

Interactive comment on ““Doing” cultural geography/“being” a cultural geographer – reflections by an “accidental geographer” on practising cultural geography in the Netherlands” by B. van Hoven

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Lawrence Berg carefully and critically considers the article in both general and more specific terms. He praises the local and personal aspect as being interesting but finds the connections made to wider developments lacking and thus wonders what the broader implications are for understanding (Dutch) Geographies after and beyond the cultural turn. Although the personal notes address the role of structural processes in the production of geographical practice, Berg feels these should be emphasized more. In particular, he wonders about the role of neoliberalism in the production of cultural

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geography (such as the choice to rename the Department in Groningen to ‘Cultural geography’ and the consequences of this choice for the way in which developments of Dutch/ Groningen geographies will be impacted by assessments and visions from UK cultural geographers in the future -as they already have after the most recent research assessment exercise in 2007). Berg points at a key intervention in the faculty which was the hiring of high profile (male, middle-aged, my addition) geographers from the UK and Australia. This is indeed an important factor for the way in which geography will be interpreted, practiced, taught, told and published- and by whom. Berg’s insistence on dealing more explicitly with the personal in the context of socio-spatial structures and power relations is therefore both relevant and necessary. Related to this, Berg takes issue with the hierarchical comparison made between Dutch and UK geography and suggests a stronger focus on “the reasons that the cultural turn in Anglo geography was not seen as so important in the Dutch tradition”. Again, Berg raises an interesting and relevant point here, and one that links to the previous comment on power structures. I would reply that resistance to UK cultural geography has largely been in terms of content dealt with. As noted in the article, Dutch culture in general has a history of modesty but with the neoliberal turn, this undoubtedly has changed in the context of universities. Increasingly, developments are modeled on ‘how things are done’ in the UK implying more pressure to publish in high-ranking journals, more pressure to take on multiple roles within the organization, politics, society and business. This is likely leading to a different culture of practice, a way of doing, in our discipline but, as I indicated above, also to a different way of being. Academic superstardom is on the rise. A revision of the above aspects in the article is valuable and indeed necessary. In addition to Berg’s suggestions regarding issues underlying the article as a whole, he also addresses some minor points in the article such as ways of phrasing awkwardly and, more importantly, the outdated reference to GeoForum as the most international journal. This, clearly, needs to be seen in the context of its time. Berg rightly suggests ACME as one of the newer international journals.

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