

chapter 4 — REGIONAL CULTURE(S)

pre-publication version

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However small a region may be, it will not be homogeneous. The Northern Netherlands, measuring only 8300 square kilometres approximately (land surface only), can be subdivided into smaller regions with different histories, different languages or dialects (see chapter 3), different economies, and so forth. Furthermore, the people living in these different smaller regions have different ways of doing things, different ways of thinking, and different values, in one word: different *cultures*. Map 4 and table 4 represent these cultural differences within the Dutch North.

Culture – as the concept is used here – can be measured. One way to do this is by means of a survey. The most famous and influential example of such a *direct* measurement of culture based on a survey was the work of Hofstede (1980). Hofstede measured four basic value orientations for 53 countries. This measurement was based on an enormous number of questionnaires. As these are unavailable for the Northern Netherlands, regional cultural difference has to be measured differently: it has to be measured *indirectly*. In an indirect measurement of culture the basic data set does not consist of filled out questionnaires but of available data on actual behaviour. The behaviour in this data set includes, for example, voting behaviour, age of marriage and giving birth, divorce, religious adherence, traffic accidents, and so forth. While such an indirect measure might seem worse than a direct one (because it is *indirect*), it may actually be better as social pressures and expectations more strongly influence people's answers (in questionnaires, for example) than their actual behaviour.

The indirect measurement of regional culture on which the map and table in this chapter are based was a measurement of regional culture on the municipal level for the whole of The Netherlands (Brons 2005). Statistical analysis of the data available resulted in the five basic value orientations or *dimensions of regional culture* presented in table 4. These are: Post-Materialism (PMA), Protestant Conservatism (PRC), Classical Individualism (IND), Egalitarian Anti-Conservatism (EAC), and Dissatisfaction (DST).

Post-Materialist (PMA) cultures are more focused on self-development and self-expression, creativity, 'belongingness', and so forth. Generally, Post-Materialism is related to urbanisation, education and wealth. Not surprisingly the biggest cities of the North, Groningen (c on map 4) and Leeuwarden (b on map 4), both also centres of higher education, are much more Post-Materialist than the surrounding countryside. Corrected for urbanisation, education and wealth, the eastern parts of the Dutch North (regions 4, 7 and 12 in map 4) are more Post-Materialist than the rest.

Protestant Conservatism (PRC) refers to a preference for traditional values such as male dominance, early marriage and childbearing and large families. Regions that score highly on these values are predominantly (orthodox) Protestant. The Northern Netherlands are mostly Protestant with some very small Roman Catholic enclaves and large areas that are not strongly religious at all. Protestant Conservatism (PRC) is strongest in Oostergo and Central Groningen (regions 5 and 6 in map 4) and weakest in Boarnsterhim and (parts of) the Eastern Borderlands (regions 9 and 12 in map 4).

In regions that score highest on the third dimension, Classical Individualism (IND), people tend to focus strongly on personal (individual) material well-being and less on collective interests. Like Post-Materialism (PMA), Individualism is related to wealth and urbanisation. Correcting for these shows

that the North is slightly more Individualist than the Dutch average. Within the North there are remarkable differences, however. The islands of Vlieland and Terschelling and Northern Drenthe (regions 1, 2 and 11 in map 4) score very highly on Classical Individualism (IND), while especially the city of Stadskanaal (e in map 4) scores very low.

As a whole, the Northern Netherlands are much more Egalitarian Anti-Conservative (EAC) than the Dutch average. Societies that score highly on Egalitarian Anti-Conservatism are not particularly religious and have egalitarian values and non-traditional household structures (many unmarried parents, for example). Within the North, the islands of Vlieland and Terschelling and the regions of Boarnesterhim and Northern Drenthe (regions 1, 2, 9 and 11 in map 4) are most strongly Egalitarian Anti-Conservative (EAC). On the other side of the spectrum we find Oostergo and Southwestern Fryslân (regions 5 and 12 in map 4).

The dimension of Dissatisfaction (DST) represents both social and personal dissatisfaction, both dissatisfaction with society and with personal circumstances. The Northern Netherlands are on average less Dissatisfied than the rest of the Netherlands, but again there are strong differences between the cultural regions of the North. In the cities of Groningen en Harlingen and the region of Central Groningen (c, a and 6 in map 4), Dissatisfaction (DST) is very low, while it is high in Vlieland, Fivelingo and the city of Sneek (1, 7 and d in map 4).

It is important to note that the regionalisation presented here (in map 4) is based on these dimensions of culture alone. There are other aspects of culture – such as language, for example – and, hence, there are other maps of culture possible. Map 4, therefore, should not be interpreted as the definitive map of regional culture in the Northern Netherlands. It is a map of a specific aspect of culture, basic value orientations, and, moreover, as culture is not a static phenomenon, neither is this map.

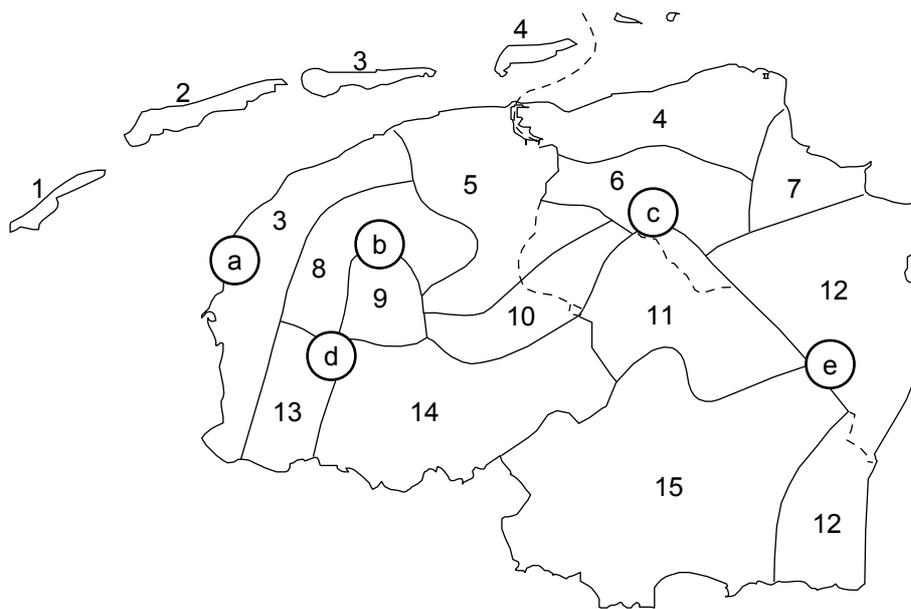
Nevertheless, the data and the map based on this data reveal some interesting spatial differences. First, the Dutch North is culturally different from the rest of the Netherlands in at least one respect: it scores much higher on Egalitarian Anti-conservatism (EAC). In other words, the North is less religious, less traditional, less hierarchical, and more egalitarian than the rest of the Netherlands. This may (at least partly) reflect what in Dutch is called "Noordelijke nuchterheid" (Northern sobermindedness).

Secondly, and as advanced in the first paragraph of this chapter, even the relatively small region of the Northern Netherlands, shows strong internal spatial heterogeneity. Within the North 15 cultural regions can be distinguished that differ strongly from each other. This strong internal heterogeneity poses the question whether it actually makes sense to speak of the Dutch North as a whole. It may be more accurate to view and represent it as a patchwork quilt of regional cultures, languages, dialects, economies, and so forth, each different from the others, but each contributing to the unique spirit of the Northern Netherlands.

REFERENCES

- Brons, L.L. (2005 - forthcoming), *Rethinking the culture - economy dialectic*, dissertation
- Hofstede, G. (1980), *Culture's consequences: international differences in work-related values*, Beverly Hills: Sage

map 4: cultural regions of the Northern Netherlands



1-15: cultural regions of the Northern Netherlands.
a-e: cities that score significantly different from their surrounding countryside.
See table 4 for names and additional information on regions and cities.

table 4: cultural regions of the Northern Netherlands

	name	province	PMA	PRC	IND	EAC	DST
1	Vlieland	F	0		+++	+++	++
2	Terschelling	F	0		++	++	0
3	Frysian Coast	F			0		0
4	Hunsingo	G / F	+	+	0	0	
5	Oostergo	F / G		++			
6	Central Groningen	G		++	0		
7	Fivelingo	G	+	+		+	++
8	Central Fryslân	F			0	0	
9	Boarnsterhim	F	0		+	++	
10	Opsterland and Vredewold	F / G		0	+	0	0
11	Northern Drenthe	D / G			++	++	0
12	Eastern Borderlands	G / D	+			+	+
13	Southwestern Fryslân	F		0	+		
14	Wouden and Werven	F			0	0	+
15	Southern Drenthe	D		0	+	+	0
a	Harlingen	F	++	0		0	
b	Leeuwarden	F	+++			0	0
c	Groningen	G	+++	0	0	0	
d	Sneek	F	++	0	0		++
e	Stadskanaal	G	0	++			+

#map = number on map 4

the number of pluses or minuses reflects the deviation of that region from the *Northern* average.

province: F = Fryslân; G = Groningen; D = Drenthe (province of largest part mentioned first)

PMA = Post-Materialism; PRC = Protestant Conservatism; IND = Classical Individualism; EAC = Egalitarian Anti-Conservatism; DST = Dissatisfaction