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THE NETHERLANDS IN MAPS

SPATIAL PATTERNS OF HIGH AND POPULAR CULTURE

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INTRODUCTION

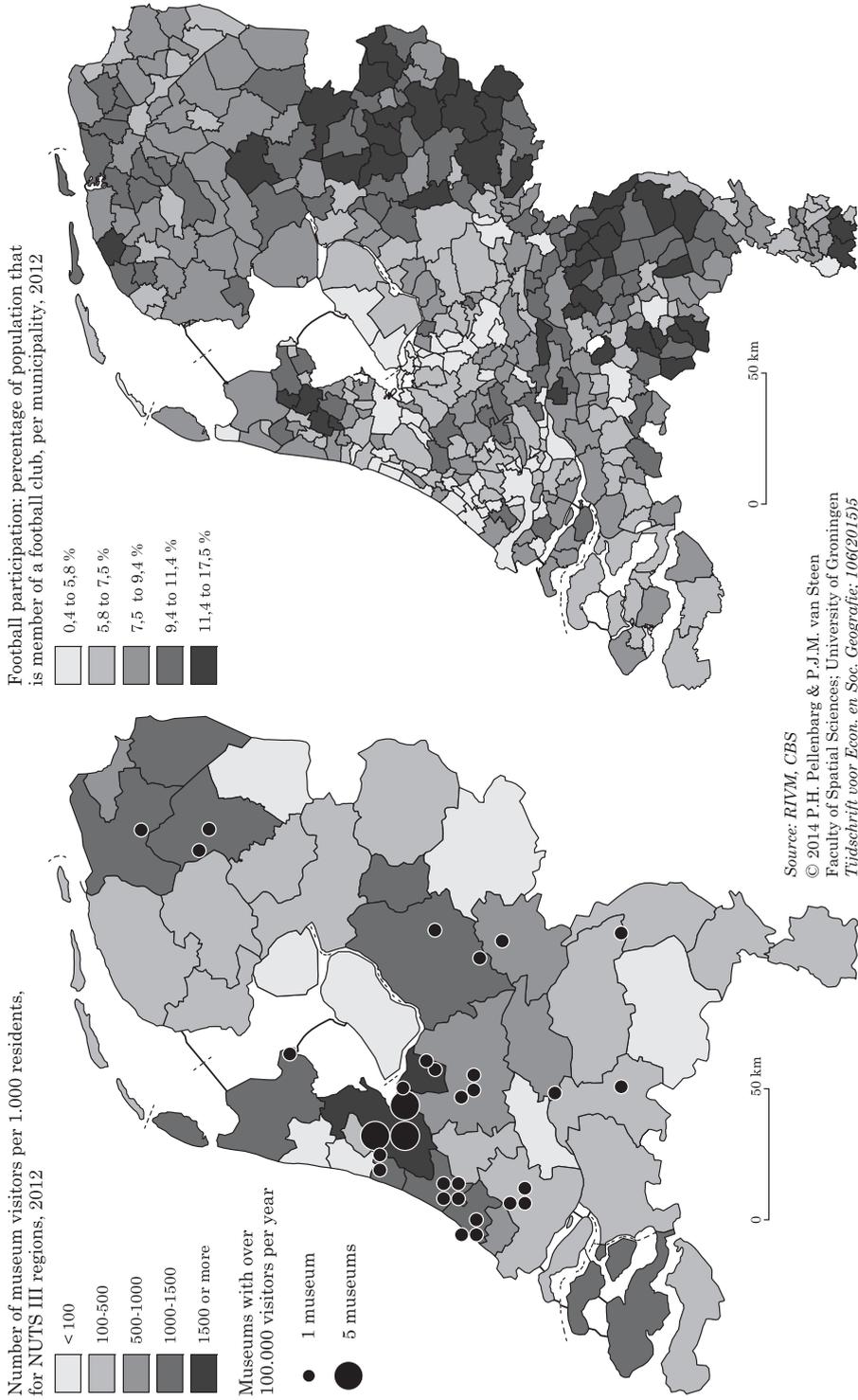
Next to the cultural diversities related to national origin, religion, sexuality and education that we portrayed in the preceding *The Netherlands in Maps* issues 2015/1–4, there is a cultural diversity that can be described not in terms of types but levels, that is, the difference between ‘high’ (elitist, superior) and ‘low’ (common, popular, mass) culture. Popular culture has long been regarded as just a commercially driven mass interest for certain types of food, music, sport or more generally ‘entertainment’. Only from the 1970s onwards recognition has grown that popular culture, reflecting and expressing the aesthetic and other wants of many people, in the light of ‘cultural democracy’ has to be regarded as regular culture, not inferior to the ‘high’ culture of classical music and theatre, literature, architecture, art and design (Gans 1999). Different levels of culture are supposed to be linked to specific social, educational and economic classes in the population that are characterised by different distributions in space, which raises the question of possible spatial differences in supply and demand of high and low culture as a possible item of geographer’s interest. Indeed the distinction between high and popular culture did not escape the attention of (cultural) geographers, witness a recent survey by Sturm (2015) who refers, among others, to an interesting collection of articles in the 1980s about ‘Geography, the media and popular culture’ (Burgess & Gold 1985). The themes in such

sources cover a wide spectrum of very different subjects and angles of incidence. For this issue of *The Netherlands in Maps* we chose museum visitors and football club members in the Netherlands as representatives of high and mass culture consumers, in search of possible differences in the spatial patterns of their specific cultural demand and supply.

HIGH CULTURE: MUSEUM VISITORS

The museum visitors map offers a picture with the majority of most visited museums in the west-central (Randstad) national core area on the one hand, and a more varied spatial pattern if we relate the number of museum visitors (who may come from everywhere) to the population size of the ‘receiving’ regions. Amsterdam, *casu quo*, the greater Amsterdam region, is the undeniable centre of the ‘museum culture’ in the Netherlands, with the highest score both in absolute and relative terms. Of the 43 Dutch museums that receive over 100,000 visitors per year, no less than 15 are located in the city of Amsterdam. The top three museums here, all receiving one million yearly visitors or more, are the recently renovated Rijksmuseum, the Van Gogh museum, and the Anne Frank House. Numbers 4 and 5 of the top five are also in Amsterdam, these are the Hermitage museum and the NEMO science centre. The largest museums outside the Randstad area are the Open Air museum near Arnhem (number 6, showing historic houses, crafts and traditions), the Kröller-Müller modern art museum in Otterlo (10) and the Loo

THE NETHERLANDS IN MAPS
 Multicultural Society (Part 5)
HIGH CULTURE (MUSEUMS) AND LOW CULTURE (FOOTBALL)



Source: RIVM, CBS
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palace in Apeldoorn (16). Both Otterlo and Apeldoorn are in the northern part of the province of Gelderland, which easily explains the high relative score of that region on the choropleth map. The other regions that distinguish themselves with such high relative scores are the Gooi region to the East of Amsterdam (with the museums Singer, Muider slot, and the 'Picture and Sound' museum in broadcast city Hilversum), the northern region of Groningen/Drenthe (with two successful museums numbering 25 and 26, in the cities of Groningen and Assen) and Zeeland in the Southwest. As a whole, the museum high culture map leaves the impression of a dominating urban supply and demand in the Randstad area, with some outliers in the North, East and South, and a void, mainly rural area along the eastern and southern borders.

POPULAR CULTURE: FOOTBALL PLAYERS

The 'popular culture' map of registered football players shows an almost 100 per cent reverse picture of high participation in the same regions where museum visits are scarce, that is, the rural municipalities in the eastern parts of the provinces of Overijssel, Gelderland and North Brabant, and in Limburg. In terms of sport club membership football is by far the most popular sport in the Netherlands: With a population of close to 17 million inhabitants 1.2 million persons (7%) are members of football clubs, that is almost twice the number of tennis players and three times the number of golfers, which are second and third of the list of most popular sport types (NOC/NSF 2015). The football club membership share is twice as high or more in the aforementioned area in the East and South, and clearly below average in most of the Randstad municipalities and also in the bigger cities outside the Randstad. These are easily recognisable as lighter spots on the map, exemplified by all but one of the provincial capitals outside the Randstad: Leeuwarden, Groningen, Assen, Zwolle, Enschede, Arnhem, and Maastricht. Football culture apparently is related to rurality and village life, notwithstanding the international status and media attention for Ajax and Feyenoord, the symbolic football sport icons of Amsterdam and Rotterdam.

We have already described the rural character of the football participation map in an earlier series on 'sport and space' of *The Netherlands in Maps* (Van Steen and Pellenbarg 2008a, 2008b), but just like then, find it less easy to offer a completely satisfactory explanation. Relative shortage of sport field facilities in cities as compared to villages is a possibility, but not really convincing. A more probable factor is the higher price of sport club membership in the more urban areas. In the Randstad, the price of football club membership can be up to twice as high as in more rural areas (Lubberding 2015). Next to such economic factors the difference between urban and rural social-cultural settings for human behaviour, including sport behaviour, will be of influence. Urban and rural areas differ in many ways, but certainly also in the representation of social, educational and income classes that we referred to in the introduction.

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