural infrastructure's contribution to the innovating, learning or earning capacity of regions, measured in terms of patents or the regional gross national product, but these also have an incidental character as yet. Unlike the situation in the field of research on participation, no tradition has thus far taken shape in the definition of the economic effects of art and culture. There are sufficient methodological instruments available, but they have not yet been systematically deployed for the continuous monitoring of the urban-regional cultural infrastructure. Research should include both an analysis of the cultural economy as such and its external economic effects, such as the investments attracted and expenditure, the appreciation of surrounding economic transactions, and the significance of art and culture as a factor in the choices companies make regarding locations for establishing their operations. The point of such monitoring is obvious; it provides insight into the broader economic significance of investment in art and culture, thus clarifying how public investment can lead to private (and ultimately again public) benefits. It yields a picture of the value of culture as a source of economic prosperity.

The cultural dimension

This brings us to what we have already differentiated as the blind spot in research on the assessment of culture: the determination of the strength or the workings of the cultural sector itself. Research on the social and economic effects of art and culture tells us something about the broader social carry-over of art and culture, but it does not tell us much about the degree of organisation, sustainability, resilience or quality of the cultural sector itself. We should have a criterion to indicate the resilience of the cultural domain, in the same way as the state of

biodiversity indicates the resilience of ecological systems. There is an increasing need for an indicator of this kind within the cultural sector, too. This interest emerges in the PON analysis in themes such as 'Pluriformity' and 'Artistic Quality', 'Networks and Cooperation', 'Talent development' and 'Internationalisation'. For meaningful starting points for operationalisation, among other things, we can look at (conceptual) data sets supplied by the EU, UNESCO, UNCTAD and the American 'National Arts Index' (following on from recent initiatives by the SCP and the Dutch Boekman Foundation, but subsequently to be elaborated for the regional scale). Various assessment indicators can be derived from the available sources which provide answers to questions such as: how pluriform is the public/private landscape of the cultural sector? What disciplinary components can be differentiated in it? What is their magnitude/strength compared to one another and to similar regions, for example, in terms of the number of active persons and their income, the magnitude of the public/private investment (including sponsoring and subsidies), the offer of activities and products, the public participation, the national and international prestige (as demonstrated by national and international publications, co-productions, exhibitions and prizes)? Where is growth taking place in terms of the quantity and quality of that 'input' and 'output'? Where is shrinkage taking place? And what are the reasons for this growth or shrinkage? Is there a form of specialisation detectable in the way in which the different Brabant regions are developing culturally? How is talent developing within and between the various disciplines: what is the relationship between the supply of talent through study programmes and courses and the demand from the various subsectors? How are regional/global production, distribution and performance chains/platforms linked to one another? What about the financial and organisational continuity? How do cultural benchmarks compare with similar regions? How broad or narrow is the social and/or economic embedding of the cultural domain? Core values, such as pluriformity, accessibility, organisational capacity and talent development, are at stake here.

A closer look at cultural 'resilience'

If the argument sketched here is followed up, a start could be made with a 'simple' analysis of the cultural and spatial spread, the scope and financial position of organisations, companies, platforms, study programmes and courses and production centres, as well as their output in terms of products and services. Besides an analysis of the economic and social effect of the cultural sector, this will also yield a picture of the composition, the pluriformity and the artistic and financial strength of the cultural domain itself and, accordingly, of the sectoral resilience.

A more far-reaching analysis could concentrate on the composition and density of the mutual networks and form a basis on which conclusions can be drawn about reciprocal cross-sectoral links, links between the local/regional and national/global components of the network or between public and private ones (with the related position of 'switchers'). The relationships between the study programmes and courses and the platforms and companies could be included in this network analysis, to provide information about courses of action for talent development. Subsequently, blind spots and patterns of regional specialisation could be identified. In a word: a network analysis which is well set up (and for which the methodology is available) could get important information into the open about how the cultural sector in Brabant is composed and how it actually 'works' in its mutual interaction.

In addition to having generic studies (aimed at building up a general overview) as part of a potential monitoring system, in-depth studies on the regional resilience of cultural systems/sectors can also be carried out. Inspiration can be found in research carried out on the working of regional economic and/or cultural clusters or 'learning regions'. Economic-geographic studies which try to analyse mechanisms of regional cultural clustering, such as in the fields of fashion, publishing or the arts in general, are worth mentioning. How are these clusters composed and how do they work? How can we understand the working of the design cluster in and around Eindhoven in the interaction between a broader regional cultural

ecosystem, the educational field, the technological environment and a global design column?
Or: how can we understand the clustering of performance platforms in and around Tilburg, from Incubate and Mundial to 013 and the Efteling in the context of the arts training courses present, the present and past of Tilburg's broader cultural infrastructure and the general growth of the entertainment and/or event economy?

How to proceed?

This essay argues that a stronger positioning of the value of culture depends upon an analysis which makes visible the state of development or resilience of the cultural sector. In the absence of such insight, the cultural sector will always primarily be judged on its social and economic effect and the intrinsic value of the cultural-artistic domain, as a platform of imagination and meaning and as a source of cultural-artistic innovation and curiosity, will never be explicitly safeguarded.

There are at least three forms of research-related safeguards.

It is true that, in the Brabant Sustainability Balance published every four years by Telos, 'culture' maintains its position within the domain of social capital (after all, this is a human capital factor), but its operationalisation is again to be minutely examined to make more space for indicators which tell us about the resilience of the cultural sector itself, in line with the core values mentioned above.

In addition, a separate, continuous monitoring instrument is being developed which pays more balanced attention to the social, economic and cultural-organisational characteristics of the broader Brabant cultural domain (in line with the core values differentiated above) than the current socio-cultural monitoring. On the one hand, the instrument will fit in with and feed the Sustainability Balance, but on the other it will yield more in-depth information so that it can function as a more continuous indicator, for the benefit of Brabant's cultural, administrative and market environment, of the composition, the effect and resilience of Brabant's culture.

Finally, following on from both monitoring instruments, a research programme is being developed which has room for more in-depth studies on components of the functioning of the 'cultural system' (e.g. aspects of the formation of alliances, talent development, market development, clustering, specialisation and internationalisation, etc.).

7 Conclusions

The aim of this essay: a coordinating story

This essay is intended as a coordinating analysis of the contemporary value of culture, based on Brabant's Agenda and the ambition it expresses to develop Brabant into a North-West European top region in the field of knowledge and innovation. In concrete terms, the aim of the essay is to provide insight into the contemporary assessment of culture, seen in terms of its contribution to the sustainable economic, ecological and socio-cultural development of Brabant. The province needs an analysis of this kind to enable it to meet its responsibility as regional cultural authority. The regional culture is deemed a 'linked interest' with regard to spatial-economic developments here. How should the regional cultural infrastructure be assessed to this end?

In order to answer this question, general literature on the contemporary social role of art and culture, and national and international developments in policy-oriented research on art and culture were examined. Furthermore, the PON has made an analysis of policy themes put forward by the cultural sector of Brabant itself.

The intrinsic value of culture, beyond the social and economic aspects

This essay points out that the public support of art and culture has, for a long time, been dominated by objectives of national civilisation, the education of the population, community building and public spread, and has delegated issues of artistic quality to the professional field. In the second half of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, assessment shifted to aspects of economic development. Art and culture were increasingly seen in the framework of the economic development of cities and regions, assessed in terms of direct and indirect employment, economic appeal, the increase in value of real estate, the contribution to the gross national product and the stimulation of creativity and innovation, in some cases linked to notions of a 'creative industry'.

The blind spot which threatens here is subsequently broken down into themes. There is no adequate story about or understanding of the functioning of the cultural sector or the cultural sphere itself. More attention for this can be legitimised on the basis of the relevance of a versatile and energetic cultural infrastructure, which functions as a platform for tapping new, as yet unknown questions and realities, providing room for the imagination or exploration of new perspectives and meanings and as a seedbed for association with and pleasure in cultural diversity. In a network society, in which linear or absolute views must make place for an increasing multiplicity of images, views, opinions and ideologies, there is a need for a certain familiarity, not to mention curiosity or playfulness, in dealing with multiple and uncertain realities, beyond the fear of the unknown, and distanced from the short-term interests of usefulness and need.

Reference points: a need for imagination

Where do we find reference points for such a strategy? The volatility of the 'social', at least in its classical 'compartmentalised' form, demands a different positioning of art and culture,

beyond a canonical perspective of civilisation and spread. This repositioning may tie in with a renewed interest in amazement, perception, the symbolic, the sublime, the mythical and the moral, beyond consumptive excess. The performing arts are leaving the theatre to manifest themselves more and more on the street, outdoors, on industrial sites and in theme parks, to attract people who are looking for new forms of excitement. The visual arts are escaping from museums to reappear in all sorts of shapes and guises in our everyday lives, as part of a craving for new meaning. Sooner or later, cultural excess leads to a new urge for more depth, refreshing orientations, excitement, relevance, involvement, to beat the boredom. Here lies an opportunity for the cultural sector. The significance of culture should be sought in culture itself, as a source of a shared environmental orientation rather than in derived values of economic development, innovative capacity, feelings of happiness, social involvement and gatherings. Man as the animal that tells 'stories' (cf Philipp Blom). Everything else begins here.

In his study of the developmental power of cities through the ages, which is as famous as it is extensive, Peter Hall, the British researcher, shows the decisive importance of an open and energetic cultural sector for urban innovative capacity. Urban communities such as Florence, Amsterdam, London, Paris, Vienna, Frankfurt, Stockholm and Los Angeles were at their best in periods in which a certain social-economic developmental phase coincided with a sharp political awareness of opportunities and a dynamic cultural sphere. Peter Hall characterised this cultural sphere in terms of 'a lack of particular constraints, in terms of a kind of social fluidity and openness'. There is a broadly shared willingness to try something new and unknown, a willingness which is facilitated by the arrival of new groups of people and a certain pragmatism, which reaches beyond existing conventions.

We must not misinterpret this 'lack of particular constraints'. It is not the same as 'indifference', because it involves an active attitude. People can actively open themselves up to new developments and to the exploration of unknown futures, based on a shared perception of safety and mutual involvement. They do not have to waste their energies on fighting with one another and defending themselves, instead of focusing their gaze on the future. As has already been said, if Brabant wishes to position itself as an industrial knowledge and innovation region, it is important that we combine a strong feeling of mutual social involvement (the Brabant identity in the classical sense) with a high degree of cultural openness to, confidence in and curiosity about surrounding/unknown worlds. These worlds can only be connected on the basis of an open and tolerant association with culture, which focuses on the unleashing of culture rather than its affirmative use (cf Rik Hergreen). The Brabant identity should be more of a 'playful' base and a cultural seedbed rather than an introvert authoritatively formulated canon.

The importance of monitoring

In order to incorporate and safeguard this method of assessment and positioning in policy and the political social debate, a monitoring instrument is required which pays attention to the developmental power and resilience of the cultural sector as such, as well as an understanding of its social and economic effects. In this way, culture will be given a more explicit place in the thinking processes concerning the sustainable development of Brabant, alongside social, economic and ecological interests, but in interaction with them. This fits in with how sustainable development is viewed by Telos. The development of these forms of capital is viewed on two levels: on the level of the capital itself (there is an increase in the ecological, economic, social and/or cultural developmental capacity as such) and on the level of the mutual interaction (there is no question of a shift). The important thing is always 'and-and' rather than 'either-or'.

To this end, some suggestions have been made about the types of information which can play a role in determining the sustainable development of the cultural capital. Some of these suggestions involve simple counts, such as of funding sources, active persons and output, with

the related analysis of spread and pluriformity. This information may be traceable through CBS data and supplementary company surveys. Other suggestions have to do with the analysis of chain connections, following on from theories about value chains and clustering processes, and more qualitative assessment, such as in terms of national and international reputation and social perception.

As has already been stated, this report must not be interpreted as a plea for the return of a cultural sector which is purely supported by public funds. That is not the idea at all. The idea is to safeguard the independent value of an energetic cultural sector, as a condition for the resilient functioning of the region as a network society. Whether this energetic cultural sector, with the related values of talent development, pluriformity and accessibility, can be better safeguarded by means of public or private funding will have to be examined more closely. It is probably a question of a well thought out combination, depending on mutual financial and organisational possibilities. Ultimately, the question will be raised of which cultural manifestations we want to support if the market is unable or unwilling to do so, and to what extent. Should the region continue to provide an independent infrastructure for the vigorous pursuit of symphonic music? Or are the social appreciation and utilisation of this area so on the wane that things should be organised differently? Do we revitalise it or do we pack it in? These are questions for a political-social debate (which the citizens of Brabant may be challenged to relate to) rather than for an academic essay. But this debate must be based on facts which provide meaningful information about the public effects of the decisions to be made.

Making a difference

If Brabant is able to draw up a programme in which attention is more proportionately paid to the independent significance of the cultural sector, in relation to its social and economic effects, as part of an innovative, self-confident cultural strategy which fits in with the ambition to position the region as a European knowledge and innovation region, the province will also be able to make a difference in Europe in cultural political terms.

'You have no choice but to choose'.

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Appendix 1: Research Landscape of Art and Culture Factsheet

Because of its size, this document has not been included here.

It is available at www.telos.nl

Appendix II: Reference list for the Research Landscape of Art and Culture

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Appendix III: M. van Bommel & E. Koopmanschap (2011) Culture in Brabant. A PON analysis (*Cultuur in Brabant. A PON inventarisatie*). Tilburg, PON.

Because of its size this document has not been included here.

It is available at www.telos.nl / www.pon.nl

Appendix IV: UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of Cultural Expression

The General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, meeting in Paris from 3 to 21 October 2005 at its 33rd session,

Affirming that cultural diversity is a defining characteristic of humanity,

Conscious that cultural diversity forms a common heritage of humanity and should be cherished and preserved for the benefit of all,

Being aware that cultural diversity creates a rich and varied world, which increases the range of choices and nurtures human capacities and values, and therefore is a mainspring for sustainable development for communities, peoples and nations,

Recalling that cultural diversity, flourishing within a framework of democracy, tolerance, social justice and mutual respect between peoples and cultures, is indispensable for peace and security at the local, national and international levels,

Celebrating the importance of cultural diversity for the full realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other universally recognized instruments,

Emphasizing the need to incorporate culture as a strategic element in national and international development policies, as well as in international development cooperation, taking into account also the United Nations Millennium Declaration (2000) with its special emphasis on poverty eradication,

Taking into account that culture takes diverse forms across time and space and that this diversity is embodied in the uniqueness and plurality of the identities and cultural expressions of the peoples and societies making up humanity,

Recognizing the importance of traditional knowledge as a source of intangible and material wealth, and in particular the knowledge systems of indigenous peoples, and its positive contribution to sustainable development, as well as the need for its adequate protection and promotion,

Recognizing the need to take measures to protect the diversity of cultural expressions, including their contents, especially in situations where cultural expressions may be threatened by the possibility of extinction or serious impairment,

Emphasizing the importance of culture for social cohesion in general, and in particular its potential for the enhancement of the status and role of women in society,

Being aware that cultural diversity is strengthened by the free flow of ideas, and that it is nurtured by constant exchanges and interaction between cultures,

Reaffirming that freedom of thought, expression and information, as well as diversity of the media, enable cultural expressions to flourish within societies,

Recognizing that the diversity of cultural expressions, including traditional cultural expressions, is an important factor that allows individuals and peoples to express and to share with others their ideas and values,

Recalling that linguistic diversity is a fundamental element of cultural diversity, and reaffirming the fundamental role that education plays in the protection and promotion of cultural expressions,

Taking into account the importance of the vitality of cultures, including for persons belonging to minorities and indigenous peoples, as manifested in their freedom to create, disseminate and distribute their traditional cultural expressions and to have access thereto, so as to benefit them for their own development,

Emphasizing the vital role of cultural interaction and creativity, which nurture and renew cultural expressions and enhance the role played by those involved in the development of culture for the progress of society at large,

Recognizing the importance of intellectual property rights in sustaining those involved in cultural creativity,

Being convinced that cultural activities, goods and services have both an economic and a cultural nature, because they convey identities, values and meanings, and must therefore not be treated as solely having commercial value,

Noting that while the processes of globalization, which have been facilitated by the rapid development of information and communication technologies, afford unprecedented conditions for enhanced interaction between cultures, they also represent a challenge for cultural diversity, namely in view of risks of imbalances between rich and poor countries,

Being aware of UNESCO's specific mandate to ensure respect for the diversity of cultures and to recommend such international agreements as may be necessary to promote the free flow of ideas by word and image,

Referring to the provisions of the international instruments adopted by UNESCO relating to cultural diversity and the exercise of cultural rights, and in particular the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity of 2001,

Adopts this Convention on 20 October 2005.

Appendix V: From: NATIONAL ARTS INDEX 2012: AN ANNUAL MEASURE OF THE VITALITY OF ARTS AND CULTURE IN THE UNITED STATES: 1998-2010

WHAT'S TREASURED IS MEASURED

Why measure? If something is important to us, we want to know how much of it there is and how it is changing. We want to measure it and track it over time, as people might do with their weight and income, for example.

The arts are a fundamental component of a healthy society, based on virtues that touch the individual, community, and the nation—benefits that persist even in difficult social and economic times:

- . **Aesthetics:** The arts create beauty and preserve it as part of culture
- . **Creativity:** The arts encourage creativity, a critical skill in a dynamic world
- . **Expression:** Artistic work lets us communicate our interests and visions
- . **Identity:** Arts goods, services, and experiences help define our culture
- . **Innovation:** The arts are sources of new ideas, futures, concepts, and connections
- . **Preservation:** Arts and culture keep our collective memories intact
- . **Prosperity:** The arts create millions of jobs and enhance economic health
- . **Skills:** Arts aptitudes and techniques are needed in all sectors of society and work
- . **Social Capital:** We enjoy the arts together, across races, generations, and places

For these reasons, it is important to understand how the arts thrive and remain healthy, enabling them to deliver these valuable benefits. It is this health and ability to sustain itself over time that we refer to as the “vitality” of arts and culture.

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