

Case study report (Code NL4C)

## **Cultural festivals: Creating a more positive image for peripheral regions**

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## Context

### Short description of the regional context of the practice

Throughout the European Union, there are peripheral and rural regions which suffer from a less positive reputation than their central and urban counterparts. These rural and/or peripheral regions have partially lost their reputation as green places, are dealing with ageing and depopulation and have an image of being outdated and underperforming (Grimsrud, 2019; Navarro Valverde, 2019; Fitzgerald & de Souza, 2017). This less positive reputation may function as a barrier when regions want to attract young talents and rural newcomers. As a result, the process of depopulation and a less promising future for a region becomes self-fulfilling. To counter this negative spiral for rural regions and alter it into a positive spiral of ruralization is one of the most important aims of the Ruralization research project of which this report is a result.

The cultural sector is a very clear example of disbalances in investments and reputations between on the one hand, central and/or urban regions and, on the other hand, peripheral and/or rural regions. The cultural sector is more often related to urban areas, which also receive relatively much more government funding for the cultural sector (Collins & Cunningham, 2017; Kuhmonen et al., Deliverable D4.3, 2021; Cowling & Lee, 2017). This also means that it is harder for peripheral regions to profit from the positive effects of a strong cultural sector (Cowling & Lee, 2017). It would therefore be interesting to investigate what happens when there are relatively much cultural events organized in a rural or peripheral region.

The Oldambt municipality in the Groningen province, in the Northeast of the Netherlands, is a peripheral and relatively rural Dutch area which could be interesting to investigate. The Groningen province is located in the Northeast of the Netherlands. Groningen city is the quickly growing, centrally located capital of the province. The surrounding areas, especially those in the north and the east of the province, are dealing with depopulation and an out-migration of young people. Oldambt municipality is situated in the Northeast of the province. The eastern part of Groningen province has seen quite a long period of relative economic decline, with relatively high rates of unemployment (Thissen et al., 2010, Appendix 3). Groningen province has recently received relatively much attention because of the earthquakes in the province, which are a consequence of the gas extraction in the north of this

province (Spetzler & Dost, 2017). The Oldambt municipality is also to a certain extent affected by these earthquakes, with almost 500 houses in the area in need of reinforcement (Nationaal Coördinator Groningen, 2017; Nationaal Coördinator Groningen, 2021). The earthquakes are not helping the already struggling region to receive positive attention and create a more positive reputation.

In the Netherlands, there is a clear focus on central and urban regions in the national funding for the cultural sector. Within the Netherlands, subsidies for the cultural sector in general have decreased since an austerity policy of Cabinet Rutte-I decreased funding (Kloosterman, 2014). Currently, the overwhelming majority of cultural subsidies from the national government are directed towards the central Randstad area. More than half of the subsidies are directly going to the capital city Amsterdam, in which just 5% of the population lives (Fonds Podiumkunsten, 2021). The relatively small number of national funding that is directed towards Groningen province, is almost entirely going to Groningen city. The unequal distribution of funding for the cultural sector causes opposition from regional politicians and people who work in the cultural sector (Volkskrant, 2020; Van Ruiten, 2020). It also makes it more difficult for rural areas to profit from the opportunities that existing rural cultural festivals create in terms of livability, reputation and economic strength (Fisker, Kwiatkowski & Hjalager, 2021). In fact, the unequal distribution of funding is partly explaining and even increasing the huge imbalances in cultural amenities and the perception on where the cultural sector is strong between central and/or urban regions on the one hand and peripheral and/or rural regions on the other hand.

Nonetheless, the Oldambt municipality seems to host quite some high-level cultural events. During the last decade, a number of high-quality cultural events have developed in or moved towards the Oldambt municipality. Festival Hongerige Wolf, Pura Vida, Waterbei and Grasnepolsky are the most important examples, but there are even more events located in the area. Among the organizers, visitors and artists at the festivals, there is a serious number of rural newcomers, who are new to the Oldambt area. Since this development does not reflect the general tendency in which cultural events in peripheral areas seem difficult to organize, it is interesting to further investigate the roots and impacts of the various cultural events in Oldambt municipality, which at first sight seem to show a promising practice. This

seems especially interesting now that Covid-19 poses a threat to the cultural sector in both urban and rural contexts.

This research report investigates the promising practice of organizing cultural events in a rural and/or peripheral area. It investigates the origins, development and effects of four cultural festivals in the Oldambt municipality: Festival Hongerige Wolf, Waterbei, Pura Vida, and Grasnapsky. Festival Hongerige Wolf is a festival for music, dance, theatre, film, visual arts and literature, organized in the small and very peripheral village of Hongerige Wolf. Waterbei is a street theatre festival in the town of Winschoten. Pura Vida is an annual concert by the North Netherlands Symphony Orchestra [NNO], played on a pontoon in the Oldambt lake in Blauwestad, Oldambt. Grasnapsky is a festival with alternative music, art and expeditions to the surroundings in a unique location. It is organised in former straw cardboard factory 'The Future' [Strokkartonfabriek de Toekomst] (Respondent [R] 1; R2; R3; R4; R6). This research describes how the ideas for these festivals and their organization in Oldambt were developed, the obstacles in realizing the practice, the role of policies in this process, the impact on the local community and the amount to which they were successful in attracting young rural newcomers, the likely future for these events and their transferability to other places. The research is based on an analysis of grey literature, 17 interviews with relevant stakeholders, a small focus group with young people from the area in the age group of 17-23 years old and a final public session in which the results were presented to and discussed with relevant stakeholders and other people who were interested.

This report categorically analyses the important elements in the assessment of the practice of organizing cultural events in the relatively peripheral and rural Oldambt municipality. First, it describes the context in which this practice takes place, by looking into physical, economic, social, cultural, political and governmental aspects. Second, the report describes the origins of the practice by explaining the origins of the idea, the involved practitioners and the motivations behind different events. Third, the role of other relevant actors and stakeholders is discussed and analyzed. Fourth, the report analyses what actually happens at the events by looking into the type of activities, the innovativeness, the transferability and the environmental aspects that result from the practice. Fifth, the synergies and networks which are created as a result of this practice are analyzed, by assessing the relationship of

the practitioners with the local communities, with other practitioners and with other stakeholders. Sixth, the report describes the role of policies and policy makers by analyzing the policies towards and the institutional support for the cultural events. Seventh, the impact and perspectives of the practice are described, by an assessment of the impact of the cultural events on the revitalization and regeneration of the countryside and by analyzing their future perspectives. Finally, this report concludes with the most important lessons which can be drawn from this case study.

### Description of the practice context (physical, economic, social, cultural, political and administrative).

The physical landscape and the existing buildings in the Oldambt municipality are useful assets for the cultural events. The region has a specific agricultural history with huge grain farms. Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it was the granary of the Netherlands. Wealthy farmers prospered enormously during the creation of the Common Agricultural Policy by the European Economic Community. The focus on grain also caused the creation of the local straw cardboard industry. The huge industrial complex 'Strokkartonfabriek de Toekomst' was builded to produce the straw cardboard in Oldambt. Nowadays, the golden era of the wealthy grain farms is long gone, and the straw cardboard industry has demised. This is one of the reasons why the region is dealing with a negative reputation. Nonetheless, this unique regional history is still very visible in the landscape and also something which the area is widely known for (Westerman, 2018). Both Festival Hongerige Wolf and Grasnepolsky embrace this physical asset of the region. The former is organised in a very small village, surrounded by huge grain fields and celebrating the spacious and peripheral surroundings. The latter is organised in the former straw cardboard factory 'Strokkartonfabriek de Toekomst.'

Besides, Pura Vida is organised in the Oldambt lake in Blauwestad, an interesting area in Oldambt. In the late 1980s, a local architect and public servant recognised the influence of technology on agriculture and devised a plan to redevelop an area of relatively unproductive grainfields (Blauwestad, 2020; Meeus et al., 1990). An 800 hectares lake would serve as a water basin, a location for water recreation, partly as a nature reserve and partly as an attractive residential location. The idea was that people could design their dream villas on huge building plots next to the waterfront. This should attract rich pensioners from the

Randstad in the west of the Netherlands to Blauwestad (Westerman, 2018). Despite serious cutbacks on the ambitious plans, Blauwestad is currently having record sales of building plots. Pura Vida celebrates the physical beauty of Blauwestad by organising a classical concert on the lake. Thus, the physical landscape of Oldambt is important in contextualising the cultural events which are investigated in this report.

The economic local context for this practice makes it complex to become successful. The Oldambt municipality has slightly depopulated over the past decade, has a relatively high unemployment and a relatively small percentage of highly educated and young citizens (Thissen et al., 2010; Appendix 3). Meanwhile, the number of tourists in the area has stayed relatively low in the period before Covid-19 (R17). All of this makes it supposedly hard for the cultural events to find financial support in the area, to attract local citizens and to reach a sufficient number of visitors. Since the area is peripherally located, most events need to attract visitors from further away to stay viable, despite the lack of a touristic history for the area.

The social history and the current social context of the Oldambt area are important when investigating the cultural events. Historically, the Oldambt area has seen huge class differences between, on the one hand, the wealthy farmers and a small group of local elites and, on the other hand, a large working class of industrial and especially land labourers. Whereas the Oldambt farmers were the wealthiest farmers in the Netherlands between the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the 1970s, their land labourers were among the poorest. Other than that, there were also huge social divisions between the two groups, who had different associations and were living apart from each other (Keesman, 2013; Westerman, 2018). These complex social histories may be part of the story of the events and explain something about the mentality of the people and politicians in Oldambt. Besides that, the social history of the area still has its effects. The relatively low level of education and the high level of unemployment can be related to the decline of the former economic strongholds of the area and to the backlogs under which the local working class suffered for such a long time, and which may not yet be solved (Westerman, 2018). Hence, it could be difficult for high-quality cultural events, which have a relatively elitist reputation, to attract local visitors and to be able to make a connection with local communities.



The cultural context of the area is also relevant. Besides the emerging and growing attention for the unique economic, social and political history of the Oldambt area, there is also a long history of local attention for culture. In the postwar period, there was an active scene of amateur theatre in which a wide range of people participated (Voerman, 1993). Currently, there are multiple local initiatives to strengthen the cultural field and to improve the cultural education for children from different ages (R9). In the national recovery plan for Groningen, which is focusing on creating new jobs and opportunities in a region where the earthquakes are having severe consequences on the population, there is also quite some attention for these kinds of local initiatives and for culture in general (Nationaal Programma Groningen, 2021). As a result, there seems to be quite some potential for the cultural events in Oldambt.

The political context of Oldambt and Groningen province is also relevant for this research. With its history of social struggle, Oldambt has always been known as and still is a relatively left-wing area. The high number of land labourers who worked under severe circumstances in the grain fields formed a stronghold for the Dutch Communist Party (Keesman, 2013). During the Cold War, some small villages in the Oldambt area became even famous on the international stage as 'Little Moscow' (Time Magazine, 1950). Nowadays, there are still some communist local councillors in Oldambt, which is very rare in the Netherlands. The left-wing Socialist Party is the largest party in the local council (Gemeente Oldambt, 2021). Groningen province is also relatively left-wing and progressive (Provincie Groningen, 2021). This political context may partly explain the enthusiasm among both the provincial and the local government to support the cultural sector.

Finally, there is an administrative issue which requires attention in order to be able to understand the governmental context of this research. Despite the relatively high level of political autonomy for municipalities in the Netherlands, Groningen province has a very active role in the Oldambt area. This is mainly because of the Blauwestad project. As already explained, the initial ambitions in terms of the sale of building plots for houses were not reached in this project. In the early 2010s, the regional and local governments had no other option but to take responsibility for the future of Blauwestad and to reduce the damage as much as possible. Between 2010 and 2013, some changes were made to the initial plan

(Grol, 2020; Provincie Groningen, 2013). These would later help to make the project more successful.

The most important change was a renewed focus on the demands of the population in the own region. The mirage that many rich Randstad pensioners would come to Blauwestad was abandoned. Moreover, some ambitions were heavily reduced. First, the annual number of building plots which had to be sold became much lower. This gave the project the opportunity to develop more gradually. Second, the prices for building plots were reduced and permits were also given for relatively cheaper housing. This made Blauwestad available for much more people, especially from the own region (Van den Berg, 2015).

Other functions of Blauwestad were also massively improved. Local citizens of the Blauwestad were unsatisfied about the maintenance of the area. Local citizens of the surrounding towns and villages were complaining about the lack of connections with the people in the Blauwestad area. Both were complaining about the lack of useful infrastructure (Provincie Groningen, 2017). The provincial and local governments addressed most of these complaints. First, the maintenance in the Blauwestad area was heavily improved, in order to keep the area attractive for potential new buyers (Provincie Groningen, 2017). Second, local infrastructure was heavily improved. The largest bicycle bridge of Europe, between the nearby town of Winschoten and Blauwestad is the most recent example of this. This bridge even helped the area to be discussed in the international press once more, but now in a positive way (Boffey, 2020). Third, and most important for this research, Pura Vida, a cultural festival was launched and further professionalised in Blauwestad. Since the Groningen province is the most important partner in the Blauwestad project and has huge financial investments in and dependencies on the success of the project, it also has an important role in the Oldambt municipality as such. Groningen province is also the main organiser of Pura Vida.

## Origin of the practice

### Origins of the idea

The investigation into the practice of organizing cultural events in the Oldambt area focuses on four festivals: Festival Hongerige Wolf in Hongerige Wolf; Waterbei Street theatre festival in Winschoten; Pura Vida in Blauwestad; and Grasnepolsky in Scheemda. Although all of these events are high-quality cultural events which are organised in the Oldambt area and have an element of rural newcomers, there are also some differences between them.

Festival Hongerige Wolf started in 2011 when Ruth Weites, who was originally raised in Hongerige Wolf but lived in Amsterdam, wanted to celebrate her birthday in a spectacular manner. She had good memories of her birthdays in her teenager years, when she used to invite many people to the spacious area in Hongerige Wolf and celebrate in an old barn. Now that she had lived in the Randstad area for ten years, she wanted her new friends, who were wondering what the life in Hongerige Wolf was like, and the villagers to meet during an event of celebration (R1). Since her parents could not host too many people, she came up with the idea to organize it more professionally. This led to the organization of the first Festival Hongerige Wolf edition in 2011. It was a festival with music, dance, theatre, film, visual arts and literature. Since many people would come to a normally quiet village, it was immediately important for the organization to create a strong connection with the local community. From the first year onwards, Festival Hongerige Wolf developed as a festival that is organized within and around the village. Whereas some local villagers are not involved with the festivities, others work as volunteer or make their garden available as a place for catering services. Consequently, Festival Hongerige Wolf became a festival where highly educated, sometimes a bit alternative people from the central Randstad area of the Netherlands meet the local communities of Hongerige Wolf, Ganzedijk and other Oldambt villages and towns in a three-day festival. Currently, Ruth Weites is no longer the main organizer of the event and has an advisory role. Instead, a few professionally involved organizers and a large group of volunteers organizes the festival (R1, R2, R10).

Waterbei festival was first organized in 2010. In that period, Cultuurhuis de Klinker, the local theatre of Winschoten, was temporarily closed for reconstruction. Some local citizens felt sorry that this led to a diminished cultural offer in the area and came up with the plan to

organize a street theatre festival. Some of these initiators were already involved with the organization of Adrillen, an annual fair in the city center of Winschoten (R6). Many shop and bar owners in the Winschoten city center, including their association, were supportive of the plan, as the organization of this festival would attract more and new people to the city center and, hence, strengthen their business opportunities (R6, R14). The Waterbei indeed attracted many visitors to the center of Winschoten and quickly grew to a larger festival that took multiple days. However, after five years, disagreements within the organization, with local entrepreneurs and with the municipality caused the discontinuation of the festival for a few years. After these troubles were solved and a less risky, less expensive model, which would focus more on involving volunteers, was adopted, initial organizers became involved again and continued organizing the festival in 2018 and 2019. Since Waterbei is organized on the streets, it is an entry-free festival (R3, R6, R7, R8, R9, R14).

Pura Vida was first organized in 2007. During this period, the first rural newcomers were settling in the Blauwestad area. Since this was for a large part still under construction, local citizens and the project partners of Blauwestad wanted to come up with an event that would make newcomers feel welcome, form a sort of compensation for the nuisance they were experiencing during the construction work and promote the Blauwestad area to local citizens and potentially interested newcomers. The idea was that the Northern Netherlands Orchestra would play either classical or popular music on a pontoon in the Oldambt lake, which forms the basis of the Blauwestad area. From the beginning onwards, there was quite some support by local co-organizers, volunteers and entrepreneurs (R3, R8, R9, R10, R11, R12, R13, R15). Over the years, Pura Vida became increasingly popular. While the Blauwestad project was suffering under a damaged reputation after the sale of building plots was not as successful as initially planned, Pura Vida was attracting many visitors from the area and beyond. After the public-private partnership was dissolved and the Groningen province had an even more central role in the Blauwestad Project, it decided that Blauwestad needed the success of Pura Vida to continue. Hence, it decided to further professionalize the event and to guarantee funding for a longer period. The idea was that Blauwestad, with already a damaged reputation, would see a further setback if problems would arise around the Pura Vida festival. Ever since, the Groningen province has been responsible for Pura Vida and is also the main funder. To attract visitors and show their

commitment to the area, the province has so far kept the event entry-free (R3, R8, R9, R10, R11, R12, R13, R15).

Grasnapolsky was first organized in 2010 by a group of friends from Utrecht who wanted to organize a music festival in the winter that would celebrate the nature and surroundings of a unique location. The first edition was organized in Bunnik, close to Utrecht, in the central Randstad area of the Netherlands. Later on, the festival moved to Radio Kootwijk, a location which is surrounded by the Veluwe, one of the largest nature conservancy areas in the Netherlands. This location is situated in the east of the Netherlands. Around 2017, the festival location became too small, and the organization felt that the public was saturated with the stories of Radio Kootwijk. Hence, it looked for a new location, a process in which their regular public could do suggestions (R4). In this period, the cardboard factory De Toekomst had been bought by an entrepreneur from the Oldambt area who wanted to re-develop it into a location for events, small shops and catering services. An entrepreneur from Groningen city with much experience in the catering sector would lead the new concepts in De Toekomst (R5). A number of regular visitors of Grasnapolsky suggested De Toekomst as suitable festival location. Coincidentally, the parents of the director of the festival live in Oldambt. Therefore, she knew the location and was quite enthusiastic about moving Grasnapolsky towards De Toekomst. In 2019, Grasnapolsky was first organized in Scheemda. It is a festival for alternative music, art and expeditions to the surroundings of this unique and historical location. So far, De Toekomst has hosted Grasnapolsky twice (R4, R5).

### Promoters, motivations/targets

Most of the initiators and promoters of these practices have comparable motivations. For the organizers of Festival Hongerige Wolf, it is most important that the festival brings together people who are normally unlikely to meet each other. This is done by bringing a high-quality cultural event that attracts a relatively alternative scene from urban and central areas in the Netherlands to the rural community of Hongerige Wolf. This clash of cultures is continuously experienced by initiators, organizers, local citizens and visitors from both an urban and a rural background (R1, R2, R10, Focusgroup respondent [F]1).

For the organizers and entrepreneurial supporters of Waterbei, it is important to add an attractive cultural event to the town center of Winschoten. By doing so, local citizens get to see high quality street theatre acts in their own town, without having to go somewhere else. Local entrepreneurs and bar owners can profit from the event by attracting new and more customers. Moreover, the vibrant cultural festival could improve the reputation of Winschoten among potential visitors (R6, R8, R14, R15, F1, F2).

The promoters of Pura Vida have two goals behind the event. First, it should provide the inhabitants Blauwestad area, which had a shaky first decade in terms of reputation and nuisance, with a high-quality event. Second, it should bring the rural newcomers of Blauwestad together with local communities. Since Pura Vida attracts visitors from throughout the region and beyond, it also makes people meet each other. Third, Pura Vida should improve the reputation of Blauwestad. It is organised in the beautiful scenery of the Oldambt lake, at 'De Wilgenborg', a terrain that may also be used for other large events. In fact, Pura Vida promotes Blauwestad as a place to recreate, reside, enjoy and organize events in (R3, R9, R11, R12, R13).

The promoters of Grasnapsky want to scale up and renew their longer existing festival in this new location, by making connection with local stories, people and opportunities. The festival aims to make the social, economic, cultural and political history of the Oldambt an active part of its festival. The festival location, De Toekomst, is a landmark building which exemplifies the history of the area. Other than renewing and growing themselves, Grasnapsky wants to be actively involved with the local community, as it claims to have done before in Radio Katwijk as well. This ambition coincides with the ambitions of the owner and main entrepreneur of De Toekomst, to connect with the local community as good as possible (R4, R5, R7, R8, R12).

In conclusion, all of the investigated events see it as an essential aim to connect with the local communities and to strengthen the reputation of the area. This not only improves the opportunities for the festivals itself, but also makes them feel more welcome in the area and reach their goal of contributing to broader societal goals.

## Actors involved

### Description of actors involved

There is a wide number of actors involved in the practice of organizing cultural events in the Oldambt municipality. First, there are the initiators and organizers. These vary between local citizens, rural newcomers, urban people with a rural background to civil servants with the task to co-organize an event (R1, R2, R3, R4, R6, R11, R15). Second, there are the artists on the festivals and the visitors to the events. The former group are generally new to the area and not always used to play in the unique type of locations the Oldambt cultural events offer, such as a pontoon in Blauwestad, an old straw cardboard factory in Scheemda or a barn in Hongerige Wolf. The latter group could either be rural newcomers or local citizens. Third, there are the local citizens who on the one hand can profit from the organization of high-quality cultural events in their area, but who may also be hampered by nuisance and activities they did not ask for. Especially a festival such as Hongerige Wolf, which is organized within a village which is normally very quiet, could spark problems with the local community (R1, R2, R9, R10, R16). Fourth, there are the local entrepreneurs, who may profit from the festivals which are organized in their areas. These entrepreneurs may for that reason also be financially supportive of the events, such as for Waterbei and Pura Vida, which both do not charge visitors an entry-fee (R5, R9, R14). Fifth, there are the various governmental actors, mainly consisting of Groningen province, Oldambt municipality, Projectbureau Blauwestad, Leader Oost-Groningen and Marketing Oldambt. All these actors have a role in either promoting, facilitating, funding or supporting the events in some way (R3, R7, R8, R10, R11, R12, R13, R15, R17).

## Style of activities promoted

### Resources activated/adaptability

As already discussed in the physical context of the local area, most events use the available physical and cultural resources as a basis for their festivals. Both Festival Hongerige Wolf and Pura Vida are held at these locations because of the physical and cultural resources they offer. Hongerige wolf, which translates as ‘hungry wolf’, is already appealing because of its name. The subtitle of the festival is ‘Earthy. Wide. [Aards. Weids.]’ (R1, R2). This reveals the importance of the unique physical surroundings of Hongerige Wolf as a central element of the festival. This is further used by creating festival spots which are further away from the village. Visitors could, for example, walk for several kilometers over de ‘Mijmerdijk [Muse dike]’, where artists also have expositions and where people can reflect upon the festival and life while enjoying the spacious surroundings (R2).

Pura Vida is concentrated on the beautiful scenery of the Blauwestad. It is, off course, also quite uncommon for orchestras to play on a pontoon in the water. By creating this setting, Pura Vida seems to resemble the Prinsengrachtconcert, an annual concert which is organized on a canal in Amsterdam. According to multiple respondents, Pura Vida could be considered the rural and Oldambt version of this concert (R3, R10, R14, R15).

Finally, Grasnapsky is using the physical building of De Toekomst to organize its concert, while supporting the story it wants to disseminate about the unique history of the Oldambt area. Moreover, this festival wants to use the local knowledge, existing offer and close by nature areas such as Blauwestad to strengthen its quality. Hence, Grasnapsky uses the existing physical, cultural and human resources to set the story of its own event (R4, R5, R7, R8).

### Activities promoted

There are multiple contributions that the cultural events in this report are making to the area, although it is hard to measure these. First, the festivals are strengthening the cultural sector of the area. This is something good in and of itself, as local citizens can profit from the livability that arises out of this. During the events, local citizens are confronted with ideas,



people and form of arts that they would probably not come across without the existing of these festivals. Perhaps even more importantly, the organizers of festivals, artists and visitors in the area find a new place where they can feel welcome, which offers inspiration and possibly could be a location for further cultural endeavors. Hence, the festivals create a clash of cultures out of which new ideas can arise, while strengthening the cultural offer in a peripheral area and improving the livability of it (R1, R2, R3, R4, R5, R6, R7, R8, R9, R10, R11, R12, R13, R14, R15, R16, R17, F1, F2). This is also a function that rural festivals seem to have in other contexts (Hjalager & Kwiatkowski, 2018; Kwiatkowski et al., 2020; Fisker et al., 2021; Bell & Jayne, 2010; Duxburry & Campbell, 2011).

Second, the festivals are attracting more and new visitors to the Oldambt area. Without the existence of cultural festivals, most visitors of events such as Festival Hongerige Wolf and Grasnepolsky would for a large part never come to the Oldambt area. Consequently, they would not know how beautiful and unique it is. This diverse offer of cultural events allows people to get to know an area which seems quite attractive for tourists, although not many people know about that (R1, R2, R4, R5, R8, R9, R12, R17). This also fits with the idea on tourism as something that could help Dutch regions to become stronger, as long as it is not becoming an uncontrollable form of mass tourism (Raad voor de Leefomgeving en Infrastructuur, 2019). Although the events are attracting more tourists, it is not easy to measure the exact effects on the local economy. The budgets of the festivals themselves are quite limited, so potential extra jobs and income for local people should rather come through the extra money that visitors spend during the festival. However, it could very well be the case that the events are having a very positive long-term contribution towards these local people (R17).

Third, the cultural events in Oldambt contribute to the reputation of this area. Although it has had a less positive reputation according to quite some interviewees over the last decade, most of them agree that the reputation is currently quickly improving and that the practice of organizing such diverse high-quality cultural events is contribution to that. The festivals are helping in multiple ways. Local citizens may become prouder of their area and become more active ambassadors for their area. When people in other parts of the country learn about the diverse offer of cultural festivals, they may be positively surprised and alter their view of the region. All of this may attract more rural newcomers, businesses and, hence,

jobs, to the area. Even if this effect would be quite limited, it would still be very valuable for a region which has encountered high rates of unemployment and periods of depopulation over the past decades (R3, R5, R7, R8, R9, R10, R11, R12, R13, R14, R16, R17).

Nonetheless, there are also some problems for the practice of organizing cultural events in the Oldambt area. First, many visitors have to come from other areas to make the festivals financially stable. For a festival as Grasnepolsky, which is now located quite far away from where most of its general public of highly educated people in their 30s and 40s lives, the move towards Scheemda seems very risky. Festival Hongerige Wolf is quite dependent on the weather and on continuous strong relations with the local community in whose direct surroundings the festival is organized. Festival Waterbei and Pura Vida are, as open and freely accessible events, depending on local financial support anyway. Now that Covid-19 and its consequences has caused cancellations of some of the events, they may need quite some support to sustain over the following years. If relevant actors think that these festivals promoted activities and the area in a right way, they ought to consider if they want to support the festivals over the upcoming years, which are probably going to be difficult (R2, R4, R5, R6, R7, R9, R10, R11, R12).

### Innovation introduced/innovation transferability

The innovation aspects of this practice are fairly limited. There are more festivals which have an approach of focusing on local stories and people. There are also more festivals which use existing physical and/or cultural infrastructures. And many festivals aim to strengthen a region. However, the uniqueness here is in the combination of all of these aims and activities in most events which have been investigated. Furthermore, the use of certain locations could inspire other organizers to move towards the Oldambt area as well, which would further strengthen the cultural offer in the area. For example, Grasnepolsky is one of the flagship events of De Toekomst, and proves that it is possible to organize a festival in that location. Pura Vida is showing the strength of De Wilgenborg as potential location for small festivals and other activities outside in the Blauwestad area (R3, R4, R5, R7, R9, R11, R13, R15).

## Environmental issues

This aspect is relatively unimportant in this investigation. Most festivals do think about organizing themselves in a sustainable way and pay quite some attention to having a positive impact on the area in terms of sustainability. This is also complex, as it costs quite some money and the very nature of a festival is not coinciding with ideas on environmental care (R2, R4, R10, R15). In general, the effects of this practice on environmental issues are quite small.

## Synergies and networking

### Relationships with the local community

The relationships of the investigated festivals with the local community differs as a result of their different backgrounds, amount of local impact and visitor groups. Festival Hongerige Wolf is organized by a semi-professional organization which mostly exists of volunteers and has a few people who are being paid. Since the festival is organized in and around the settlement of Hongerige Wolf, it is highly dependent on a strong cooperation with the local community (R1, R2, R10). If they would oppose the organization of the festival, it would become impossible to organize it. Therefore, the organizers of Festival Hongerige Wolf spend much time and attention to maintaining a good relationship with the local community. For example, they organize discussion evenings where all local citizens are invited. If people have problems with elements of the festival, the organization tries to solve this issue as soon as possible. Nonetheless, there are always some people who do not agree at all. This is also understandable. People who live in Hongerige Wolf deliberately chose to live in a location which is quiet and peripheral. Once a busy event is being organized in such a location, it is understandable that some local citizens completely oppose this disturbance. However, so far, most inhabitants like the temporary event and also are proud that it is organized. When other visitors arrive to their village and are so interested, it also leads to reevaluation of elements of the village that are normally taken for granted (R1, R2, R7, R10). Tickets for Festival Hongerige Wolf are relatively expensive and the majority of the visitors of the festival are people from outside of Oldambt who are coming to enjoy the quiet and unique festival location and the high-quality offer of relatively unknown cultural acts. Meanwhile, there are also quite some local people who are interested in these uncommon artists and also are interested in the other visitors. After all, the meet-up of local Oldambt citizens and visitors from the Randstad area is one of the aims of the festival organizations. It also seems to succeed in this aim (R1, R2, R7, R8, R10, F1, F2).

The other festivals are in a slightly less complex situation, as they are not organized in the middle of a normally quiet village. Waterbei is organized by a group of local volunteers. It is organized within the town center of Winschoten, which is busier during the festival than in other situations but is also used to a higher number of visitors. Furthermore, the festival is

entry-free and is visited by a large group of local citizens, but also by people from elsewhere who are interested in this high-quality offer of street theatre (R6, R7, R8, R14, F1, F2). Pura Vida is mostly organized by the Groningen province, in a special location within the Blauwestad area. There have in recent editions hardly been complaints about the organization of the festival. Local inhabitants are actually quite happy with this event, which celebrates their area. Meanwhile, it attracts both local citizens and people from further away, who are interested in this high-quality and entry-free performance of the Northern Netherlands Orchestra in the beautiful scenery of the Blauwestad area and Oldambt lake. However, young people are slightly less interested in this event than adults and elderly people (R3, R7, R8, R9, R11, R12, R13, R14, R15, R17, F1, F2). Grasnapsky is a relatively new festival in the area of Scheemda. It is organized by a professional organization of rural newcomers from outside of the Oldambt. However, the festival organization tries to involve local citizens, entrepreneurs and organizations as much as possible. They have hardly encountered opposition from local citizens, who seem quite happy that something happens in De Toekomst and that so many people from elsewhere want to come to and celebrate in their unique location and area. Grasnapsky is relatively new to the area and not known so well by local citizens yet. Moreover, its visitors are mostly coming from elsewhere and are new to the area (R4, R5, R7, R8, R12, R13, R14, R16, R17, F1, F2).

### Synergies enabled

So far, the enabled synergies between the different festivals which have been investigated are relatively sparse. Festival Hongerige Wolf and Grasnapsky are to a certain extent having the same approach and target group, although enormous differences exist. They are helping each other out whenever it helps them both and are in any event not making things more difficult for each other, since they are both happy that the other event is organized quite close to their own festival location, at another moment in the year. Meanwhile, the organizers of all events are happy to share knowledge, contacts and experiences with each other. Nevertheless, this knowledge sharing is quite limited. All organizers want to do things in their own way and use their specific strengths. Hence, cooperation with other organizers in the area only happens when it helps them both (R1, R2, R3, R4, R6, R7, R10, R11).

## Networking established

An advantage of having so many high-quality cultural events organized in the area could be that it strengthens the local area by organizing networks of people within the local cultural sector. This opportunity is embraced through the Cultuurplatform Oldambt. This is a platform in which all organizations and people in the Oldambt cultural sector can come together and cooperate. The platform aims to share knowledge between people within the cultural sector and to improve the level on which the whole cultural field within the area could and does operate. For example, there are workshops on how to organize events or on how to apply for a subsidy on different levels. Besides that, there are informal events in which people can meet each other and create new ideas. Members of the Cultuurplatform vary from professional festivals to local choirs to individual citizens who operate within the sector. The Oldambt municipality is actively supporting the Cultuurplatform and has a leading role in it. Although some people and organizations are actively embracing the Cultuurplatform and using it to improve their own events and ideas, it is not always going smoothly. The budgets are quite limited, and some people and events are not actively taking part. Despite some problems in reaching the full potential of creating stronger networks within the Oldambt cultural sector, the Cultuurplatform seems to help to establish networks for those people who are looking for it. Since some festivals investigated for this research are also taking part of the Cultuurplatform, this seems a successful instrument in sharing knowledge between different types of actors within the local cultural sector (R2, R4, R7, R8, R9, R10).

## Policies and institutional supports

### Policies activated, constraints, change/ need of new policies

Although there seems to be strong political support for this practice, it does not seem to be a result of political initiative. Both Groningen province and Oldambt municipality are very supportive of the development of cultural events in the Oldambt area. From the beginning onwards, both institutions seem to do everything they can to support the festivals financially, organizationally and politically. As a result, the festivals feel very welcome in the Oldambt municipality and Groningen province (R1, R2, R4, R6).

The cultural policies in both important institutions are supportive in multiple ways. First, the festivals make sure to make the organizers of the events feel welcome and supported. When problems arise, both governmental levels are willing to help festival. During the Covid-19 period, in which it is hard for festivals to make plans, both Groningen province and Oldambt municipality had a pro-active approach in contacting festivals to see how things would evolve. Other than that, the Oldambt municipality is very helpful when problems arise. For example, during one edition of Festival Hongerige Wolf, in which bad weather conditions threatened the organization of the festival, the municipality helped by providing shelter for festival guests (R2, R7, R8, R10). By doing so, they make the organizers of the festival feel very welcome. The municipality was also very clear when there were problems in the organization of Waterbei. It warned the former board of the festival that their plans were too ambitious and eventually decided to no longer back the festival. According to the current board, this approach by the local government helped the festival in the end, as it returned to its initial, more modest ambitions (R6, R7, R8, R14).

Both Groningen province and Oldambt municipality are also investing in the cultural sector beyond the investigated festivals. There are multiple programs which are focused on cultural education for the youth in Oldambt. These initiatives can come from local citizens, can be part of plans that are developed to compensate the region for the damage as a result of the earthquakes, or it can be initiatives from the local or provincial government. Programs like Cultuurlab, the vast support for cultural theatre De Klinker in Winschoten and the broad provincial support for culture in general show that both levels of government attach great

value to the potential impact of culture on the lives of citizens in Oldambt (R3, R7, R8, R9, R10, R11, R12, R13, R17).

Nonetheless, there is also some critique on the limits of the cultural support from both Groningen province and Oldambt municipality. According to some respondents, they can better support cultural initiatives and do more spectacular things. For example, the play on 'Het Pauperparadijs', which was organised in Veenhuizen in the bordering Drenthe province, is something that is unlikely to be supported or initiated in Groningen province. The argument is here that the Groningen province, although supportive of the cultural sector, is not focused on spectacular events which could have an enormous impact on a certain area. Besides that, respondents argue that there are differences between areas in Groningen on how much supportive Groningen province is. According to some respondents, Groningen city is still receiving too much support and a peripheral and rural area such as the Oldambt municipality is still quite neglected by the Groningen province in terms of cultural support. Furthermore, there is also some critique on the Oldambt municipality. Despite its support for De Klinker and its budget for cultural events, some respondents complain that the support is still quite limited. There is a lack of funding to have enough hours for civil servants to work on culture and the budgets are still relatively small. They have also been further reduced in the past decade. However, respondents admit that these cutbacks can also be related to the harsh financial situation that the Oldambt municipality finds itself in, which is widely related to austerity programs by the national government (R2, R3, R4, R6, R7, R8, R9, R10, R11, R12, R16). This situation is having a huge impact on the general abilities of Dutch municipalities to support their political ambitions financially and to invest in public services (Hoekman et al., 2018; Bekkers, 2021).

In the end, it seems to be people and not policies that helped to bring these practices to Oldambt. The active political support did help all festival organizers to feel welcome and strengthen their opportunities. Nonetheless, this support was never the reason to settle the festival in Oldambt in the first place. Festival Hongerige Wolf was organized in Hongerige Wolf because this was the place where initiator Ruth Weites had her roots. Waterbei was organized to maintain enough cultural events during the closure of De Klinker. It would in any event have been organised in Winschoten, as it was initiated by local people. Grasnepolsky mainly moved to De Toekomst because it was such an interesting, suitable and unique



location. Pura Vida is organised by the Groningen province itself in order to compensate local people for nuisances during the construction of the Blauwestad area and to promote the latter as a residential and recreational location. All of these festivals would probably have been developed in or moved to Oldambt in any event, even if the cultural support would have been less encouraging. However, if either Groningen province or Oldambt municipality would be less supportive, these events were much less likely to be successful and to sustain. Despite the fact that the policies in support of cultural events were not the reason that festivals settled in Oldambt, they are reason that they developed further and are likely to stay in the region (R1, R2, R3, R4, R5, R6, R7, R8, R10, R11, R12, R13, R15, R17).

### Institutional support

In this section, it is explained how each of the investigated event profited from institutional support. For Festival Hongerige Wolf, the Oldambt municipality and Groningen province were very happy with this new festival in a peripheral and often forgotten area, which could use a new event to improve its image. Groningen province were supportive in terms of subsidies and promotion. Oldambt municipality was supportive in providing the festival with the required permits and financial support. The municipal support is especially helpful in the complex local context in which the festival has to be organized. Moreover, the LEADER program Oost-Groningen supported the festival financially. The regional train company, Arriva, has even named a train after Festival Hongerige Wolf and designed it with pictures and stories from the event. Finally, Marketing Oldambt, which promotes the area among tourists for the municipality, makes the festival part of its general promotion. All of this support helps the festival to become more successful and to sustain (R1, R2, R3, R7, R8, R10, R17).

The other festivals have also been supported in multiple ways. Waterbei has received financial support from LEADER Oost-Groningen and Oldambt municipality and promotional support from Marketing Oldambt in the past (R3, R6, R7, R8, R10, R17). Pura Vida is organized by the Groningen province and has thus received huge financial support from this organization. Moreover, the Oldambt municipality has been helpful in providing the right permits and by making it part of the promotion on Marketing Oldambt (R3, R7, R8, R10, R11). Grasnepolsky has received quite some support as well. The Groningen province, the Ol-

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Oldambt municipality and LEADER Oost-Groningen have provided the festival with subsidies and Marketing Oldambt is also helping it by using it in the promotion of the area (R4, R5, R7, R8, R10, R11, R12, R13, R17).

## Impact and perspectives

### Impacts of the practice on rural revitalization

The practice of organizing cultural events in a rural and/or peripheral area seems to have a positive impact on the revitalization of that area. Festival Hongerige Wolf, Waterbei, Pura Vida and Grasnapsky are all helping to bring new enthusiastic ideas and people to the Oldambt area. The idea that now these interesting, high-quality cultural events are being organized, provides the people in the area with a new and positive impetus. In the past, the attention for the Oldambt area was generally focused on negative stories such as on the lack of sales in Blauwestad area, the high rates of unemployment or the amount of outmigration of young, talented people. However, these festivals shed different and more positive lights on the area. Apparently, interesting events are being organized. This could help to set a different image for the area, which is more positive. People may wonder what is going on in the area and visit it as tourist or they may consider it as a suitable place to settle a business or themselves as resident. Although the short-term impact on the revitalization is hard to measure, the organization of so many high-quality cultural events is part of a broader movement that the livability and prospects for the Oldambt area are improving. This may lead to more visitors, inhabitants, businesses and jobs in the long-term future (R1, R2, R3, R4, R5, R6, R7, R8, R9, R10, R11, R12, R13, R14, R15, R16, R17, F1, F2).

### Impact on rural regeneration

It is not likely that the investigated practice has a direct effect on rural regeneration, but it may have an indirect effect. The investigated events are from a high-quality cultural level. They are, however, not directly focused on young people. The public at Hongerige Wolf mainly consists of people in their 30s, 40s and 50s, sometimes with children (R1, R2, R10). The public at Waterbei mainly consists of young families, with sometimes younger people who are visiting the spectacular street theatre show on Friday night (R6, F1, F2). The public at Pura Vida mainly consists of adult and elderly people who are interested in an event in which a classical orchestra plays popular music. There are younger visitors, but they are a minority (R3, R11, R15). Grasnapsky is specifically targeting highly educated people in their

30s and 40s, who like the alternative music program and special events in relation with the history of the place that Grasnapsky is offering (R4). Consequently, none of the investigated festivals is specifically focusing on young participants in the age group of 15 to 30 years old. That does not mean that this group is not coming to the events. In fact, most of the events are known and regularly visited by young people (R7, F1, F2). It is, however, not likely that the events have that much impact that they themselves will convince young people to stay in the region. But, since the festivals are quite interesting for people in the age group of 30s and 40s years old, they may indirectly strengthen rural regeneration. If people in these age groups are that interested that they become more likely to settle or stay in the Oldambt area, they are also likely to bring more young children with them. Consequently, the Oldambt area would see an increase of children and, later on, young people. However, it is not yet proven that such a development is going on (R7, R8, Appendix 3).

The investigated festivals seem to suggest a 'misfit' between the cultural offer in the area and the wishes of young people, but they do not tell the complete story of the area. Beyond the four events that have been investigated, there are many more festivals being organized, such as De Nacht van Winschoten, Adrillen, Gezellig and Bevrijdingsfestival. Many young people are also visiting these other festivals. These may have a less pretentious cultural offer, but they are very popular among the local youth. Therefore, there seems to be quite a lot going on in terms of cultural offer for young people. Those that do not visit Festival Hongerige Wolf, Waterbei, Pura Vida and/or Grasnapsky, may do so when they become older or when they get to know these festivals better (R7, R8, R9, R12, R13, F1, F2).

## Future perspectives

The future is always insecure, but it is most insecure for cultural festivals in the middle of the Covid-19 pandemic. Since this period has a very serious impact on the organizers of festivals who depend on huge groups of visitors, it is quite hard to portray future perspectives. Therefore, the following results should be understood with this in mind. The future for cultural events in the Oldambt area is just very hard to predict. However, there is a story to tell already on how practitioners react to the pandemic and plan their own future.

The Covid-19 pandemic poses risks to all of the investigated festivals. All of the festivals have had to be cancelled at least once and most of them twice. In the meantime, plans have been changed, been disapproved, been altered again and often been cancelled altogether. For the future, the cultural events in the Oldambt area face a number of risks. First, there are financial concerns. Since festivals had tough years, it is possible that they will not be able to proceed further in the following years. Especially if the support for cultural events and institutions would diminish or if another year with organization problems would strike, it becomes likely that some festivals have to quit organizing (R2, R3, R4, R6, R7). Second, there are weather risks. Some festivals, such as Hongerige Wolf, Waterbei and Pura Vida, depend on good weather. If the weather is bad, visitors will not come. Although some of these festivals do not ask entry fees, it is still problematic if not many people come. This can still lead to larger exploitation losses and decrease motivation among the important volunteers (R2, R3, R6, R7). Third, there is the risk of internal disagreement in the organization. Waterbei already has been discontinued for some years as a result of internal disagreements. This could happen again, making the festival organization less effective, necessary institutions such as the municipality less enthusiastic and important sponsors such as local entrepreneurs less likely to back the festival financially (R6, R7, R8, R9, R14, R16, R17). Fourth, there is the risk of conflicts with local communities. For example, if the inhabitants of Hongerige Wolf start to oppose the festival which is organized in their own village, the organization and continuation of the festival comes under direct threat. For that reason, the communication with local communities is very important, especially for those festivals with a huge impact on people who live close to the festival location (R1, R2, R3, R4, R6, R7, R8, R10).

Most festivals want to maintain their approach from before Covid-19, with Pura Vida as the most notable exception. For Festival Hongerige Wolf, Waterbei and Grasnapsky, Covid-19 has been inconvenient, but not a reason to change their general approach to the festival in the future (R2, R4, R6). However, Pura Vida is planning to alter the way how the festival is organized. It is costing the Groningen province 100,000 euros to organize a one-day event in Blauwestad area. Locally, there are already some questions being asked on whether this is a good way to spend public money. Meanwhile, De Wildenberg in Blauwestad has been

further developed as a location to organize festivals. As a result of all of this, the organizers of Pura Vida are considering changing the program and concept of the festival. They may spread Pura Vida over multiple moments in the summer and depend less on one large concert. The organization also hopes to involve more local acts at De Wilgenborg. As a result, they hope to create multiple events during the summer period, rather than one huge one-day Pura Vida event in August (R3, R7, R8, R9, R11, R12, R13, R15).

Since these festivals have had and probably will have some tough years but do have a positive impact on the area in general, it seems wise for governmental institutions in the area to maintain their financial and organizational support for the festivals. So far, the festivals did help to improve the image of Oldambt, they brought together all sorts of people and they provided Oldambt area with an impressive offer of cultural events for a rural and/or peripheral region. This was possible for multiple reasons. Firstly, because of the unique history and landscape of the area that seems very suitable for the organization of the events. Secondly, because of the hard work of so many initiators, practitioners, supporters and volunteers, whether from the area or as rural newcomers. But thirdly, because of the strong support of multiple institutions. The role of the Groningen province, Oldambt municipality and LEADER Oost-Groningen in organizing the events, helping them to find the right funding and supporting them financially as well, has made much more possible in the area. If these governmental institutions want to maintain this unique cultural offer, it seems important that they also maintain their high level of support in the post-covid period.

## Conclusion

This report concludes that the practice of organizing cultural events in a rural and/or peripheral region has a positive impact on that region. Although the exact impact is hard to measure, it is clear that Festival Hongerige Wolf, Waterbei, Pura Vida and Grasnepolsky all help to strengthen the image of the Oldambt area and to improve the cultural offer in the area and the livability of the area. These improvements may in the long-term attract more visitors, more residents, more businesses and more jobs to the area. Despite the difficulties in measuring the extent to which this will happen and the precise role that these festivals have in such a process, it is clear that there are some positive effects for the area. Rural newcomers are enthusiastic about the welcome they have had in Oldambt and about the opportunities that the area offers, whereas local politicians, entrepreneurs and young inhabitants are generally proud of the rich cultural offer of their peripheral area.

It is, however, not easy to transfer this practice to other regions. Notwithstanding to important organizational, political and financial support from the local and regional government, it was in the end people and not policies that brought these events in or towards the Oldambt area. Almost all respondents acknowledge that it is very difficult to organize this as another government in another area, without having the specific circumstances of Oldambt and/or without existing enthusiasm of local organizers and rural newcomers to organize cultural events in an area. Government in other areas could learn something from the enthusiastic welcome which organizers feel in the area, from the way the LEADER Oost-Groningen is organizing financial support for the festivals and from the way how local entrepreneurs are involved. However, areas cannot just copy this practice. Local and regional governments depend on enthusiast people who want to organize events and come up with ideas that fit the specific histories and stories of the area, before they can make a difference with an active support for the events.

Within the Oldambt area, there could be some small improvements made in terms of promotion and cooperation. In terms of promotion, many people in the Oldambt area do not seem to be aware of the uniqueness of this practice. There are more regions with many cultural events, but they are hardly as rural and peripheral as the Oldambt area. There are more rural and/or peripheral regions with some high-quality cultural events, but hardly with

as many as in the Oldambt area. Nonetheless, quite some respondents were not aware of how unique this is. Hence, it could help the region if it even more effectively promotes their unique cultural festival and makes it even more part of the story that the Oldambt area is telling. In terms of cooperation, many things seem to be organized quite loosely. There are interesting and important forms of cooperation, such as the Cultuurplatform Oldambt. However, these are limited in their effect. A more structured form of cooperation could make sure that people get to know each other better, can learn easier from each other and are better able to take advantage when new interesting ideas arise. There are many things going on in terms of culture in Oldambt in the following years, such as the Cultuurlab education programme and the further development of Strokartonfabriek de Toekomst as location for festivals, shopping and unique catering concepts. If the existing cultural field and potential further newcomers work together more structurally, the Oldambt area is most likely to take advantage of the opportunities that existing and new people in the cultural field bring.

Further research could focus on three things. First, it would be interesting how this practice evolves in the following decade. As already mentioned, the Covid-19 pandemic and its effects make it hard to evaluate the practice as such. Although there are many promising things developing in the area, it is yet unknown how things will develop after everything re-opens. Further research could investigate what the effects of the Covid-19 have been cultural events in rural areas. Second, it would be interesting to investigate how cultural events are developing in other rural and/or peripheral regions. The Oldambt area seems to be successful but, as already mentioned, this success hugely relies on individual choices of practitioners to settle in Oldambt. This makes it harder to assess the role of governments on multiple levels. It would be interesting to investigate experiences of initiators in a rural or peripheral area where there are currently less cultural events being organized. This could evaluate if there were also many initiators coming up with ideas and what the role of the local and regional government has been in these instances. Third, it would be interesting to dive deeper in the exact impacts of these cultural events on a rural or peripheral regions. Since this research was qualitative, it mostly investigated the meaning that practitioners, stakeholders and local citizens give to the organization of cultural events in the Oldambt area. This has led to this report. It would, however, also be interesting to quantitatively assess





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the exact impacts of such events on how people experience the area and on how the area changes. Despite some methodological problems that may be encountered in such a research, it may shed further light on the exact importance of organizing cultural festivals for the improvement of the prospects of an area. Hopefully, other researchers will further explore this interesting topic.

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D5.2 30 CASE STUDIES ON RURAL NEW COMERS, NEW ENTRANTS TO FARMING AND SUCCESSORS

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## Appendix 1. Topic list (Translated from Dutch)

- Open
- Thank participant for participating
- Show, check and fill in participation form
- Origin of the practice
- Origin of the idea
- Involved people/organizations
- Motivations/goals
- Description of local context
- Most important obstacles and conflicts during start-up phase
- Main benefits of the idea
- Description of investigated practice
- Description of activities performed
- Innovative components
- Environmental aspects
- Employment (amount)
- Economic aspects (how successful)
- Role for young people in event(s)
- Conflicts/challenges
- Internal conflicts
- External conflicts (also with opponents in/and local community)
- Local networks (components)
- Relation to local context (compared idea origin)
- Benefits
- Disadvantages
- Advantages and disadvantages of policies
- Overall relationships with governments on multiple levels
- Political content developments
- Bureaucratic and procedural developments



**D5.2 30 CASE STUDIES ON RURAL NEW COMERS, NEW ENTRANTS TO FARMING AND SUCCESSORS**

- Impact of practice and perspectives
- Social, ecological and economic impact
- Economic effects at local/regional level
- Effects on social cohesion (quality of life) Oldambt region
- Effects at the political level
- Effects on gender roles
- Future perspectives
- Likely future developments for this practice
- New, likewise initiatives
- Transferability to other contexts
- Closure
- Important topics not yet discussed
- Other important respondents who should be interviewed
- Explanation further use data for this research
- Express thanks

## Appendix 2. List of interviews

Code	Interviewee (Pseudonym)	Role	Date	Place
NL4C/Int.1	R1	Practitioner/founder Cultural event	10.05.2021	Teams
NL4C/Int.2	R2	Practitioner/organizer Cultural event	21.04.2021	Teams
NL4C/Int.3	R3	Civil servant Blauwestad project/Co-organizer Cultural event	27.05.2021	Teams
NL4C/Int.4	R4	Practitioner/organizer Cultural event	30.04.2021	Teams
NL4C/Int.5	R5	Entrepreneur/Owner location Cultural Event	22.04.2021	Teams
NL4C/Int.6	R6	Practitioner/organizer Cultural event	15.04.2021	Phone
NL4C/Int.7	R7	Civil servant Oldambt municipality	17.05.2021	Teams
NL4C/Int.8	R8	Former Alderman Oldambt municipality	18.05.2021	Teams
NL4C/Int.9	R9	Local entrepreneur cultural sector	06.05.2021	Teams
NL4C/Int.10	R10	Resident location Cultural event/Former civil servant Oldambt municipality	28.04.2021	Teams
NL4C/Int.11	R11	Civil servant Groningen province/Co-organizer Cultural event	21.05.2021	Teams
NL4C/Int.12	R12	Provincial Executive member Groningen province	27.05.2021	Teams
NL4C/Int.13	R13	Civil servant Groningen province	27.05.2021	Teams
NL4C/Int.14	R14	Local entrepreneur, board member entrepreneurs' association Winschoten	30.04.2021	Phone
NL4C/Int.15	R15	Civil servant Blauwestad project	13.05.2021	Phone
NL4C/Int.16	R16	Journalist regional newspaper	17.05.2021	Phone
NL4C/Int.17	R17	Director local marketing organization	25.05.2021	Teams

Table 1- Interviews



## Appendix 3. Basic statistical data

	Oldambt 2020	Oldambt 2010 (2013 from occupation by branch onwards)	Netherlands 2020	Netherlands 2010 (2013 from education level onwards)
<b>Area (square kilometer)</b>	296 km <sup>2</sup>	296 km <sup>2</sup>	41.543 km <sup>2</sup>	41.543 km <sup>2</sup>
<b>Population</b>	38,209	39,486	17,407,585	16,574,989
<b>Population density (per square kilometer)</b>	129	133	419	399
<b>Resident population by age group</b>	0-14: 5,173 15-64: 23,529 65+: 9,507	0-14: 6,201 15-64: 25.810 65+: 7,475	0-14: 2,726,099 15-64: 11,288,931 65+: 3,392,555	0-14: 2,912,911 15-64: 11,123,750 65+: 2,538,328
<b>Outmigration last year:</b>	1,486	1,282	-	-
<b>Newcomers last year:</b>	1,652	1,486	-	-
<b>Gross Occupation rate</b>	65.1	65.4	71.1	70.2
<b>Unemployment rate</b>	4.3	6.3	3.8	5.0
<b>15-25 years unemployment rate</b>	9.8	12.1	9.1	11.1
		2013 numbers from now onwards		2013 numbers from now onwards
<b>Total occupation by productive branch:</b>	Total: 13,500	Total: 13,000	Total: 8,560,500	Total: 7,701,000
Agriculture:	100	100	103,100	97,500
Industry & Energy:	2,600	2,500	1,179,800	1,122,100
Commercial services:	4,400	4,700	4,506,400	3,859,900
Non-commercial services:	6,400	5,700	2,771,100	2,621,600
<b>Number of enterprises by productive branch:</b>	Total: 2,760	Total: 2,435	Total: 1,646,160	Total: 1,341,110
Agriculture	230	200	75,980	70,260
Industry & Energy:	435	370	258,780	207,440
Trade & Catering:	800	795	339,210	308,300
Transport, information & communication:	195	195	144,620	109,965
Finance & Real estate:	220	190	162,990	138,130
Business services:	475	375	443,265	338,200
Culture, recreation & other services:	410	325	221,315	168,820

**Table 2. Basic statistical data for practice location (Oldambt municipality vs Netherlands)**

Source: Netherlands Statistics (2021)