Deep into the Province

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Deep into the Province: proposal for a comparative research project on the role of culture and art in peripheral regions across Europe

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Biography:
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Abstract
This paper presents a comparative research project on the role of art and culture in peripheral regions across Europe. It is informed by the growing inequalities between cities where the 'winners of globalisation' reside and the peripheral regions in Europe that are not so well-connected to the global economy. The project aims to assess the strategies of cultural agents outside major city centres by asking how the spheres of arts and culture, the local economy and 'the social' interact in peripheral regions. Do these interactions contribute to sustainable (local) cultural/artistic milieus and to regional development? And how can such a contribution be demonstrated? The research project will provide an understanding of the strategies and interactions of cultural agents in peripheral cultural ecologies. It will also provide a grounded framework for value assessment of art and culture in peripheral regions which can be used as, or to improve on existing frameworks for strategic management and/or public accountability of their operations.

Key words: periphery, regional cultural policy, cultural democracy.

Word count: 7282

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Introduction

We are used to thinking of cultural agents and institutions as part of urban settings. Much research focuses on art in city settings as effective tool for regeneration (see e.g. Anheier et al. 2012). This paper presents a comparative research project on the role of art and culture in peripheral regions across Europe. It is informed by the growing inequalities between cities where the 'winners of globalisation' reside and the peripheral regions in Europe that are not so well-connected to the global economy. The first section provides the rationale behind this perspective and introduces the central research question. The second section is devoted to the conceptional model behind the project, which is based in the cultural ecology perspective and the concept of a cultural public sphere. These conceptual lenses allow for a research methodology which is sensitive to the value orientations of cultural agents and peripheral audiences. The research methodology is explicated in the third section. The paper concludes with some remarks on the envisioned outcomes of the project. The paper should be read as an invitation to join in this comparative research project.

1. Background and Research Question

Worldwide, more than 50% of people are living in large agglomerations. Urban economist Glaeser (2011) argues cities make us smarter, healthier and wealthier. The creative class concept posits large agglomerations as the important creative hubs that drive the knowledge economy (see e.g. Florida 2002[1] and Landry 2008). Urban sociologist Saskia Sassen (1991, 2007) describes globalisation as a condition of global exchange of goods, services, people and ideas facilitated by networks of 'global cities' that provide the (physical and social) infrastructure for these networks. The corollary to her argument is that smaller cities and the countryside only have a role which is subsidiary to major urban centres. Compared to the fast, dynamic, and thrilling cities, the periphery seems slow, disconnected and prone to decline. The countryside is the site of specific issues such as a necessary transformation of agriculture in light of the sustainability crisis, population developments such as degreening, greying and decline, and associated loss of amenities and sociability, although not all peripheral regions are experiencing such problems. The network logic of the global economy seems to penalise being more isolated. However, there are also positive conceptions of the rural as 'authentic', 'pure', and 'original' while city life is considered as simulacrum (see e.g. Steenbekkers & Vermeij, 2013, or Maleuvre 2016). As a result, cities and metropoles have become a major focus in academic research and policy making (see e.g. Anheier et al. 2012 or the current project of the Cultural Commons Quest Office at the University of Antwerp), also in the field of cultural policy and impact research. As a consequence, much of the conceptual work on art and culture and their value in society is based on the cities. When researching the rural area around Sidney, Stevenson (2018) however found that creative city rationales have little relevance to the artists living in the periphery around the large city. That leads to the question whether the cultural identity of the periphery should not be considered in its own right, rather than as subsidiary to major urban centres.

At the same time, a different movement is taking place. In cultural policies, the local and regional levels have become more important. Policy systems that have developed a substantial role for the national government have faced a 'regional' turn over the last decades. On the one hand, this is a recognition of the important position of large agglomerations for cultural infrastructure as artists seem to flock in cities naturally (Van Maanen 2009). This prompts attention to the role of local and regional authorities in the cultural sphere. But still this amounts to a focus on large agglomerations. On the other hand, discourses

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[1] Although in more recent publications Florida has revoked much of his 'creative-class thesis'. <mark>reference</mark>

of a distinction between city and 'region' are prominent in policy system in countries with a national cultural policy system. In Scandinavian countries where the role for municipalities always has been substantial, various experiments have been conducted with subsidy schemes focusing on regional authorities, such as the Cultural Cooperation Model in Sweden and the The Act on Regional Cultural Agreements in Denmark.[2]. But also, in countries with traditionally very centralised policy systems 'regional' arrangements have come up, e.g. the regional cultural planning institutions in France (DRAC's) and the regional councils within the Arts Council of England that focus on the needs of peripheral regions. Moreover, big cultural institutions in London (under pressure or of their own accord) have developed branches in 'the region' such as the BBC in Salford and Tate in Bath, St. Ives and Liverpool. Also, in the traditionally city-based systems such as Germany interest in the regional level has grown. In Germany the notion of *Soziokultur* has taken root at the level of the Bundesländer. The recent publication *Vital Village* (Schneider et al. 2017), provides various examples of how art and culture help in the development of rural areas across the whole nation.

The Netherlands provides an interesting example in this respect. The modest size of the country as a whole (ca. 17 million inhabitants on ca. 42.508 km^2) might relegate the whole nation to the label 'periphery'. However, its central location in North-Western Europe and the population density of the Western part of the country, where major urban centres such as Amsterdam and Rotterdam are located, allow for it to be both considered 'urban' or 'metropolitan' and 'rural'.[3] In Dutch cultural policy discourse, ever since its neat legal structure came into effect in 1992, a debate is evident on the relative 'over- subsidizing' of the Rim City (and particularly the capital Amsterdam) by the national government as compared to 'the region'. Regional representatives also argue that the art made in Amsterdam, and subsequently distributed over the whole country as part of national subsidy regulations, is of little relevance to regional audiences.[4] In a research project on the relation between culture and the regional identity of the Northern Netherlands (almost a quarter of the country where only 10% of the population lives), Kolsteeg and Van den Hoogen (2018) typify the debate as a centre-periphery 'discomfort'. From the perspective of northern artists, the work done in the Amsterdam city centre is much more local than their productions that relate to three provinces as a whole. However, press attention and national subsidy advisors focuses on Amsterdam. On the other hand, national advisors (e.g. experts in the national funds for the arts) for them guarantee a better critique of their work than local authorities. Not surprisingly,

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[2] In Sweden experiments with regional cultural policy started as early as 1997 (Duelund and Larsson 2003), being formalised in the Cultural Cooperation Model formalised in 2009. The model entails county councils (regional level with elected leadership) develop regional cultural policy plans which need to be approved by the Swedish Arts Council. Upon approval the national government transfers funds to regional cultural institutions (Harding 2016). It is interesting to note that at their start the regionalization processes were heavily influenced by notions related to the EU and European integration. Currently, however, the focus has changed towards the relation between the regions and the municipalities and how they can best serve local interests (Johannisson 2011).
The Act in Regional Cultural Agreements was passed by the Danish parliament in 1999 following earlier experiments with multi-level government in the cultural field. The reforms comprised general block grants. They were based on a four-year contract which was established between local or regional authorities and the national government; the Cultural Accords (Duelund 2003; Duelund and Larsson 2003). The reforms were instigated and evaluated by the Ministry for Culture. The regional reforms were aimed at investigating whether local authorities could be more involved in cultural project, how the collaboration between municipalities could be strengthened and how the arm's length principle could be applied at the regional level (Duelund and Larsson 2003). Local government reforms in 2005 effectively abolishing any regional responsibility for culture. Since 2005, the Council of Municipalities has been an important element in the co-ordination of cultural policy for the municipalities (Duelund et. al. 2012).
[3] in the Rim City comprises ca. 8.200 km^2, but has 8,2 million residents, i.e. 48% of the population live on 20% of the country's areal. Much of the other 80% is rural. Sassen indicates Amsterdam as being a 'global city', connected to global economic networks, particularly financial networks.
[4] See Van Meerkerk and Van den Hoogen (2018) for descriptions of the debate.

the national Council for Culture has labelled the co-operation between national and local authorities as ineffective and detrimental to the development of artists. The council has suggested to develop the national cultural infrastructure bottom-up rather than top down as is the praxis now. The national infrastructure should consist of a regionally distributed system of cultural facilities, the national authorities merely providing a 'plus' on cultural ambitions of local and regional authorities (Council for Culture 2014 and 2017). Politics has taken up the suggestion by introducing so-called 'city-regions' that are expected to provide a profile which details a course of development for the cultural infrastructure in the region. Larger urban centres are expected to collaborate with smaller municipalities and/or the provincial authorities, being considered as the 'major poles supporting the circus tent' of a regional cultural infrastructure. Currently, 11 city-regions are being considered.[5]

This regional turn in European cultural policies is based in the concept of cultural democracy that favours taking up a wide definition of art in the policy system and focusing on local decision making. The policy discourse assumes a connection between culture in the region and local customs, languages, etc. (i.e. local identity) and culture produced there. The assumption is that 'own' culture leads to more participation or ownership by regional populations. Nonetheless, universal notions such as craftmanship and quality are also present in the discourse though 'regionalists' may claim that such criteria are merely those of the dominant region which do not fit local interests in peripheries.

Academic interest in the role of arts and culture in 'the region' is also rising. In cultural policy research as well as in fields such as cultural geography and rural studies, many articles have appeared. An overview of such research will be provided in an appendix. A few criticisms can be levelled towards this growing body of knowledge. First, most research is case study based in which a single project in a single small town or hamlet is described.[6] As a result, the research is always local and does not cover the level of regions as a whole and the relation of cultural agents in the periphery to agents outside 'their' region. Also, it seldomly makes distinctions in what type of cultural projects are researched. Particularly in cultural geography, culture can mean anything from amateur activities to specific projects by renown cultural institutions, as long as they are located in the region. Such research remains oblivious to the obvious different meanings and value orientations such widely different cultural agents bring along are not taken into account. Last, though this is not always the explicit aim, the case study perspective prompts a toolkit approach: transferability of strategies in one region to others is assumed. This may be the result of "an overwhelming pressure to produce recipe knowledge of immediately practical utility" (McGuigan 2011, 79) in cultural policy research. But there is no reason to assume that strategies in one region, or in urban agglomerations, will be effective in other regions.

Unease with current value assessment frameworks in cultural policies and cultural policy research provides the last reason behind the project. Van den Hoogen (2010 and 2012) and Bunnik (2016) provide an overview of efforts to provide value assessment. They develop frameworks that provide ample room to intrinsic values of art and culture using various perspectives (professional, audience and societal) on

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[5] Interestingly, this scheme does not address the original idea to turn responsibilities for cultural infrastructure around as it still the national level will be deciding on subsidy allocations, also for the city-region programmes. The budget allocated for all city regions, 2 million yearly compared to 47 million for all nationally funded cultural institutions and cultural funds, for the period 2021 – 2024 also does not indicate a willingness to transfer responsibilities to regional or local authorities.

[6] A criticism which, by the way, is also valid for much research on the efficacy of art and culture in urban centres or in city borough's, i.e. in the periphery of urban centres. Moreover, these case studies almost always provide evidence of positive impact on economic or social functioning of a city or city district. Studies indicating no or negative impact, such as Grigoleit et al. (2013), are very rare, though very interesting as they point to why strategies to create impact might fail.

quality. Nonetheless, they recognise that in practice those values that are easily measured (in quantitative terms, i.e. economic values) carry more weight in policy discourse than they should. In short, the current value assessment frameworks foreground economic and to a lesser extent social values as the yardstick by which performance is measured. Representatives from the cultural sector feel assessment frequently is hardly relevant to what they actually do, leading to paper procedures with no connection to the realities of cultural organisations (Chiaravalloti 2016). As a result, they feel the conversations with public sponsors are not productive (Bunnik and Van Huis 2011). Moreover, the instrumental focus may lead to hyperinstrumentalisation of cultural policies, particularly if they are linked up with regeneration logics. This implies the economic and social outcomes aimed at will dictate the choice of art and culture used (Hadley and Gray 2017) which will come at the detriment of cultural values proper. Therefore, this research will surpass such value assessment frameworks, opting for an empirically grounded notion of value instead.

The aim of this research project is to assess the strategies of cultural agents outside major city centres by asking how the spheres of arts and culture, the local economy and 'the social' interact in peripheral regions. Do these interactions contribute to sustainable (local) cultural/artistic milieus and to regional development? And how can such a contribution be demonstrated?

2. Conceptual models

The research is based on two models of cultural infrastructures and their relation to society: the ecology metaphor and the notion of a cultural public sphere.

The ecology metaphor fits the research well, as ecologies are considered as dependent on and adaptive to their environment. Holden (2015) argues cultural ecologies or ecosystems in any location consist of three interdependent spheres: the sphere of home-grown culture (culture produced and consumed in the privacy of the homes of individuals), the publicly funded sphere and the sphere of commercial culture. For any ecology to be sustainable, all three elements need to be present. Between these spheres flows of people, products, ideas and resources exist. From a public policy perspective the metaphor is very useful as it widens the notion of success of publicly funded cultural institutions. No longer is their success dependent solely on their 'own' productions and audiences but also on the extent to which commercial and home-grown culture can use people, products, ideas and resources from the publicly funded sphere, and thus are sustained by the publicly funded sphere. Moreover, the metaphor, once again, demonstrates the limited perspective of policy evaluation based on instrumental outcomes. Cultural sustainability, i.e. the dynamic of the cultural spheres themselves, is added as a lens. Holden therefore argues for the addition of 'institutional' values in the assessment of cultural policies, equally important as intrinsic and instrumental values.[7] For the present research, the ecology metaphor points to the necessity to include – in any region under study – agents from all three spheres and to be sensitive to the connections of the three spheres to each other. Data on the interchanges between agents from the different spheres should be gathered. The metaphor, however, also has a limitation as it does not explicitly address how the cultural ecology of a region interacts with the cultural ecology of a country as a whole or with international culture. This should be added as a lens in the analysis. In Holden's metaphor such exchanges merely are 'input' from the environment that may foster dynamics in the regional ecology.

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[7] See also Holden (2004). Do note that the use of the term 'value' is problematic here. In policy research, 'value' commonly refers to the positive benefits that result from cultural activities, be they cultural or artistic in nature, or social or economic. However, assessment of such values, i.e. evaluation of policy outcomes, is not 'value-free'. It is done by social agents that apply their own particular values, or value regimes (Boltanski and Thévenot 2005), to the benefits culture and art may bring about in society. For this second meaning of the term 'value' the term 'value regime' or 'perspective' will be used.

However, it is important to realise the relationship may also be the other way around. Moreover, the metaphor does not address the relationship of the cultural ecology to the rest of society, although it assumes it is there and that the cultural ecology is particular to the society of a region. To analyse how the cultural spheres interact with wider society, the concept of a cultural public sphere is helpful.

The concept of the cultural public sphere will be introduced based on the book *Urban Festivals and the Public Sphere* (Griogi et al. 2011), in particular the contributions by Jim McGuigan and Monica Sassatelli. For McGuigan (2011, see also 2004) public sphere is "no less than an official principle implicit in claims to democracy, the practical implementation of which may be called to account with impeccable legitimacy" (McGuigan 2011, 79), i.e. it is a dogma of liberal democracy. As such public-sphere theory provides both a focus for analysis and a criterion in cultural policy research. McGuigan defends Habermas's bourgeois concept of the public sphere against criticisms that in reality a public sphere within which each citizen can take part in public deliberations on equal footing is hardly possible. Attention is shifted from the bourgeois or civic public sphere to a *cultural* public sphere. The dialogic nature of the civic public sphere may be inaccessible for a large proportion of the population as (a) they may not see the relevance of the topics discussed for their daily life and (b) they may not feel able to effectively contribute to social change at the level of the system which discourages their participation in the civic public sphere. Therefore, a different mode of communication may be far more effective in including people in the public sphere, engendering the possibility for social change. McGuigan sees this mode of communication as 'affective' rather than 'cognitive' and as particular to arts and culture.[8] His argument seems relevant today, as discussions as a result of the Netflix-series *When They See Us* by Ava DuVernay (2019) about the Central Park Five, five black and Latino youth who were wrongly convicted of a murder in New York in 1989. The series has sparked public debate on the unequal treatment of people of different descent in the American justice system. A documentary on the issue from 2012, The Central Park Five by Ken Burns, was not able to stir such a debate. In our current media-saturated society the civic public sphere may have a hard time functioning properly. He argues as follows:

> "The cultural public sphere of late modernity operates through various channels and circuits of mass-popular culture and entertainment, facilitated routinely by mediated aesthetic and emotional reflections on how we live and imagine the good life. The concept of a cultural public sphere refers to the articulation of politics, public and personal, as a contested terrain through affective – aesthetic and emotional – modes of communication (…). The cultural public sphere features pleasures and pains that are experienced vicariously through willing suspensions of disbelief. In a mass-popular medium like television, the cultural public sphere is most evident in forms of fiction and entertainment where representation may not be policed so closely as in news and current affairs." (McGuigan 2011, 83, see also McGuigan 2005).

Monica Sassatelli builds on McGuigan's argumentation when discussing the authenticity of urban arts festivals. She argues there are two ways of looking at art festivals. The anthropological and folklore studies perspective conceiving "of festivals as organic expressions of so-called traditional societies and platforms for the representation and reproduction of their cultural repertoires, and thus identities" (Sassatelli 2011, 12), and the narrative of modernization which does not take festivals seriously anymore

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[8].It is important to note that McGuigan's use of the term cognitive here is questionable. In cognitive theories of art (see e.g. Donald 2011, and Van Heusden 2010) affective responses to art are also denoted as cognitive. McGuigan here merely implies 'cerebral' or 'rational-logic'.

as a result of a critical stance towards the cultural industries in line with Horkheimer and Adorno's dismissal of these industries as inauthentic. The latter perspective posits that in our current culture festivals do no longer function as instances of public sphere as they merely represent corporate interests, bypassing the cultural significance of festivals and their 'sociability' (Sassatelli 2011, 13). Sassatelli argues the significance of festivals resides in the type of experiences they afford, experiences which may not inform the civic public sphere, but certainly can inform public culture.

Indeed, even is 'amusement' is the key to understanding these kaleidoscopic events [she means: urban arts festivals], (…) this is not a way to dismiss them, but rather an insight into the specific, modern experience of sociability through its forms of (cultural) production and consumption." (Sassatelli 2011, 15). And: "Even though the experience of events may be superficial, they still represent a means of coming together, "reaching an aesthetic and sociable (…) coherence" (p.16). The notion of the cultural public sphere opens up the possibilities for a more inclusive analysis of "cultural manifestations" (Sassatelli 2011, 25) – note that her argument here expands beyond art festivals – as sites of "alternative critical potential, alternative to participation through rational debate, such as through forms of aesthetic experience" (Sassatelli, 2011, 15).

For the present research project this vision on festivals is of interest as festivals comprise an important part of the cultural offering in peripheral areas, see Dons (2014) who provided an inventory of the festivals in the Northern Netherlands and Wijn (2003) who argues that in small hamlets and villages with no permanent cultural amenities, festivals should comprise the core of the offering. The argument can also be extended beyond art festivals to cultural policy research in general where impact research has an economic and social focus, neglecting the cultural relevance of arts and culture in society and the 'sociability' of cultural events. This leads to the conclusion that the notion of a cultural public sphere is particularly suited to conceptualise how arts and culture relate to society at large. Moreover, as Sassatelli's and McGuigan's critique encompasses both the role of public and corporate agents in the cultural field, their argument neatly aligns with Holden's ecology metaphor which posits corporate, public and private agents as equally important. Nonetheless, the possibility that both public and corporate agents will seize on homegrown culture's authenticity by 'spectacularising' it and exploiting it for public or corporate benefit, is a reality. Such exploitation may come at the cost of the *cultural* sustainability of such homegrown activities.

If we accept that culture in the periphery can provide or contribute to (instances of) the cultural public sphere, and hence to social change, one last step remains: how can this conceptual relationship be applied in empirical research? Lijster et al. (2018) provide a helpful tool for analysis with what they call the 'civil sequence', a concept they have applied in their analysis of how cultural initiatives tackle global challenges or community issues, i.e. how they are 'glocally' relevant (see Gielen and Lijster 2017). They base the notion on the work of Manuel Castells who argues that all civil action is born form emotion, often a negative one: a discomfort with the current state of affairs. Emotions typically are felt individually but "in 'order to 'enter' civil society (…) the initial emotion must be recognised as a shared emotion. (…) Civil action is only possible if we 'de-privatise' our personal discomfort' " (Lijster et al. 2018, 139). They continue explaining the necessary steps and skills:

> "Such a step towards civil space requires an important skill: *rationalisation*. Rationalisation, which in the first place means self-rationalisation, is required to articulate an initial intuition or basic emotion. It is the cognitive competence of analysing one's own feelings and perhaps pointing out possible causes. Self-rationalisation therefore precedes communication, although the causes of certain emotions may be further clarified in dialogue with others. And finally, after the stages of rationalisation, communication and

de-privatisation, the skill of *organising* is required in order to set the civil action in motion and, if necessary, keep it going in the long run. For instance, one must organise oneself in order to write an opinion piece but also encourage others to do the same. Protesting in the streets or rolling up our sleeves to clean the neighbourhood requires at least a modicum of organisation." (Lijster et al. 2018, 139, italics original)

These four 'steps' in the civil sequence, (self-)rationalisation, communication, de-privatisation and organisation, can be used to analyse the observations of how cultural agents act in peripheral regions. Do their actions and the connections they forge represent instance of the civil sequence? Lijster et al. (2018) however point out that not every cultural activity leads to civil action. During each step of the sequence the agent can 'loose' the initial emotion, i.e. the initial energy that drives his or her action. One might add that each step can be simply ineffective (e.g. not leading to a shared sense of urgency) or a cultural agent might limit their role to only parts of the sequence. For instance, they may see it as their role to indeed de-privatise particular emotions but not to organise civil action upon it. A last point, which Lijster et al. do stress, regards the type of cultural agents. They argue that in our current condition agents operating outside of cultural institutions might be better suited to connect to the initial emotions of members of a community, i.e. they see grass-roots agents – usually agents operating alone or in small groups without formal hierarchical structures – as far more likely to be effective agents of social change than formal cultural institutions (publicly or privately funded). Their research data supports this argument. They criticise Dutch cultural policies, that under a rhetoric of social change, in practice mainly support formal cultural institutions. The grass-roots level in their opinion is a blind spot of the policy system.

This, however, does not exclude the possibility that institutional agents may also provide for some of the steps in the civil sequence. And, following the ecology metaphor, it must also be born in mind that grass-roots agents in some way may depend on the formal institutional agents to be effective *cultural* agents. Community artists, typical agents at grass-roots level, often identify as artists rather than as social workers, e.g. by referring to their formal (institutional) training. This, again, points to the necessity to focus research on how the different spheres in cultural ecologies interconnect, not only the connections between the public, commercial and homegrown culture but also between the institutional and grass-roots spheres.[9]

3. Methodology

In essence, the methodology for proposed research consists of a thick description of institutional and grass-roots cultural agents active in peripheral regions across Europe through a 'bottom-up' approach. The approach aims to uncover the 'emic' meanings (Beuving and De Vries, 2014), i.e. the meanings as they are expressed and experienced by the subjects in the research. Through observations, interviews and analysis of documents it will be described how both institutional and grass-roots cultural agents in the peripheral region from each of the spheres in a cultural ecology (public, commercial and homegrown) behave over the course of two years. Which connections do they make to other agents inside and outside their region (or not) and which (sometimes implicit) meanings do their actions have and which values do link to such connections in producing and distributing their cultural offering? How do they perceive of the link (if existent) between their offering and the (identity of) the particular region?

[9] The term grass-roots is favoured here over non-institutional. Institutional agents, or rather individuals working in formal institutions, may also have a non-institutional mentality. Moreover, the last step in the civil sequence, organisation, inevitably leads to a form of institutionalisation. Rather than non-institutional grass-roots agents are pre-institutional.

How do they perceive of the values their work generates? In short, their everyday life networks will be described. Particular attention will be paid to the question as to how the agents themselves define value and how they assess or articulate it and the question as to how the connections with other agents in their view impact their work and its value. Observations will be guided by sensitising concepts (Beuving & De Vries 2014), such as regional identity, cultural and societal value, and quality. These concepts relate to the existing cultural policy discourse. In the later stages of the research such concepts, and others that will emerge from the observations, will be used to interpret the data.

The regions under study should be peripheral in their country, culturally and economically. Most of these regions will be rural but they may include urban centres, but no global cities, nor cities that are considered to be the economic and/or cultural centre of a country.[10] Examples of such regions are the North of the Netherlands (with Groningen, 197.000 inhabitants as its major urban centre), Eastern-Hungary (with Debrecen, 204.000 inhabitants), Northern-Jutland in Denmark (with Aalborg, 206.000 inhabitants), or Eastern Estonia (with Tartu, 104.000 inhabitants). Preferably, nationally funded public cultural institutions are located in the region as this brings the interplay of the local with national (and international) levels into the research. Including such publicly funded agents, however, necessitates describing the historic development of the interaction between the national and local levels of the policy system of the country. How is the role of publicly funded cultural institutions perceived, does this include a particular role regarding the periphery? Therefore, it becomes interesting to include regions from countries with different cultural policy traditions (Mulcahy 2017) in the research. Anglo-Saxon regions may represent the Laisser Faire tradition which defines culture as an inherently private matter. Scandinavian regions may represent the Welfare State tradition which sees culture as a means for development of the population, granting a rather extensive role for governments. Dutch regions can serve as an example of a mix of both traditions (though slanted towards the welfare state) and at the same time as a policy system with highly formalised bureaucratic procedures. Southern European regions may represent the more informal policy systems and also the Grand Cultural tradition Mulcahy identifies. This tradition grants an inherent role to the state in preserving the national culture, leading to very different forms of justification of policies. Eastern European regions should be included as well as their cultural policy systems share the 'disruption' of the Soviet period between 1945 and 1989. Eastern European countries therefore, have a different perspective to the EU in respect to cultural policy as setting an example in more autonomous policy traditions, although the close connections between the state and art institutions have in some cases survived. Preferably six to ten regions in six to ten countries will be studied. In order to work with non-predetermined notions of value, it is worth considering to work with pairs of researchers, teaming up a humanities scholar with scholars from spatial science, social science and economics in each region. The researchers should be native speakers of the national (and possibly regional) language of the region.

The observation data will be analysed in three stages:

1. Analysis of each region

The sensitising concepts and the steps in the civil sequence are used to provide descriptions of the interactions of cultural agents with their region and their value definitions and assessments. This may lead to a particular understanding of the relationship between culture and the (sustainable) development of each region. A taxonomy of the types of connections and types of values can be built per region and

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[10] Methodologically, the choice for peripheral cities provides an advantage as an overview of the cultural infrastructure in smaller cities and regions, as well as the historical development of that infrastructure, can be attained more easily. See e.g. the research of the Project on European Theater Systems that focussed on cities of maximum 200.000 inhabitants in peripheral regions of smaller European countries (Van Maanen et al. 2009).

how they are conducive to social change can be provided for each region. Such an overview can be compared with the public polity perspective of regional authorities, thus informing regional and local cultural policy.

2. Intra-regional analysis

Comparison of the outcomes of the research in each region may result in a taxonomy of possible relationships between culture and (development of) the region. Moreover, a taxonomy of strategies and of values and assessment methods can be provided. Existing value assessment frameworks such as the aforementioned Holden (2009), Van den Hoogen (2010), and Bunnik (2016) may be conducive to systematizing the research data. Other assessment frameworks and methods (e.g. outcomes of the Cultural Value Assessment project of the AHRC, Culture Counts (Arts Council England), De Cultuurindex (Boekmanfoundation, the Netherlands), and Otte (2015) may also be helpful in this respect. This leads to building a grounded value assessment framework which is sensitive to how cultural agents connect to the regional, and national and international levels.

It is important to make the research process iterative, at this point. So, after step 2 the resulting value assessment framework will be 'given back to the agents in each region'. They will be asked to reflect on the framework and use it for their own purposes (e.g. strategic management or public accountability of their operations), providing the researchers with feedback that can be used to redesign the assessment framework. These actions will, again, be observed in each region and then compared between regions.

3. Comparative analysis outside the regions

Comparing the research outcomes to the existing knowledge base on the efficacy of art and culture in urban settings, may provide insights as to the particularities of peripheral settings. The existing body of knowledge on art, culture and regeneration will be used here. It is interesting to also mention the work of the Cultural Commons Quest Office at Antwerp University, which applies similar concepts (particularly the civil sequence), however, focusses on major urban centres such as London, Berlin, Marseilles and Amsterdam.

4. Research Outcomes

The research project will provide an understanding of the strategies and interactions of cultural agents in all spheres of peripheral cultural ecologies. It will also provide a grounded framework for value assessment of art and culture in peripheral regions which can be used as, or to improve on existing frameworks for strategic management and/or public accountability of their operations. Lastly, the research will yield insights as to the particularities of the relationship between art and culture in peripheral settings across Europe.

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