

PhD Application Research proposal

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Research Centres: Art, Culture & Cognition / Arts and Institutional Change
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Preliminary title: *Fostering the Cultural - Policy Perspectives*
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1. Short description of the project

In Dutch cultural policy – and in the public discourse surrounding it – two concepts of “culture” appear as basis for public policy concern and involvement: (1) culture as a set of cultural products (works, utterances, signifiers) and (2) culture as a set of values (conventions, identities, norms). Academically, however, there is considerable support for the view that “culture” should be understood as a continuous interactive *process*. Still, the relationship between culture-as-process and (general) cultural policy conception has not yet been subject of major academic study in the Netherlands. The present dissertation aims to fill that gap.

The (double) hypothesis driving this study reads *that a conception of culture-as-process (1) may offer a new foothold for public cultural policy, and (2) may explain and may resolve some of the persistent issues concerning the aims and legitimisation of current public cultural policy - based on culture-as-product and/or culture-as-value.*

The study carries some general relevance and urgency, because in the Netherlands (and in its surrounding countries) the stability and the effectiveness of public cultural policy based on culture-as-product and/or culture-as-value have been severely impaired, by a combination of (e.g.) sociological deconstruction, populist discourse, rising multiculturalism, new media, changing views on the role of government in general - and some degree of semantic confusion.

By building a new conceptual framework for cultural policy, this study contributes to the critical analysis of current cultural policies, the (ground-up) design of alternative policies, and the development of practical policy applications. Its findings may be of use in the Netherlands as well as beyond.

Main Research Question

How can the conception of culture-as-process contribute to the formation and substantiation of public cultural policy?

Sub-questions

1. How do different conceptions of “culture” play a role in the conception and legitimisation of cultural policy? (Status Quaestionis)
2. How can the concept of culture-as-process be developed?
3. How can the public interest of (the functioning of) culture-as-process be conceptualized?
4. Does the concept of culture-as-process offer a framework for diagnostic analysis of current cultural policy conception and -practice? If so, how?
5. What implications for cultural policy practice could arise if cultural policy were based on the concept of culture-as-process?

Elaboration

Sub-question 1 (Status Quaestionis)

How do different concepts of "culture" play a role in the conception and legitimisation of cultural policy?

The study sets out with an inventory of the main conceptual problems and dilemma's concerning the legitimisation and formation of public cultural policy in general. The focus will be on the different ways in which "culture" is conceptually "charged". I will differentiate between two main "arteries" of culture-conception in relation to policy (1) culture(s) as a set of cultural products (works, utterances, signifiers) and (2) culture as a set of values (conventions, identities, norms). I will illustrate that both of these conceptions have shown to be more and more problematic in the light of developments in the last fifty years; both on the level of conceptualization as on the level of implementation of cultural policy.

I will then study the underlying theoretical problems of these conceptions of culture. My conclusion will be that a sustainable underpinning of cultural policy cannot be found within the conceptions of culture as product or culture as value, due to major, conceptual pitfalls. I will propose that a conception of culture-as-process may offer a way out of these pitfalls. I will indicate interesting signs in both the academic debate as in the theory of practice (both nationally and abroad) that point out that this may be feasible, but also that the view needs to be conceptually tested before it can be developed into a full-grown alternative.

I will then put these findings in an international perspective by placing the aims and foundations of cultural policy in the Netherlands, in the context of an on-going international (European) discourse. This may provide reference for some later considerations on the transferability of the findings of this study.

Sub-question 2.

How can the concept of culture-as-process be developed?

I will now go deeper into the concept of culture and look for a theoretical framework to clarify the concept and dynamics of culture as process.

I will explore the idea that "culture" and "cultures" can only be understood and interpreted through the study of "the cultural", as being constituent to, and at the same time, an expression of, "culture".

I will subsequently explore the direction of Geertz (1973), Gielen e.a. (2014) and Laermans (2002) towards a (still temporary) description of "the cultural" as a continuous process of *symbolic interaction*.

Next I will investigate the distinction between societal (social, sociological) and the individual (personal, psychological) levels of this interaction, each referring to different theoretical frames. I will then develop a theoretical frame that allows me to relate the two levels of interaction.

I expect that a confrontation of Van Heusden's *cognitive theory of culture* (2010) with Luhmann's theory on *social (communication) systems* (Luhmann 1997, 2012) will yield a new, comprehensive reference-framework for this study. Central to this new composite framework could be the concept of *imagining* as both a mental strategy and a systemic mode of communication.

I may arrive at this framework (1) by drawing on Van Heusden (2010) and others, to argue that Luhmann's communication theory could – in relation of culture-as-process – be refined by introducing a specific non-binary communication *mode*; and further (2) by drawing on Luhmann and others to argue that the four elements (perception and imagining; conceptualisation and analysis) of Van Heusden's cognitive theory of culture may, on a social level, be related to communication system theory, thus building the new framework from two sides. I will explore how the "episodic" and "abstracting" mental strategies of Van Heusden's theory each may fit into this new framework in relation to the specific (binary or non-binary) setting of the communication system.

I may now take a sidestep to bring on Laermans (1999) and Gielen e.a. (2014) who point out that the interplay between the social and the personal level of culture may contain two opposite "process-

directions”: a “normalising” direction (patterns become norms, norms become identities) and a “de-normalising” direction (when patterns, norms and identities collide and are mediated). I will make some remarks on the value-aspects of this approach.

Next I will assess in some depth how *artistic* processes may be related to the communications-framework. My conclusion may be that artistic processes - on both the individual and the societal level - can be viewed as *complex imagination based interactions*. The complexity relates to its reflexive character, as well as to the use of elaborate form-languages that have developed over time.

I will then elaborate on the idea that the new framework of culture-as-process encloses not only artistic processes but also less complex, everyday or applied forms of imagination-based interactions. It does, however, not enclose the social systems of science or the social or political discourse on arts and culture, as these relate to binary systemic settings, which find their psychic counterparts in conceptual and analytic mental strategies.

At the close of this chapter I will round up by providing a (new) working definition of culture-as-process for the second part of this study. From now on, I refer to culture-as-process as (concept): *dynamic, reflexive, and imagination-based interaction, which entails a specific mode of systemic communication*. This would add to systems theory, deviating somewhat from Luhmann’s art theory (2000), while still approaching the arts from within the communications framework.

Sub-question 3.

How can the public interest of (the functioning of) culture as process be conceptualized?

What new grounds does the conceptualisation of culture as process (and its functionings) offer for public cultural policy? Why should culture as process be of *public* interest – if it is an autonomous and inevitable part of our lives and our living-together to begin with? To answer these questions I will revisit the problematic relation between value, values, public interest, politics and culture. First I will return to the considerations of S-q 1 and establish that *value* (that can only exist in and be constructed by psychic systems) must be distinguished from *values* (that are social/cultural constructs and can as such reside in a social system). Next I go deeper into the value-related paradoxes that are at the core of any policy-formation but that are specifically applicable to cultural policy. Following and elaborating on Nussbaum (2011), I will suggest that a way out of these entanglements may be through the concept of *capability*. Confronting the capability approach with the concept of cultural communication I will conclude that (on both the individual and the societal level) the *capability to culturally communicate* (cultural capability) is a prerequisite for any functioning of culture-as-process. Next I may test the public interest aspects of cultural capability against democratic values / human rights approach, and against a more abstract approach, focussing on the responsibility for the freedom and options of *future* society (Hoefnagel (2009), Dworkin (1986)). I expect the latter approach to be more robust, both in terms of value-entanglement as in confrontation with neoliberal or sociological deconstruction.

At the end of this chapter I will come back to the role of the arts, artists, and complex form-languages. I will explore if and how the renewal of form-languages may be seen as a factor in cultural capability and could, as such, give rise for public concern. I may revisit this in the last chapter. (With all of this, I will try to remain in the societal domain and within arm’s reach of Luhmann. I will use the psychological / emancipatory “vein” (e.g. Gardner (1982), Van Heusden (2010), Biesta (2017), Smith (2010)) mainly as support. I will argue, however, that “cultural capability” should also be specified as *capabilities* (plural) and that a working model should be made and tested. This may subsequently play a role in S-q 5.)

Sub-question 4.

Does the concept of culture-as-process offer a framework for diagnostic analysis of current cultural policy conception and -practice? If so, how?

I will now take a look at current cultural policy practice and develop the theoretical findings of S-q 1-3 into a method for the analysis of current cultural policy conception and practice.

I will start out by sketching the ideological positions found in de public discourse on cultural policy by identifying “standard rhetorics” based on specific value-orientations. I will then bring these rhetorics and the related policy-practices into a matrix and analyse them, drawing on Luhmann’s theory on operational closure and blind spots of communication systems. I expect that this may uncover and explain recurring problems and inconsistencies in standard rhetorics and related policy-practices. I will explore possible ways in which these inconsistencies could be solved, from the perspective of *public care for culture-as-process*, which will be developed further in the next chapter.

Sub-question 5.

What implications for cultural policy practice could arise if cultural policy were based on the concept of culture-as-process?

Drawing on Hoefnagel (2009), Van Maanen (2005), Gielen e.a. (2014), Nussbaum (2011) I will infer that public policy directed towards *care for culture-as-process*, based on democratic responsibilities and core-values, could be directed towards two goals:

- That all citizens have the opportunity to communicate culturally (i.e. be able to take part in culture-as-process);
- That new form-languages may (continuously) arise: signifying, expressing, challenging and fuelling continuous change in and of society.

These goals have in fact been central to (post-war) cultural policy in the Netherlands. However, by shifting the policy focus from “cultural expressions” (e.g. the Dutch Law on Specific Cultural Policy) to *fostering the cultural*, a new framework for policy design and -assessment can be construed.

The shape and effects of this possible “shift” in policy dialogue will be explored in a separate chapter. I expect to develop the term “Cultureel Vermogen” with four constituent elements of “capability” in relation to culture-as-process. *Arranging challenging cultural experiences* will be a key concept here. Drawing on Wilson e.a. (2018), Holden (2015), Gielen e.a. (2014), Van Heusden (2010) Van Maanen (2005), Van den Hoogen (2012), Drion (2013) and others, I expect this to lead to proposals for a recalibration of cultural policy goals and strategies.

At this point I will refer to two actual set-ups in the Netherlands (under preparation) that may help to illustrate and interpret the application of this approach.¹ I will describe the key success and failure factors that these set-ups will, by then, have brought to light, and touch upon possible indicators for reviewing results.²

In the closing chapter of the study I will recap the four steps that the study has laid out (theoretical framework, diagnostics, policy implications, practical applications) and explore the opportunities and issues that relate to further study and development.

First, I will refer back to the international context sketched at the outset of this study and discuss some promising leads for the transferability of policy implications and practical applications. I will argue that there may be good reasons to suspect that “the Dutch situation” - with its typically functional approach to cultural policy - may offer an interesting vista for other countries where a similar functional approach is now developing.

I will relate this to urgent cross-cutting societal issues such as multiculturalism, inclusiveness, participation and empowerment on the one hand, and topical artistic, social-cultural and pedagogical practices (e.g. Heijnen (2015), Biesta (2015), Cleveringa (2012), Otte (2015), Holden (2015) on the other. I will relate this to the possible role of artists and their “agency” and suggest opportunities for further study.

The study then concludes with a sober inventory of some critical restraining factors, e.g. the systemic resistance of the bureaucratic system (Van Meerkerk e.a. 2018), the systemic peculiarities of the Art

¹ *Cultuurvisie Zoetermeer and Proeftuinen Cultureel vermogen*

world, and the formal and legal contexts into which any changes in policy objective will have to be embedded (Van den Hoogen e.a. 2016).

2. Position of the project within the discipline

- By researching cultural communication as a particular social system, with a characteristic (non-binary) setting, this dissertation may provide a conceptual addition to, or extension of, existing systems theory.
- The applicability of systems theory may benefit by this extension because: (1) it may now provide a framework for the study of the wider field of culture-as-process, including – but not restricted to – the arts; (2) it may now provide a framework for analysis of interaction between cultural communication systems and other social systems such as political systems, bureaucratic (policy)systems and other organisation systems.
 - An additional benefit of (1) may be that Luhmann’s grand theory (and its phenomenological context) may be theoretically related to the embodied practice of cultural communication; an issue that has not yet been extensively highlighted.
 - A possible substantial yield of (2) may be the development of a theoretical framework for understanding and dealing with the inevitable blind spots in the interplay between cultural policy and the cultural in society. See also below, under 5.
- Other theoretical frames (e.g. critical realism and semiotics) may benefit from the presented model of cultural communication, as this may bring the phenomenological and the sociological approaches closer.
- The study may also yield substantial benefits for the field of policy research, as it develops new ways for ground-up policy design and application.

3. Short description of the texts that you will use or collect

Please see attached list.

4. Short description of the project’s research method

The method of this study is exploratory academic research focussing on the converging point of social theory, cultural practice and policy conceptualisation. The research may benefit from cross-referencing with actual on-going practice where the key-concepts of the approach are tried out in real-life situations - although this is not the main focus of this study.

5. Short statement on the relevance of the project

- This study sets out to explore a new, overarching approach to the underpinning and structuring of cultural policy. Its findings may be of use on local, regional, national and international levels.
- It also may offer a new approach to the interpretation of the public discourse on the role of culture and the arts in society, and may clarify the value-positions, standard “rhetorics” and policy practices that surround this debate.
- Offers footholds for a possible “shift” in policy dialogue and develops constituent policy elements for “fostering the cultural”, that may be applied to different levels of the cultural process, illustrated by and referring to actual trial set-ups in the Netherlands.
- Offers concrete suggestions for a recalibration of (cultural) policy goals and strategies on cross-cutting societal issues such as multiculturalism, inclusiveness, participation and empowerment; while at the same time connecting with topical artistic, social-cultural and pedagogical practices.
- May help to clarify and rephrase the (systemic) relations between culture and the arts, and to reframe the importance of the arts within (democratic) society.

- Provides steps towards aligning education and participation processes through the application of Cultureel Vermogen (cultural capability) and offers some footholds for the further alignment of the relevant policy-fields.
- Provides steps for overcoming “systemic blindness” in cultural *organisations* and offers tools for collaborations and co-creation in the cultural ecosystem.

6. Statement of a provisional timetable

- During a three-year preliminary study leading up to this proposal, a comprehensive exploration (of literature, discourse, perspectives, practical approaches, and theoretical framework) has already been done.
- The actual writing of the dissertation is expected to take 2,5-3 years, with an average investment of 2,5 days per week, amounting to ca. 3000 hours.
- Intended date of completion: early 2022.

Rough outline:

- Summer 2019: approval PhD proposal, networking, additional finance, identification of test set-ups, preparing international perspective;
- Autumn – winter 2019: in-depth reading, developing theoretical framework, extended discourse research, supplement literature;
- Spring 2020 – summer 2020: first draft on sub-questions 1 and 2; first field set-ups;
- Autumn 2020 – winter 2020: first draft on sub-questions 3 and 4; monitoring field set-ups;
- Spring 2021 – summer 2021: first draft on sub-question 5 (Cultureel Vermogen and policy perspectives); findings field set-ups; preliminary editing of complete dissertation;
- Autumn 2021 – winter 2021: second draft, third draft, proof readings, final version in concept; proof readings;
- Early 2022: completion.

7. Statement of expected expenses

- No research costs are expected, except for travel expenses. These may be of some substance if and when co-supervisors from universities abroad are involved (as is being proposed by the candidate).
- The candidate will put in the necessary time and engagement at his own cost, with possible support of several civil society organisations.
- The RUG will provide for the necessary supervision (including possible co-supervisors) and the general access to academic sources and materials, free of charge.
- The RUG will also cover the costs for enrolment in the PhD programme and for other necessary protocols and red tape.
- Travel expenses will be covered by the RUG (maximum to be decided upon).
- The RUG will offer some financial support (to be considered) to help cover the costs of print and publication.

8. Description of the required research environment

To be considered, in consultation with RUG staff.

Primary texts

- Adorno: *The Culture Industry* (2001)
Anderson, B.: *Imagined Communities* (2007)
Arendt, H.: *Denken* (1971)
Badiou: *Philosophy of the Event* (2010)
Barrico, A.: *De barbaren* (2011)
Bateson, G.: *Steps towards an Ecology of Mind* (2000); *Mind and Nature* (2002)
Bauman, Z.: *Culture in a Liquid Modern World* (2011); *Culture as Praxis* (1999); *On Education* (2012); *Freedom* (1988)
Becker: *Art Worlds* (1982)
Berlin, I.: *Four Essays on Liberty* (1969)
Biesta, G.: *Het prachtige risico van onderwijs* (2015); *Door kunst onderwezen willen worden* (2017)
Bourdieu, P., Passeron: *Education, Society and Culture* (1977)
Bourdieu, P.: *Distinction* (1984)
Damasio, A.: *The Strange Order of Things* (2019); *The Self Comes to Mind* (2010)
Danto, A.C.: *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace* (1981); *What Art Is* (2013)
Dewey, J.: *How we Think* (1910); *Art as Experience* (1934); *Experience and Education* (1938)
Dickie, G.: *Art and Value* (2001)
Donati, P., Archer, M.S.: *The Relational Subject* (2015)
Dworkin, R.: *A Matter of Principle* (1986)
Eagleton, T.: *The Idea of Culture* (2000)
Eco, U.: *De structuur van de slechte smaak* (1988)
Elias, N.: *Het civilisatieproces* (1982)
Fukuyama, F.: *Identity* (2018)
Gadamer, *De actualiteit van het schone* (1993)
Gardner, H.: *Art, Mind & Brain* (1982)
Geertz, C.: *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973)
Giesz, L.: *Phänomenologie des Kitsches* (1971)
Gleick, J.: *The Information* (2011)
Goodenough, W.H.: *Culture, Language and Society* (1981)
Gray, J.: *The Soul of the Marionette* (2015)
Hanley, L.: *Respectable* (2016)
Hargreaves, I & Hartley, J. (eds): *The Creative Citizen Unbound* (2016)
Heidegger: *De oorsprong van het kunstwerk* (1996)
Hoefnagel, F. / WRR: *Een nieuwe toekomst voor cultuurbeleid* (2009)
Hofmeyer, J.: *Signs of meaning in the Universe* (1996)
Holden, J.: *Cultural Value and the Crisis of Legitimacy* (2006); *The Ecology of Culture* (2015)
Huizinga, J.: *Homo Ludens* (1938)
Kahneman, D.: *Thinking. fast and slow* (2011)
Laermans, R.: *Het cultureel regime* (2002); *Communicatie zonder mensen* (1999); *Sociale systemen bestaan* (1997)
Langer, S.K.: *Philosophy in a New Key* (1948); *Problems of Art* (1957)
Luhmann, N.: *Art as a Social System* (2000); *Theory of Society* (1997 / 2002)
Maturana, R. en Varela, J.: *De boom der kennis* (1988)
Merleau-Ponty, M.: *Fenomenologie van de waarneming* (1945/1997); *De wereld waarnemen* (1948/2002); *Oog en geest* (1964/1996)
Morris, D.: *The Biology of Art* (1962)
Mouffe, C.: *Over het politieke* (2005)
Mounk, Y.: *Age of Responsibility* (2015)
Nussbaum, M.: *Creating Capabilities* (2011)
O'Brien: *Cultural Policy* (2014)
Otte, H.: *Binden of overbruggen?* (2015)
Praslova, N.L.: *Culture as Unfolding Process* (2006)
Ranciere, J.: *Het esthetische denken* (2000/2007)
Read, H.: *Filosofie van de modern kunst* (1977)
Rodgers, G.T.: *Age of Fracture* (2015)
Schrijvers, E. (e.a.) (red) WRR: *Cultuur herwaarderen* (2014)
Sloterdijk, P.: *Sferen* (1998/1999); *Schuim* (2004); *Je moet je leven veranderen* (2009/2011)
Smith, Chr.: *What is a Person* (2010)
Spencer-Brown, G.: *Laws of Form* (1969)
Steiner, G.: *Real Presences* (1989)
Stott, T.: *Play and Participation in Contemporary Arts Practices* (2015)
Sutton-Smith, B.: *The Ambiguity of Play* (1997)
Taylor, C.: *Sources of the Self; Multiculturalism; The Malaise of Modernity* (1991)
Tooby, J., Cosmides, L.: *The Psychological Foundations of Culture* (in Barkow e.a.: *The Adapted Mind*, 1995)
Toulmin, S.: *Return to Reason* (2001)
Turner, M.: *The Artful Mind* (2006)
Upton, B.: *The Aesthetic of Play* (2015)
Van den Hoogen, Q.: *Performing Arts and the City* (2010)
Vuijk, K.: *Oude en nieuwe ongelijkheid* (2018)
Williams, R.: *Culture is Ordinary* (1958)

Secondary texts

- Belfiore, E. & Bennet, O.: *The Social Impact of the Arts* (2008)
- Benington, J. & Moore (ed.), M.: *Public Value: Theory and Practice* (2011)
- Boomkens, R.: *Erfenissen van de Verlichting* (2011)
- Buikema, R., Meijer, M.: *Kunsten in beweging – Cultuur en migratie in Nederland* (2004)
- Bunnik, C.: *Naar waarde gewogen* (2011)
- Carbaugh, D.: *A Communication Theory of Culture* (2012)
- Cleveringa, S.: *Cultuur nieuwe stijl* (2012)
- Ciampi, L.: *Ein blinder fleck bei Niklas Luhmann?* (2004)
- Crossick, G. & Kaszynska, P.: *Understanding the Value of Arts and Culture* (2016)
- Davies, S.: *Definitions of Art* (1991)
- Dorn, C.M.: *Mind in Art* (1999)
- Drion: *De waarde van cultuureducatie* (Boekman 109)
- Drion: *De waarden van sociaal-liberaal cultuurbeleid* (Boekman 95) (2013)
- Du Gay, P.: *Doing Cultural Studies* (2013)
- Gielen, P. (e.a.): *De waarde van cultuur* (2014)
- Gielen, P.: *The Murmuring of the Artistic Multitude* (2010)
- Haanstra, F.: *Authentieke cultuureducatie* (C&E 31, 2011)
- Hall, S. (e.a.): *Representation* (2013)
- Halsall, F.: *Danto and Luhmann* (2007)
- Heijnen, E.: *Remixing the Art Curriculum* (2015)
- Heusden, B. van & Gielen P. (eds): *Art Education Beyond Art* (2014)
- Heusden, B. van: *Cultuur in de Spiegel* (2010)
- Heywood, I.: *Social Theories of Art* (1997)
- Hoogen, Q.L. van den: *Effectief cultuurbeleid* (2012)
- Hoogen, Q.L. van den (e.a. red.): *Handboek Cultuurbeleid* (2016)
- Jaegher, H. de, Paolo, E. di.: *Participatory sense-making* (2007)
- Jong, de, S.: *Een wereld van verschil*
- Keesing R.M., *Theories of Culture* (1974)
- Kemmelmeier, M., Kühnen, U.: *Culture as Process* (2012)
- Kunneman, H.: *Habermas' theorie van het communicatieve handelen* (1983)
- Kwant: *Fenomenologie van de taal; De wijsbegeerte van de ontmoeting* (1959)
- Laermans, R.: *Sociale systemen bestaan* (1997); *Communicatie zonder mensen* (1999); *Het cultureel regime* (2002)
- LKCA: *Cultuur in de kanteling* (2015)
- Maanen, H. van: *How to Study Art Worlds* (2005)
- Meerkerk, E. van, Hoogen, Q.L. van den: *Cultural Policy in the Polder* (2018)
- Moeller, H.: *Luhmann Explained* (2006); *The Radical Luhmann* (2012)
- Moore, M.: *Recognizing Public Value* (2013)
- Pots, R.: *Cultuur, koningen en democraten* (2002)
- Ramplsey, M.: *Art as a Social System – The Sociological Aesthetics of Niklas Luhmann* (2009)
- Small, H.: *The Value of the Humanities* (2013)
- Squire, J.: *Principled Positions* (1993)
- Stichweh, R.: *Systems Theory as an Alternative to Action Theory* (2000)
- Stone (D.): *Policy Paradox* (2012)
- Wheeler, W. (e.a.): *Biosemiotics and Culture – an introduction* (2015)
- Wilson, N. (e.a.): *Towards Cultural Democracy* (2017); *Caring for Cultural Freedom* (2018); *The Space that Separates: A Realist Theory of Art* (due 2019)