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ARTISTS' MOBILITY INSTIGATING ENDURING GLOBAL NETWORKS?

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Artists' mobility instigating enduring global networks?

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1. Introduction and topic of research

In the arts world, a new organizational form emerged in recent decades: the so-called artists' residence. In previous research, we have examined what this new organizational form offers to artists, why they go there, or in other words, the factors that determine the appeal of this new organization. We found that no generalizations on the subject must be made, given the diversity within this organization form. Through several interviews with artists three archetypes of residences came to the fore: 1) the *R&D* or '*refuge*' type, 2) the *production* type, and 3) the *dispersion* type, which could contribute to one's fame.

In this research, we will focus on the latter, and consider these international reputation-building 'events' a *transition*. By studying ego-centered networks, we aim to reveal if these transitions cause first, more network ties, second, more prestigious ties and third, more global ties. We will do so by not only focusing on absolute networks and ties, but also on relative ties, that is first, compared to the network of the actor previous to the event, and second (a dynamic approach), compared to another actor that has not been subject to this transition (an artist that did not undertake a residence; we will therefore make use of 'similar pairs') (a relational approach).

At first glance, our research objective appears inscribing in a tradition of research into artists' careers. In part it does. But it evenly embodies an ecological approach, in that it is oriented towards populations of actors and institutions, the dynamics of constellations thereof, and causes and consequences of these changes. It thereby outreaches toward cultural policy issues that address the support and dissemination of cultural values in general.

2. Theoretical background

The following section briefly introduces the theoretical outlooks that are relevant to this research. Two major perspectives from within organization studies guide our research: (neo-) institutionalism and organization ecology. Both embody a dynamic outlook on the constellation and constitution of a group of actors, i.e. a population or a field. Hence, they have a conception of boundaries and membership in common. In addition, both neo-institutionalism and organizational ecology stress the importance of processes or mechanisms that outline social imperatives, restrict organizational choices and cement social order. In brief, organizations get institutionalized by legitimization processes of reproduction, instigated by the state or moral authorities, and stemming from cultural and cognitive frames resulting

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from education and professional memberships (institutional perspective as put forward by DiMaggio & Powell (1991), Scott (2001)). According to the ecological perspective, the organizational world is shaped by processes of selection operating on organization forms (Hannan & Freeman, 1984) and organizations' identities get created by being taken-for-granted, as through perceptions and beliefs (Hsu & Hannan, 2005; Hsu, Hannan & Polos, 2011).

3. Context: the field of arts and cultural production

We follow Giuffre (1999) and conceptualize an artist's career (but similarly also an organization's trail) as transitions through positions within a constantly shifting web of relations. These relations are without stable *a priori* hierarchical demarcations. This structure that in itself is in *a state of flux* can be conceived to demarcate an organizational field. By institutionalists an organizational field is defined by the institutions it comprises (disparate organizations including producers, consumers, overseers, and advisors) and the interrelations among them over time (DiMaggio, 1991). It maps out the universe of organizations engaged in the processing of a product or project from its inception to its completion. In arts, Paul Hirsch (2000, p. 356) portrays the field of music and film encompassing the "*roles and organizations ranging from the talent agencies and personal managers handling the artist's career to the satellites carrying signals for both broadcast organizations and consumers, internet delivery of recordings and song lyrics, and video cassettes of movies for purchase and rental.*" In between are a number of intermediate organizations, some powerful, that produce and distribute the cultural goods. Each actor can be considered the enactment of activities and roles, and those occupying legitimate subject positions have greater potential for agency, especially in fields where clearly established institutional rules lack. Artists' residences for instance can be regarded as actors with an in-between position and intermediate role.

The idea of a field as a web or network of ties has been elaborated throughout his entire livelihood by the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. According to Bourdieu, a field is relational and dynamic (Bourdieu 1983). This means that the position one gains or upholds within this field is defined with respect to the other members of this field (relational) and changes over time (dynamic). Within the field of cultural production, both material and symbolic production take place. Whereas the former refers to the mere artistic creation process, the latter refers to a process of legitimizing and gaining approval, like that of peers. Applicable to most art forms is the idea that artistic creativity is not as much an act of individual genius as it is the outcome of a collaborative effort by many, as expressed by several other sociologists with Howard Becker a pacer in the 1970's (Becker, 1974). So a contemporary view on artistic and cultural production fields stresses the contribution to the production processes of many different actors, in many different positions, taking up many different roles.

These positions are not arbitrary. Artists and arts organizations derive their positions or success partly from past successes, or in other words form their "trajectory" (Bourdieu) that can be defined as the sequence of positions that an actor ('player') has occupied within a field (Bourdieu 1983; Giuffre 1999; de Nooy 2002a). One way to look at artistic and cultural fields is by witnessing these sequences of affiliations between artists and organizations (Giuffre 1999; de Nooy 2002a).

4. Artists' residences under scope

Different kinds of effects or value are being attributed to arts and culture. Most people would agree that the arts are significant for identity formation, attitudes, creativity, even job motivation, which are factors that have proven crucial to economic development (Bille & Schulze, 2006). A creative atmosphere would foster not only local and regional development, but also global economic and social development. In recent years, artists' mobility has been a prime issue for local and supra-national

governments, as the European Union. Most governments stimulate artists' mobility by encouraging and subsidizing the outward move of artists through grants, contributions in travel fees and accommodation, etc. and by supporting organizations in the reception of international artists (inward and outward mobility of *creatives*).

In previous research, we have developed three archetypes of artists' residences, in which distinct emphases on material and symbolic production are being displayed: R&D residences, production residences and dispersion residences. On the one hand artists create physical objects that are being displayed or diffused by organizations as galleries, museums and art centers. This material production takes place in ateliers, but also in production residences it is facilitated. The *R&D residences* likewise contribute to the material production, by providing the time and space needed for the pre-production stages (development of ideas...) of the creative process. On the other hand is the establishment of artistic images or reputations at stake (Bourdieu, 1983). Some organizations have the ability to contribute to this symbolic production. Exhibitions within renowned art museums are exemplary, but also are residences in prestigious institutions in art metropolis. Under scope here are two residences that are globally being recognized to be imperative, namely *Kunstlerhaus Bethanien* in Berlin and *ISCP* (formerly *P.S. 1*) in New York. They can be classified as *dispersion residences*, in that their objective is to contribute to one's fame and network, which is facilitated by their proper reputation, location and management.

5. Social network analysis

Social network analysis is the analysis of a set of relations among objects. In social network analysis, these objects, *vertices* or *nodes* usually represent persons, organizations or institutions, but also instances like countries. The relations between them can be relations of interaction, exchange, opinions or perceptions, but also affiliations as the tie of someone with an organization are a common research topic (de Nooy, 2003). Ties connect pairs of actors and can be directed or undirected and dichotomous or valued (Borgatti & Foster, 2003). Network analysis comes in for the analyses of relations and interactions between actors where the prevailing quantitative research methods, as regression models, are not suitable. Network data are fundamentally dyadic, meaning that we observe a value for each *pair* of nodes, rather than for each node. This typically results in dyadic hypotheses. But since the data can be aggregated to higher levels, hypotheses on other units of analysis like the actor- or network-level can equally be tested (Borgatti & Foster, 2003).

Within social sciences several research streams and network approaches have crystallized in recent years, comprehensively covered by Borgatti & Foster (2003). One example are *social capital studies*, that seek to explain variation in (a broad conceptualization of) "success" or "succeeding"² as a function of social ties, in contrast with for instance *diffusion studies*, that seek to explain homogeneity in actors' attitudes, beliefs and practices. Both study the outcome (be it success or homogeneity) as a function of social ties (Borgatti & Foster, 2003). Our research shares an underlying premise with *social capital research* that in general is evaluative, concentrating on the benefits of a social position which lead to an outcome that for some is more favorable than it is for others.³ Hence these social

² We conceptualize success to be a broad performance indicator which can be extended toward the gaining of critical attention, reward and thus incorporates the attractiveness of one's realizations, the ability for social mobilization thereof, and the alike.

³ Borgatti & Foster (2003) contrast these types of social capital studies with diffusion studies, that are more interested in the process by which practices spread through a system, rather than in the outcome; Related to the arts, one can think of processes related to the selection and support of favored incidences (projects, artists, organizations...) and in that way connect to institutional theory (as in DiMaggio & Powell, 1983)

capital studies seek to explain the variation in “success” as a differentiated gain of success, which is due to the shape of an individual’s network (Granovetter, 1985). Our angle resembles social capital research in the prominence and capabilities of actors, which are treated as the major unit of analysis.⁴ Still, our study deviates from this research tradition in two ways. First, whereas social capital researchers are oriented on *outcomes* and see them as a *function* of social ties, we more regard the changes of the constellation of this social network. We -so to speak- make a picture of it before an event (= residence), and one after this event, in order to compare.⁵ Second, unlike social capital theories, we do not underscore the benefits of a ‘social’ position (consisting of socio-demographic background characteristics, cultural competence), but we look at one’s ‘artistic’ position as manifested by Giuffre (1999).

Another dimension within network analysis and extensively brought to the fore by Borgatti & Foster (2003) lies within the treatment of ties and their functions. One stream in literature focuses on the structure or configuration of networks⁶, whereas the other tends to keep track on the content of the ties, and the resources that flow through these social ties.⁷ Several attributes can be qualified to network ties, of which one is *direction*. A classic assumption in social network theory is that asymmetric relations express (or constitute) social prestige (de Nooy, 2003): an actor with prestige will receive relatively many positive choices, whereas he or she will return relatively few. Thus the social prestige or status of an actor is assumed related to his position in the network. Therefore a nomination by people that are relatively more prestigious adds more to the prestige of the one chosen (de Nooy, 2002a).⁸ Furthermore and proper to several dynamic network models are two fundamental assumptions related to network ties: first, ties between actors change over time and second, network ties are not brief events, but can be regarded as states with a tendency to endure over time. Many relations commonly studied in network analysis naturally satisfy the requirement of gradual change, such as friendship, trust, and cooperation (Snijders, 2001). We however only partially uphold these assumptions about the artist-organization relation. Obviously, on the one hand, in particular the artist-gallery relation can be considered a *commercial tie*, with a contract determining the coming into being and the end of the agreement. Parallel can be reflected upon the relation between an artist and an institution, who uphold an (contractual) agreement during a delimited time span. On the other hand can these relationships be envisioned as ties that contain considerable symbolic or prestige value, traversing formal collaboration, thus sustaining. We argue that the artist-institution tie is enduring (as opposed to recurrent, but therefore not necessarily long-lasting) and instigates an imprint on both parties involved. This holds consequences for the level of prestige achieved by both the artist and the organization under scope (Giuffre, 1999).

⁴ In diffusion research, the impact of the environment is dominant over ‘agency’, that is the ability of an actor to pursue and realize a certain outcome.

⁵ Whereas most (earlier) social network analysis studies did consider the network configuration to be a determining or explanatory variable (exceptions can be found within some strategic literature streams, like the ones focusing on alliances between firms, that have focused as much on the antecedents of networks as on their outcomes. Borgatti & Foster (2003) explain why they ally and how partners are chosen), that determines an actor’s environment and provides opportunities and constraints on action, nowadays the approaches are more heterogeneous.

⁶ A structural or topological approach of networks tends to neglect the content of the ties.

⁷ Related distinctions are being made by Podolny (2001) in ‘ties as pipes’ versus ‘ties as prisms’, and Burt (1987) in *positional* versus *relational* embeddedness, resonating Granovetter’s (1985) in *structural* versus *relational embeddedness*. Given limited space, we do not further elaborate on these references.

⁸ Prestige can be expressed on a continuous scale, or stratified into discrete levels by clustering. In that case the clusters represent different hierarchical positions within a field or social context. Examples are provided by Bourdieu (1983), Gerhards & Anheier (1989) and de Nooy (2003).

These dynamic and relative dimensions of networks, within the context of arts and culture, can be united by taking the following stance, as enthused by Giuffre (1999). The status or prestige of both the artist and the organization are defined by the relative position of other actors to whom they are directly or indirectly tied. Consequently, changes in the structure of ties indicate changes in status, which can be upward but also downward.⁹ Giuffre has demonstrated that the shape of an artist's art world network history influences success¹⁰ and that the network history fulfills a mediating role with regard to artists' performance. Past performance, a history of past relations, what Bourdieu refers to as trajectories, is at stake in understanding that "*present-day status is based on a position within a web of ties and also has embedded within it the history of past positions.*" (Giuffre, 1999:818)

6. Research considerations at stake

Given the above, we contend that the following considerations are at stake in our research, as equally in research projects of a similar vein.

First, networks here are understood as personal networks, centered on individuals. By the same token, these ego-networks can be centered on organizations or other instances (events, projects, groups, geographical entities as countries...). The goal of the analysis of ego-networks is to describe and index the variation across individuals in the way they are embedded in social structures. The point is that we depart from individual nodes or actors, in order to understand changes in the constellations of the networks they are central within. The tie that relates egos to *alters* is 'exhibitions'. Underlying is a *rational actor assumption* that is in the idea that actors deliberately choose their ties, in order to maximize gain.

Second, we do not deal with entire (complete) networks. In many empirical network analyses, network members are all being defined and known (as in the prototypical example of class-groups). But in the real world many potential 'participants' are not defined (yet). Studies on networks that constitute entire populations experience the same limitation: not all actors can be brought under attention.

Another issue is the time frame: a method to analyze the dynamics of positions is needed. Looking at the network picture at just one point in time is inadequate for the analysis of change, in that histories by their very nature require at the minimum two time points. En plus, within a time-frame there is the possible intrusion of other factors which are not related to the event (residence) that in our case causes a break into a *before* and *after* time period, but that do exert an influence on network conditions. In this analysis, we plan to have 20 actors under scope that all have undertaken a residence within a time span of 10 years. In other words, from the year 2000 onward, each year two artists have been able to go into residence in New York or Berlin. We must be aware of this time effect on the change of network constellations. As exposed before, we here take for granted that previously developed ties are still present, or in other words, that ties to cultural institutions (or rather, the prestige one gains from it) do not 'perish'. Giuffre (1999), having pointed to the ignorance by researchers of time dimensions, for example performs network analysis on what she calls "this shifting web" within arts in a 10-year time

⁹ Giuffre (1999) explains that positions can be expressed in absolute terms and relative to the movements of others. We assume that the residence, given its stringent selection procedure, is a privilege that can be considered a career step, thus an upward move.

¹⁰ Likewise in other research lines, as in management studies, a general consensus lives on that past performance influences present performance (e.g. Shapiro 1983), but the explanations on how this process contends are diverse.

frame. In our study, we will conduct a discrete time-interval analysis.¹¹ Our analysis will not be topological, but relational, focusing on the amount and content (resources) of ties. Consequently, we will make use of *panel data*, i.e., sequences of networks of the same set of actors, observed at two or more time points.

A fourth issue is the fact that we here deal with two types of nodes. One is artists: starting point of this research and units of analysis are artists that undertake residences; but our analysis includes organizations as another group of actors. Within this major category, we discern between several subgroups, like galleries, museum and the major art centers an artist is affiliated with (by being involved in an exhibition). Hence our level of analysis is micro. In network analysis, data are essentially dyadic, conveying values for pairs of nodes rather than characteristics for each node. Consequently one must be aware of dissimilar agents having different capabilities and their relations having different meanings (Borgatti & Foster, 2003).

A final remark is that the network analysis we aim to perform is not a means in itself. On the contrary, it is a start off for further analysis. In order to make valid statements on the causes or consequences of the incidence under scope (residence), a first step will be to properly analyze the sequence of positions, and to compare any two strings of events coming up with a measure of their degree of difference from each other.

Post scriptum to the organizers of the International Workshop on Culture as a Network

To conclude, this research is work in progress. By the end of January, we will have conducted the first stages of our analysis, which will be stepwise, and most likely using UCINET a means. We expect several useful additional insights provided by the 10th workshop on Economics and Sociology (on Dynamic Networks) in Utrecht (the Netherlands, http://www.dyconi.nl/tenth_workshop_program.htm) at the end of November 2011 and will be happy to share them with you.

Our contribution to the CSS workshop lies mainly within methodological issues: we are fully aware of the work to be done and the choices to be made. They mainly concern the aforementioned considerations at stake: ego-centered networks that have undefined boundaries and consist of differentiated nodes. We intend to apply a dynamic perspective on these networks that is able to pinpoint relevant changes and enduring effects on both the individual level and by extension on the societal field level where this individual is active within. Our intended network analysis is not a means to an end, but it in a first stage aims at illuminating dynamics and changes, in order to in a subsequent stage consider the antecedents and further implications of these shifting constellations. In a network perspective, a project undertaken by an individual is not that deviant from one initiated by a local government or cultural institution. Moreover, an actor-based undertaking has implications not only for the actor, but evenly for on a community, field, society and community-level.

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¹¹ Which according to Giuffre might be insufficient in evaluating the shifting of prestige, but for the sake of feasibility, we opt for two sequences and do not focus on transitions ("that concatenate into prestige" (Giuffre 1999:819)).

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