

Article

'You Know Them All'—Trust, Cooperation, and Cultural Volunteering in Rural Areas in Germany

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Abstract: (1) Background: Rural areas are characterised by a higher number of volunteers compared to urban centres in Germany. In this context, cultural and arts education is one of the largest voluntary sectors. However, an increasing decline in (cultural) volunteering can be observed. To counteract the decrease, it is important to strengthen regional cooperation and social networks, which are based on trust. The connection between trust, volunteering, and social networks has already been examined, but we still do not fully understand the emergence of trust in the link of cultural education cooperation and networks in rural areas. (2) Methods: A total of 34 semi-structured interviews in combination with egocentric network maps were conducted in four rural regions. The interview data were audio-recorded, transcribed, and analysed using qualitative content analysis. (3) Results: Four dimensions of trust-building were identified: 1. presence and spatial proximity, 2. multiplexity, 3. third party, and 4. community spirit.

Keywords: trust; cooperation; cultural and arts education; rural areas; volunteering



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1. Introduction

While the number of volunteers has remained the same or even decreased in some Western countries [1,2], an increase in volunteering has recently been observed in Germany [3]. Volunteering plays a central role in cultural and arts education. For example, the proportion of cultural voluntary activities that are considered 'highbrow' has more than doubled between 1999 and 2019. This includes institutions such as theatre clubs, museums, and libraries. A small increase in association memberships, e.g., in rural women's clubs, scouts, carnival clubs, can also be observed in other sectors of cultural and arts education [4].

The field of voluntary work in the cultural sector is characterised by diversity. Cultural and arts education programs differ between rural and urban regions, also with regard to their dependence on volunteering work [5]. In peripheral regions, grassroots cultural programs are more likely to be found. Such institutions are associated with a broad, diverse conception of culture that includes all forms of cultural and arts activities, are characterised by volunteering, tend to be regionally specific, and make an important contribution to local cultural development [6]. However, rural areas are confronted with dynamic processes, such as demographic change [5], migration [7], and advancing urbanisation [8]. These exert a strong influence on local, cultural engagement [5]. According to the German Survey on Volunteering 2019, the percentage of volunteers in rural areas has been higher than in urban regions for years [3]. Nevertheless, Priemer et al. [7] point to a downward trend in membership of associations in structurally weak regions, which is attributed to the decreasing number of inhabitants. Meanwhile, an increasing demand can be observed in urban clubs in Germany [7]. Consequently, cultural engagement in structurally weak regions is affected as well. In this context, extracurricular cultural and arts education is an important vehicle for promoting personality development [9,10] and political engagement [11].

These effects are indispensable especially in rural areas, due to low trust in the political system [12] and increasing xenophobic tendencies [13]. In light of recent demographic changes, securing services of general interest, specifically in the field of culture, arts, and education, is, therefore, one of the major challenges facing many rural areas.

To prevent the further decline of services of general interest, it is crucial to strengthen regional cooperation and social networks [14]. Empirical findings show that trust is an important component in the development of regional cooperation structures [15–17]. It is important to foster trust between inter-organisational actors to strengthen cultural networks and cooperation, which at the same time also secures cultural education infrastructures and thus cultural engagement. Trust is an essential component for the development of collaboration as well as participation in cultural and arts education provisions [18], which has so far received little attention in empirical studies. It, therefore, remains uncertain which conditions promote trust between inter-organisational actors in the context of cultural and arts education in structurally weak regions. Reinforcing trust is an important indicator for minimising the trend towards a decline in cultural volunteering in rural areas. Only by understanding how this phenomenon is produced in the context of cultural and arts education can trust be used as a local resource to maintain and promote cultural volunteering in rural areas. Against this background, the aim of this study is to understand what conditions foster trust in the context of cultural education cooperation and networks in rural areas, as well as to offer initial indications of how fostering relationships of trust can contribute to securing cultural volunteering.

To address the question of how conditions contribute to the emergence and development of trust between actors from different organisations in the context of cultural and arts education in rural regions, a brief theoretical introduction to the concept of trust and some thematically relevant findings on trust in rural areas will be discussed. This is followed by a more detailed description of the material, the associated survey instruments, and the evaluation methods. Using qualitative content analysis, subcategories were extracted from the data material, which are described in more detail individually and in their contexts in the fourth section. In the concluding discussion, our results and the methodological procedure are reflected upon.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. Introduction to the Conceptualization of Trust

In the literature, trust can be established with different objects. While the phenomenon of trust can refer to institutions such as the federal government or systems like monetary stability [19], following Putnam [20], the focus on trust is on interpersonal relationships. Besides social networks and social norms, trust is described as an important foundation of social capital [20,21]. Especially in combination with reciprocity, trust offers the advantage of building bridges between different people within a society [22] and strengthening their relationship [23]. In summary, trust is an important indicator for the development of cooperation and vice versa [24]. A trusting relationship involves two actors who, on the one hand, experience the trust of the counterpart and are consequently considered trustworthy and, on the other hand, give trust [25]. Regarding cooperation, trust reduces transaction costs and thus facilitates the flow of information [26], as expensive contracts and the usually unrealistically agreed obligations therein are largely avoided [27]. Consequently, trust is indispensable for maintaining collaboration.

Whether trust functions as a prerequisite for the emergence of social networks or as a result of social relationships is still disputed in the literature [22,28]. In this regard, many authors agree that trust is rarely given blindly [24,27]. There is no guarantee that cooperation partners will fulfil informally agreed obligations. The trust placed in them could be abused, which is why trust is always linked to vulnerability. For the goal of gaining social, financial, or material resources through new cooperation, a risk assessment can therefore be made, and it can be examined whether a trust bonus is worthwhile or not [29]. This risk can be minimised through control mechanisms. However, according to

Preisendörfer [24], control can never replace trust. Trust can grow on the one hand through individual collected experiences and on the other hand within societies. The second is based on the normative expectation that most of the members of a community follow the socially desirable and community-oriented rules of conduct [20,30]. In this context, this idea is linked to Fukuyama's considerations: "Trust arises when a community shares a set of moral values in such a way as to create regular expectations of regular and honest behaviour" [31] (p. 153).

Trust that refers to close, personal relationships (e.g., families, circles of friends) is referred to as "thick trust" [20]. In contrast, "thin trust" [20] is regarded as a general attitude of considering impersonal acquaintances as trustworthy [20,29]. With the help of "thin trust", the reach of the trust network is higher than with "thick trust" since it extends beyond personal relationships. Moreover, this dimension contributes to honesty and mutual support within a community. For this reason, "thin trust" is considered more useful in promoting democratic society [20].

Trust can foster a sense of social responsibility and action for the community [22], which is why this dimension is considered an important component for promoting civic engagement [20,32]. Trust also has a positive influence on participation in non-profit associations [33] and vice versa [34,35]. Therefore, the willingness to cooperate between the members involved can be promoted through trust [35]. Putnam [27] describes in relation to voluntary work in communities that trust can be established with an unknown person primarily through third parties: "I trust you because I trust her and she assures me that she trusts you" [27] (p. 169). In some instances, people are instructed to trust intermediaries to fulfil their organisational obligations.

2.2. Trust in Rural Areas

In the literature it can be found that active membership and volunteering in local regions have a positive effect on trust [20,36] and vice versa. According to Offe and Fuchs [37], collective actions strengthen interpersonal trust in rural areas. Consequently, the more often individuals observe that others join an association, the less their inhibition threshold to participate. During this process, individuals become aware of the advantages of voluntary activities (especially access to information or useful social contacts) and membership in associations [37]. Maintaining these privileges also gives participants an impulse to behave in a trustworthy manner and reduce the risk of social sanctions, which can take the form of exclusion [8]. Therefore, trust arises as a by-product of voluntary association work in rural communities. However, current developments, such as increasing urbanisation and the associated demographic decline in rural communities, go hand in hand with the danger of a decline in voluntary engagement. In addition to solidarity, this can also have a negative impact on mutual, specific trust in the locality [8].

Trust does not only offer the advantage of increasing the number of participants in associations in structurally weak regions. It is also an important element in promoting cooperation structures between local inter-organisational leaders in non-profit organisations. Trust enables the actors involved to assess each other personally, which also makes collaboration more cooperative [17]. However, trust is weakened by certain regional contextual factors. For example, Snaveley and Tracy [17] show in their study that leaders have difficulties in sustaining collaborations due to a permanent lack of local funding and geographical distances. According to Kellstedt et al. [16], trust between cooperative partners within a community tends to develop in more peripheral areas with dense settlements. One explanation is that in such communities the likelihood of multiple (random) encounters between the members involved increases, as work and private life are not geographically far apart. Due to this, those involved are more familiar with each other [16].

3. Materials and Methods

The aim of the study is to investigate how conditions contribute to the emergence and development of trust between actors from different organisations with regard to cultural

education in rural regions. Due to the dearth of studies in this area, an exploratory qualitative research design was used. Finally, elements of the phenomenon are not considered in isolation, but contextually and situationally [38]. Accordingly, the aim is to develop concepts through context-specific analysis of individual cases, which can then be generalized with empirical soundness. A total of 34 semi-structured interviews in combination with egocentric network maps were conducted in four rural regions. The interview data were audio-recorded, transcribed, and analysed using qualitative content analysis.

3.1. Recruiting, Data Collection and Sampling

The data collection took place in four rural, peripheral areas. Of these, two are located in East Germany and two in West Germany, each belonging to a different federal state. Since rural areas generally have different political, economic, and social characteristics, they also have different cultural infrastructures [39], which is why we examined several regions in more detail. Despite the various cultural infrastructures, the aim of this study is to highlight common conditions for the promotion of social ties as well as cooperation. In this study, we cooperated with cultural education institutions in each region that took on an important supporting function as gatekeepers. Due to the current COVID-19 pandemic, we had to deviate from the original idea of identifying and recruiting potential participants personally in the field. Instead, through online research and thanks to our cooperation partners, we were able to approach potential participants. To identify local cooperative relationships and network structures, a preliminary telephone conversation was held with our contact partners. Furthermore, other cultural education practitioners who are not part of the network of our cooperation partners were considered. We conducted an online search for cultural associations from different sectors, such as local heritage associations, museums, and many more. Then, we approached the potential participants by telephone. To ensure minimum and maximum contrast within the interviewees sample, we opted for theoretical sampling as a recruitment strategy. We recruited different actors (e.g., representatives of cultural institutions, mayors, etc.) from four rural regions. The data collection took place between June and November 2020 and the interviews were subsequently transcribed.

3.2. Interview Guide and Hierarchical Mapping Technique

To answer the research question, semi-structured interviews were conducted in four communities in combination with the hierarchical mapping technique according to Kahn and Antonucci [40]. Semi-standardised interviews offer the advantage of structuring, flexibility, and openness of the interview. To explore cooperation in the context of cultural education in rural areas, the interview was subdivided into four themes: description of position within the institution, social ties and cooperation, visualised network, and open topics. At the beginning, the interviewees were given the opportunity to talk about themselves and their voluntary work. During this time, current cooperation were often mentioned, so that we could ask more in-depth questions about their cooperation partner and social relationships. Afterwards, the interviewees were asked to enter these people in the egocentric network maps.

The Hierarchical Mapping Technique was used to stimulate narratives, to visualise personal networks [41], and for generating further information about the respective social relationships, which can be seen as an important indicator for understanding social networks and thus also social capital [42]. Several concentric circles and the word “Me” in the centre can be found on the visual tool. Respondents were asked to fill in the names of their cooperation partners on the map. But they had to be aware of the fact that the closer a person was written to the “Me”, the more important they are to them. While filling out the network map, more questions were asked to get detailed information about the quality of the relationship—e.g., “How did person X come to be further away from the ego on the map?”

Three pre-tests from different fields (music, child and youth welfare) were conducted as part of the study. In this phase, the interview guide was refined: some questions were

deleted or the scope of other questions was limited. A total of 34 telephone interviews was conducted in four rural areas. The duration of the interviews ranged from 42 to 148 min.

3.3. Data Analysis

To analyse the data, we used a qualitative content analysis approach developed by Kuckartz [43], supported by MAXQDA programme for computer-assisted data analysis. One main step was the development of a category system. For this, the first step was to obtain an overview of all the material. This included the summary of cases.

In the second phase, main categories that emerged as recurring themes were generated from the material. To give an example, the category of trust was formed inductively, following the open coding of Grounded Theory Methodology [43] and was clearly defined in a codebook (see Table 1).

Table 1. Excerpt from the codebook—description of trust.

Main Category	Description	Themes	Coding Example
Trust	It is about trust in a person, organisation or network. Everything is coded here, where everything is either explicitly or implicitly interpreted as trust.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Trust/trustworthiness - Informal and formal cooperation - Interpersonal interactions 	“So, you can’t assume that just because you’ve been trusted once, that trust will be there forever. People actually withdraw again after every project.”

The codebook was developed by two people, who independently coded a part of the material following the category system and then compared whether they had assigned the same passages to the same category. The aim of consensual coding is to check that category descriptions are understood in the same way by different coders and thus to ensure the reliability of the coding [43]. During this process, the codebook had to be minimally adjusted. After coding all the material, we developed subcategories. These dimensions were defined and then reviewed as well as refined in the consensual coding process. To answer the research question, four categories are presented in more detail in this paper (see Table 2).

Table 2. Summary of four dimensions of the (sub)codebook.

Subcategory	Description	Themes
Presence and spatial proximity	Knowing about each other, contacting each other and acting with their fellow human beings are encoded in this.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Addressing each other directly - Chance encounters - Knowing each other - Perceiving people from the immediate environment
Multiplexity	Overlaps of different roles are coded for this purpose.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Linking several voluntary roles - Linking voluntary work and profession - Linking personal relationships (e.g., person B is the father of person A’s classmate)
Third party	Third parties who have specifically supported cultural education practitioners in networking and building up cooperation structures are added to this.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - People who have been helpful in recruiting new members or cooperation partners - People who have advocated for you

Table 2. Cont.

Subcategory	Description	Themes
Community spirit	If it is about collective action or goals, then it is coded to this subcategory.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Collective goals - Activities for the community - Voluntary participation in associations

Subsequently, all the material was coded following the subcategories. A short summary interpretation was formulated for each subcategory and the connections between the subcategories were analysed.

4. Results

According to the data, cooperation structures in the context of cultural education in rural areas are closely linked to—particularly personal—social networks. There is hardly any clear separation between cooperation and social networks. Thus, collaborations take place on professional, voluntary, and private levels, which are closely linked to each other (see Section 4.2). In addition, the data show mainly informal but also partly time-limited collaborations with cultural institutions. As illustrated in the following, trust plays an important role:

So, you can't assume that just because you've been trusted once, that trust will be there forever. People actually withdraw again after every project (head of theatre club).

The quotation illustrates that relationships based on cooperation tend to be unstable, so they are maintained principally by mutual trust. This implies that the relationship of trust must be fostered again and again. How trust is developed will be explained in more detail in the following sections.

4.1. Presence and Spatial Proximity

This dimension is referred to as presence and spatial proximity. Due to spatial proximity, mutual observation mechanisms and thus also transparency are promoted within the community. Consequently, knowledge about neighbours is taken for granted and considered part of community culture, as the following quote illustrates:

I live in the village in [district]. And in the village, it's like this with us, that of course we know each other. And also, from the neighbours and from the friendly families and familiar faces (head of a music school).

In addition, the data indicate that newcomers who stay in the immediate neighbourhood for a long time are perceived by the community and their actions are observed. These observation mechanisms are used to judge the cultural practitioners who have moved in:

then you also get to talk to people, and I've noticed that almost everyone knows me [...] and I think they like what I do (wildlife educator).

This form of assessment is interpreted as a preliminary basis for developing general trust. In this respect, exchange processes do not necessarily have to be content-based and deep to build trust in the initial phase. The first mechanisms of trust already emerge through the consistent presence of individuals in public spaces, which is promoted by spatial proximity. Finally, these aspects promote mutual observation mechanisms in rural areas, as already mentioned. In this way, feelings of security and control are triggered and thus power is exerted on potential partners.

So, they keep a close eye on what I make, what I do. How is that, well, if my husband gets drunk in the evening and wanders through the village, then I have a problem with my school, with my image, so to speak (head of a music school).

This quotation indicates that couples are associated as a unit within the community and that there are implicit social rule systems in the community, such as not walking around the settlement when intoxicated. If a social expectation is not achieved, it can have consequences for the relationship of trust with (potential) partners of cultural education institutions, even though they are directly or indirectly involved in breaking the rules. Therefore, the awareness of these implicit social rule systems, which are individually developed in each region and are especially mediated by the existing spatial proximity, is highly relevant for the maintenance of trust.

The advantage of this spatial proximity and thus of knowing each other is that cultural practitioners quickly get an overview of the people they can contact directly in a targeted manner to obtain certain limited resources. Due to this dependency, the willingness to cooperate and the giving of trust is more likely to be promoted:

You just know that there is an artist, and I have seen something of hers before, and I always thought that was great. [. . .] And then it's not so complicated, you just go up and say, hello [name], what do you think, we do this and that here, can you imagine joining in (head of a theatre club).

Interviews conducted for the present article demonstrate that steady social exchange fosters trust between participants of a collaboration. In this context, the data indicates that regular, personal interactions are particularly promoted by spatial proximity in everyday situations. Such encounters often take place unplanned:

I just say that and then of course I often meet people while shopping, on the way to work or on a bike trip. You know each other, you see each other, you greet each other. We talk briefly (head of a music school).

Through such regular and sometimes random encounters, information is mutually exchanged. Thus, the data suggests that trust is fostered through the mutual exchange of resources. In addition, personal information is given, which makes the trustworthiness of the persons more closely evaluated.

4.2. Multiplexity

Another dimension that emerged as a recurring theme out of the data is multiplexity. This dimension involves the linking of different types of relationships. Local cultural education practitioners have multiple, different points of contact, e.g., family relationship and voluntary work or profession and voluntary work. In this way, it is easier for the actors to evaluate the potential partners in terms of their characters, which can increase trust. This already indicates that citizens often engage in several associations, which is why multiplexity is seen as a regional specificity:

And these are the active people who are also involved in other activities. For example, I'm also in the funding association for the construction [of a building] in [village], so also here [in the region], also in my hometown. So, in this respect, one still has several points of contact (volunteer in a foundation).

Regarding funding institutions, multiplex connections are primarily present in the professional context, where relationships-between funding organizations and cultural facilities-can be found at both the personal and organisational levels. The following quotation is an example of the multiplex collaborative relationship at the organisational level. Through such structures, the relationship of trust between cultural institution and funding institutions can be maintained. In this way, facilities that make an important contribution to securing funding for cultural education programmes are regularly informed about the cultural practitioners' project implementation and thus also about their activities. Accordingly, as described in the previous section, observation mechanisms also take place here. As soon as the social relationship between funding organisations and cultural education practitioners are reinforced through multiplex interactions, communication structures can be made clearer and more efficient.

and [he] is involved with us as a museum in three or even four ways. On the one hand, he has also joined the board of the museum association on behalf of the district. So, in this respect he is de facto also my customer. Then he is the sponsor (staff member of a museum).

The strengthening of trust in relation to multiplexity is promoted primarily on a personal level. This is illustrated in the following quotation, in which the mayor, who manages the financial support of cultural associations, and the head of a cultural association, who is asking for financial support, know each other personally from her voluntary work in another association:

because I know the chairwoman [of an art society] and worked with her for years in the committee of the [...] and I think that also helps communication much more easily. If I know my counterpart, I can quickly pick up the phone and make a call, rather than doing it formally by letter and all that (mayor).

Based on this excerpt, we interpret that multiplex relationships between professional and personal levels during the existing relationship of trust make it easier to assess the other person's pattern of action and behaviour. In this way, the mayor can estimate the reaction of the chairman of the art society to a direct telephone call. Compared to formal means of communication, such as letters in this case, personal telephone calls are interpreted as an instrument that is allowed to be used primarily on a personal relationship level. Coordination and negotiation can be carried out more efficiently in this way.

In addition to collaborations between funding organisations and cultural institutions, our data indicated that there is an overlap of roles at the micro level. So, you can find a link between cultural engagement and family or friends. This is presented in the data as a typical regional characteristic:

He may be from the city, but he's actually the brother of this one and that one. No, so often people know each other very well (head of a museum).

Therefore, several actors already know each other on a personal level before collaborations, which means that trust is already basically present. This existing relationship of trust can be interpreted as the basis for a general interest in working together to implement a joint cultural project. A great advantage of such multiplex relationships is the rapid acquisition of social resources and the confidence of an uncomplicated cooperation:

because we're also friends like that, so it's always a relatively short official channel, you always have to be a bit careful that there's no nepotism and no lobbying (laughs), but in the end you also need people you can do well with (head of a theatre club).

This quotation can be interpreted that to reduce the complexity, existing social capital is used and primarily accessed from personal networks. However, it can also be interpreted in another way, that the intention and the possibility of the emergence of new collaborations are less likely to be considered due to multiplex relationships and the established trust. Accordingly, there is a danger that the social, cultural network will remain in its existing structures instead of developing further. The use of the terms "nepotism" and "lobbying" refers to power relations. Through personal relationships, certain groups of people are favoured and can gain advantages for themselves within the framework of cooperation of which other groups of people could be deprived of. Thus, relationships of trust fostered by multiplexity can be interpreted as an instrument of power.

4.3. Third Party

The advantage of this dimension is that when (social) resources are limited, suitable cooperation partners can be found quickly, efficiently and in a way that reduces complexity. Here, we distinguish between mediators and gatekeepers. Mediators have a rather symbolic function as a connecting element between two people from different organisations that are already established within the community and integrated into the regional network. The existing trust in the third party is illustrated in the following quote:

then you just ask there again, who does that with you, do you know someone, and then you just call (laughs) and ask (head of a local heritage association).

One benefit of this is that trust is more likely to be established with potential collaborative actors compared to building trust with the help of gatekeepers. Trusting someone involves a certain risk. According to the interviews, regional actors are needed to reduce this risk, especially in the case of (new) cultural education practitioners. These people operate more as gatekeepers who vouch for the unknown person, have a more established position within the community (e.g., mayor) and thus facilitate access to the regional network. In this way, new collaborations can emerge in which cultural offerings are promoted. Finally, third parties guarantee that the potential partner does not suffer any disadvantage from the collaboration with actors of cultural education institutions and that there are common interests, which is illustrated in the following example:

And [she] was very committed there and kept saying you can trust them, they basically represent the civic interests of this landscape (staff member of a museum).

However, gatekeepers run the risk of reducing or even losing trust within the social network due to a lack of recommendation. The establishment of a new cultural education infrastructure, which is to be supported in particular by family members, is seen as a solution to this challenge:

I somehow thought at the time, no, I don't want to involve my family in this. Because if it doesn't work out, which is also a danger, then it might be helpful if you don't pull the people who are in the same place into the abyss (head of a theatre club).

This interview excerpt exemplifies that the introduction of a new cultural education program can have possible consequences for the already existing social environment. The cultural education program is seen here as an experiment that can either succeed or fail. For third parties, there is a risk of being excluded from the community in the event of failure and loss of trust.

4.4. Community Spirit

Many of the interview partners point to the relevance of common goals. These play a special role in cooperation and the formation of trust. Associated with this are common, implicit rules and norms in the community that are to be met. This includes, among other things, reciprocity as well as acting in the public interest.

According to the principle, you are needed, and don't you want to help out, you also don't really want to say no (mayor).

In the quote, the tendency to behave in a socially desirable manner is made clear, although there is a disinterest in conforming to the expectations of the community. The expression that persons are "needed" indicates the importance of trust, but also the responsibility attributed to persons with certain roles. However, this expectation can also be interpreted as a request to behave in a certain way in order not to lose trustworthiness. In addition to reciprocity, voluntariness also plays a central role, as the following excerpt shows:

And there are also associations that are very active in the village, for example trombone choirs or sports clubs and so on. And as soon as you get involved in a club, you are fully immersed in this life (head of a music school).

Active participation in associations can therefore facilitate access to social networks and build trust. Voluntary involvement leads to new contacts and cooperation partners. Finally, according to the respondents, the community is defined by its number of associations and volunteer involvement. This is also interpreted as a distinguishing feature from cities:

This means that more than one in ten people are active in the fire department and you will not find this level of willingness in urban areas (mayor).

Thus, it is suggested that community spirit is instrumentalised as a promotional tool for rural community and networks. This dimension is also used as a marketing strategy to maintain cooperation between voluntary organisations in cultural education:

Yes, we have always had the tradition of involving the associations in our work, simply to also keep in touch with the place. To also show that we are doing it with you. We don't do it for ourselves, we do it with you (head of a theatre club).

This interview excerpt shows that community spirit and participation are used as a strategy to build and maintain trust and thus also to strengthen cooperative relationships.

4.5. Connection between These Dimensions

It was demonstrated that there are not always clear divisions in the development of cooperation and social (informal) networks in the context of cultural education in rural areas. It has also been suggested in the previous section that these subcategories do not function independently but are interlinked with each other. These connections will be described in more detail below (see Figure 1).

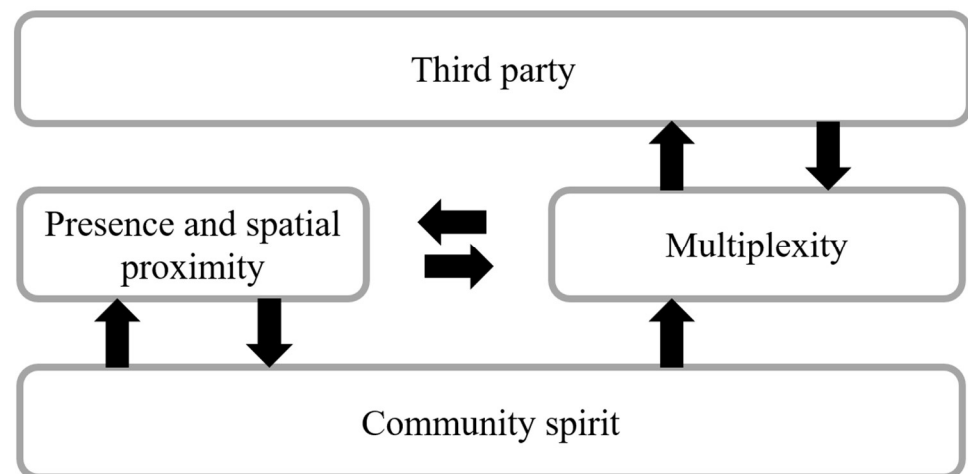


Figure 1. Regional dimensions of trust in local cultural networks and cooperation.

Presence and spatial proximity-multiplexity: The dimensions of presence and spatial proximity as well as multiplexity are closely interrelated and can reinforce each other. Spatial proximity fosters mutual (unconscious) observation, so that people see which and also how many people are volunteering in cultural facilities. In this way, further relationships of trust are developed with certain associations with the members involved. Through participation in the associations, multiplex relationships can subsequently be fostered in perspective. Thus, at the latest in the development of cultural cooperation, there is the possibility that trust is already built. Conversely, multiplexity can also include the presence of one person. By participating in different organisations, both at the professional and private level, there are more opportunities to observe each other and to get to know each other. In this way, there is a chance to build and strengthen trust with (potential) cooperative partners. At the same time, however, there is the danger that trust will be reduced, insofar as people are assessed as less trustworthy over time.

Third party-multiplexity: Gatekeepers or mediators play a special role in the recruitment of new, suitable, concrete cooperation partners and thus also in the development of trust. This dimension can be connected to multiplexity, especially in a limited period of time. For example, it was mentioned in the interviews that cooperation between the chairpersons of different associations took place mainly through their members who are active in both clubs and know both chairpersons personally. Accordingly, those potential partners already place trust in the participant-person A. While person A initially assumes the role as a member of association A and association B, simultaneously occurring overlaps of two roles (multiplexity) then develop during the cooperation development. Person A

takes on the role as a member of the association and as a mediator between association A and association B.

Community spirit-Presence and spatial proximity: The dimension of community spirit plays an important role in the data in relation to regional trust development. A connection between community spirit, and presence and proximity can be interpreted from the data. It becomes apparent that there is sometimes a lack of social resources to pursue collective projects and goals. The spatial structures can simplify the search for potential, proximate, social resources and thus specifically ask people for support. This assumes that there is a basic willingness to trust. This connection can also be interpreted in the opposite direction. According to this, the involved actors are aware of the fact that mutual observations and exchange processes exist due to the given presence of the others and the spatial proximity. To maintain trust, the people involved tend to behave collectively. In addition to presence and spatial proximity, the interviews suggest a connection to the dimension multiplexity. Because of the implicit community consensus to behave and act collectively, some members tend to engage in voluntary work. Within the framework of the association's activities, the possibility arises to build multiplex relationships and thus to already bring along a relationship of trust during the development of cultural cooperation.

5. Discussion

Our study's research question was which conditions contribute to the emergence and development of trust between actors from different organizations in the context of cultural education in rural regions. Based on our analyses, it can be concluded that different conditions (presence and proximity, multiplexity, third party and community spirit) make an important contribution to the building of trust relationships, which are at the same time mutually regularly reviewed for the maintenance of trust.

The literature describes that trust between individuals within a community is fostered through multiple interactions [8,16]. This is confirmed in our study with reference to cultural education in rural areas. At the same time, however, our data also show that trust is associated with a certain degree of risk [8,27]. To better assess this risk, observations and information exchange processes can provide important hints. Multiplexity and collective activities can also promote trust and thus new collaborations. In this way, whether or not cultural education practitioners behave according to the social demands of the community is valued. This confirms previous findings and observations on voluntarism in rural areas, which further highlights the importance of social control for aspects of trust in the field of volunteering [8]. Our analyses confirm the assumption that trust, and control are closely related in relation to cultural education in rural areas. Since collaborations in this field are often merely temporary, existing trust relationships need to be reviewed regularly. Control is rarely realized overtly or in an offensive manner. Rather, it takes place indirectly and partly implicitly and is expressed, among other things, in mutual critical observation. However, control mechanisms cannot replace trust. There are primarily indications that they can significantly minimize the risks involved in trust relationships [24].

According to our analysis, to establish cultural education programs as well as new cooperation structures, access to the regional network is required above all. Local actors who volunteer in several associations can act as mediators, building a bridge between people from different organizations based on trust. This connection has already been suggested in Putnam's essays: "I trust you, because I trust her, and she assures me that she trusts you" [27] (p. 169). In this respect, we have distinguished mediators from gatekeepers based on our analyses. Third parties acting as mediators are more likely to be found in horizontal networks. Accordingly, the parties involved are on a level with equal resources and low dependencies [27]. Gatekeepers, on the other hand, play a special role in vertical networks-i.e., in hierarchical relationships with high dependencies [27]. This gives gatekeepers a certain position of power and suggests that trust is intertwined with structural power resulting from privilege [44,45]. This connection has already been

taken up in the study on cross-sector associations (CSAs) in education by Kappauf and Kolleck [15].

Being aware of these four dimensions (presence and proximity, multiplexity, third party and community spirit) of trust is essential for the development of informal cultural cooperation and networks in structurally weak regions. In the literature, it is described that the promotion of cooperation between associations also contributes to increasing trust [34], which is considered an important indicator for the growth of voluntarism in rural areas [20,37]. The growth of volunteering, especially in the field of cultural education, contributes to the promotion of presence, multiplex relationships, community spirit and the establishment of contacts with people who can potentially act as a third party. In this way, trust is built with potential cooperation partners at the same time. Thus, at this point an iterative process becomes apparent. This process can make an important contribution to maintaining cultural engagement in rural areas. The influence of cultural volunteering on trust as well as trust in cultural cooperation and networks in structurally weak regions can be demonstrated using our data. Conversely, the influence of cooperation and networks on trust as well as trust on voluntary work in relation to cultural education in rural areas remains unexplained, which is why further research is needed. Nevertheless, this suggests that trust is increasingly strengthened through this iterative process. According to Hovmand and Svendsen [36], the promotion of trust in structurally weak areas can be used as a marketing strategy for attracting new residents. In this way, increasing migration and thus the decline in volunteers described by Priemer et al. [7] could be counteracted in rural areas. At this point we recommend longitudinal studies for the preservation of cultural structures in rural areas, which are indispensable for regional development and the promotion of democracy.

In conclusion, we were able to observe and describe different conditions for the development of trust in structurally weak areas. However, we were only able to identify a small aspect of trust-building in context of cultural engagement, which is why additional empirical studies are needed. Accordingly, it remains open whether these factors can also be found in urban centres. Furthermore, our data were collected at the beginning of the pandemic. This also motivates further research interest: for example, the possible long-term impact of this pandemic on trust-building and volunteering in terms of cultural education cooperation and networks could be examined in more detail. With regard to our findings, it raises the question of how policies such as contact restrictions affected the dimensions of community spirit or presence and proximity over time, and thus influenced trust building in the context of cultural volunteering in rural areas. Referring to Wichmann [38], qualitative studies do not pursue statistical representativeness, but rather offer the scientific benefit of identifying new aspects as well as the systematic examination of a possible transfer to other contexts [38]. In addition, such an exploratory scope can serve as a foundation for quantitative studies, which we would advocate for further research with regard to cultural and arts education in rural areas.

6. Conclusions

In summary, our analysis offers new empirical aspects of how trust is formed in connection with cultural and arts education in rural areas in Germany. The results suggest that the aspects of presence and proximity, multiplexity, third parties, and community spirit play an important role in the formation and maintenance of trust relationships. Finally, trust contains a certain degree of risk, which can be minimized through observations and information exchange processes gained through presence and proximity, multiplexity, and third parties. In this way, local actors can estimate whether or not cultural practitioners are acting according to the normative expectations of the community, and these individuals can thus be considered trustworthy or not. Accordingly, new important aspects of trust-building for the field of cultural and arts education in rural areas have been found, which can serve as a foundation for the promotion of cultural engagement. This currently has a special meaning due to the tendency of declining association memberships in structurally weak re-

gions. Building and strengthening relationships of trust between association members and between organizations can be of considerable benefit in promoting cultural volunteering. The emergence of new cooperative structures can create new attractive programs and thus also potentially attract new residents and association members. Further research based on our findings is needed for this purpose and for a holistic view on cultural volunteering in rural areas.

Concluding, this brings us one step closer to understanding the phenomenon of trust-building with its facets in relation to cultural cooperation and networks in structurally weak regions. Building upon this, initial conceptual approaches can be developed for maintaining cultural volunteering in rural areas.

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