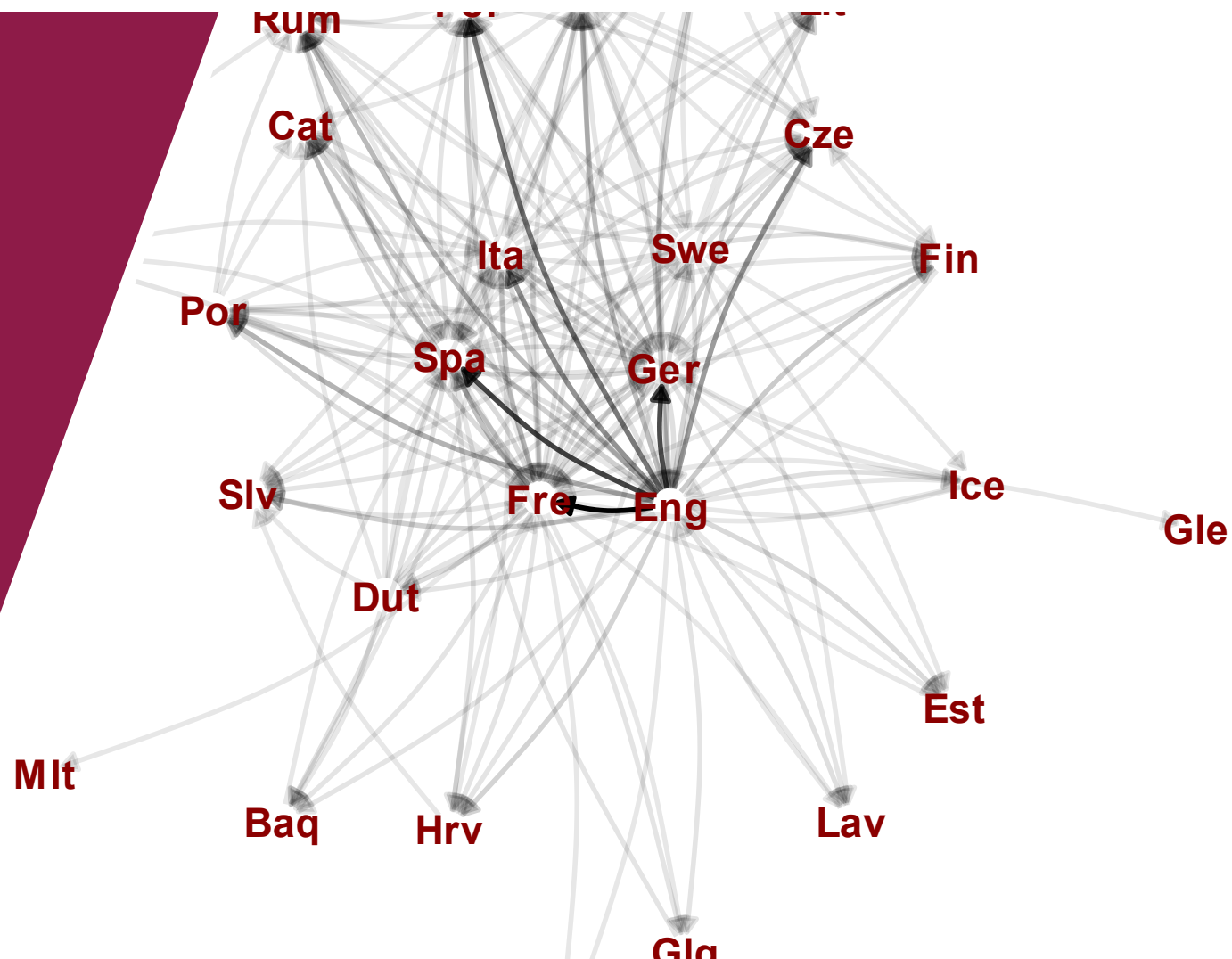
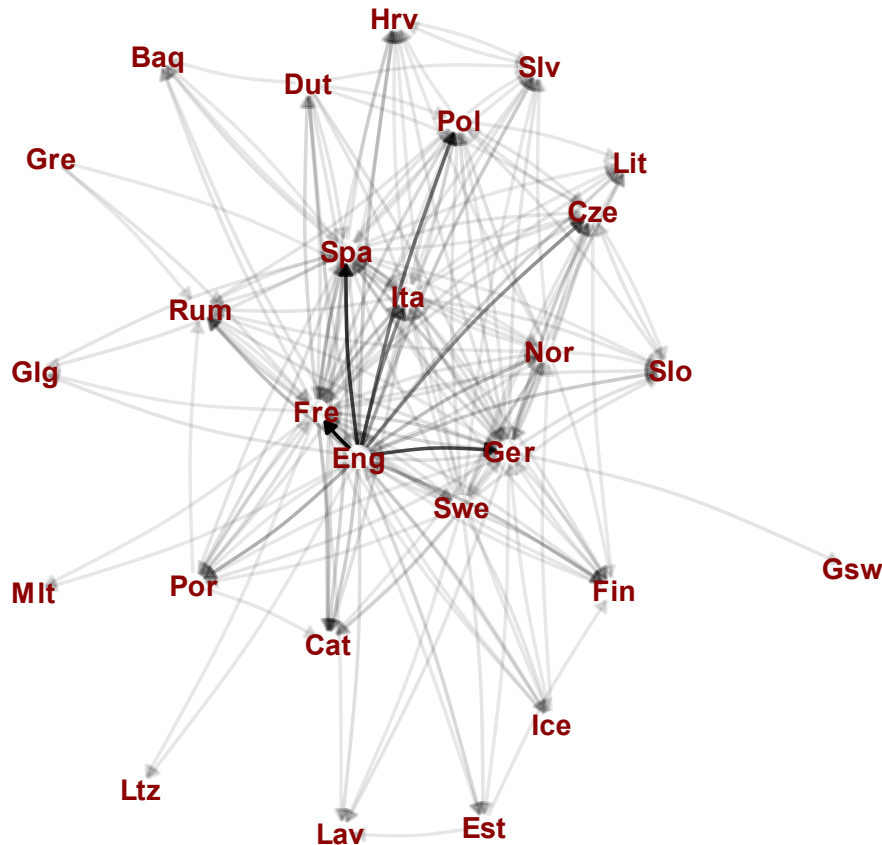


# Theorizing transborder cultural brokerage

Matthias Kuppler  
Lía Durán Mogollón



# Literature in movement: The eurolit project



**Book translations in Europe** (2018 to 2020, N = 25 countries, collected from national libraries)

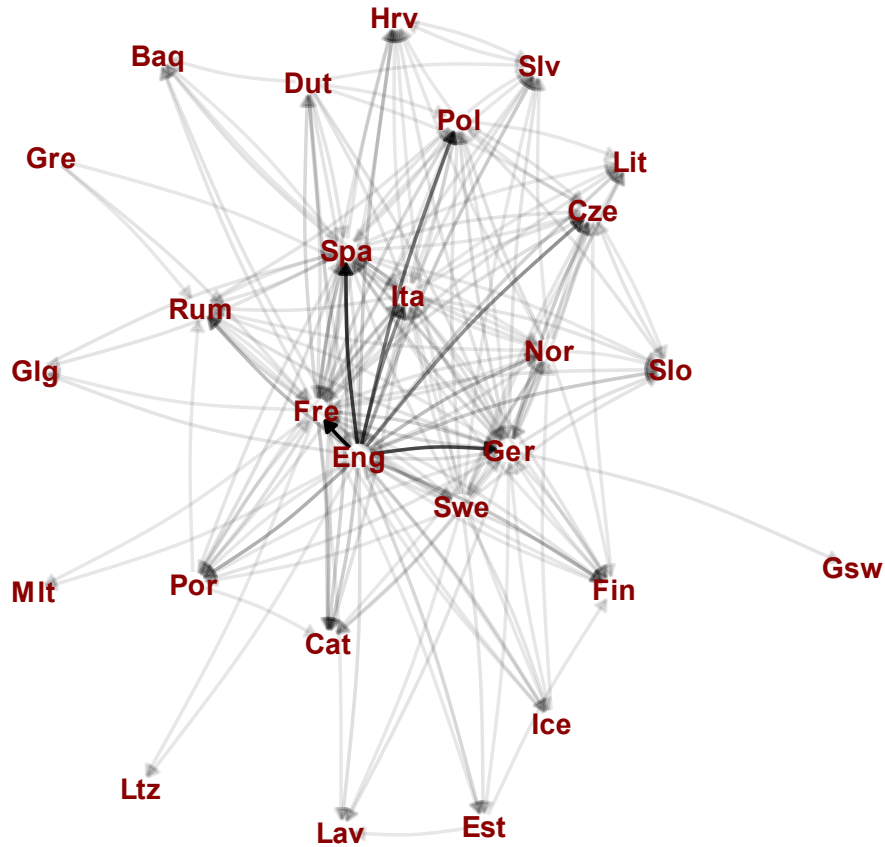
## Guiding questions

- What are the **dynamics, structures, processes, and negotiations** underlying book translations in Europe?
- Are there **conflicts and shared interests** among actors involved in these exchanges?

## Design

- **Mixed-methods:** qualitative stakeholder interviews, document analysis, network analysis

# Why do we observe this exchange pattern?

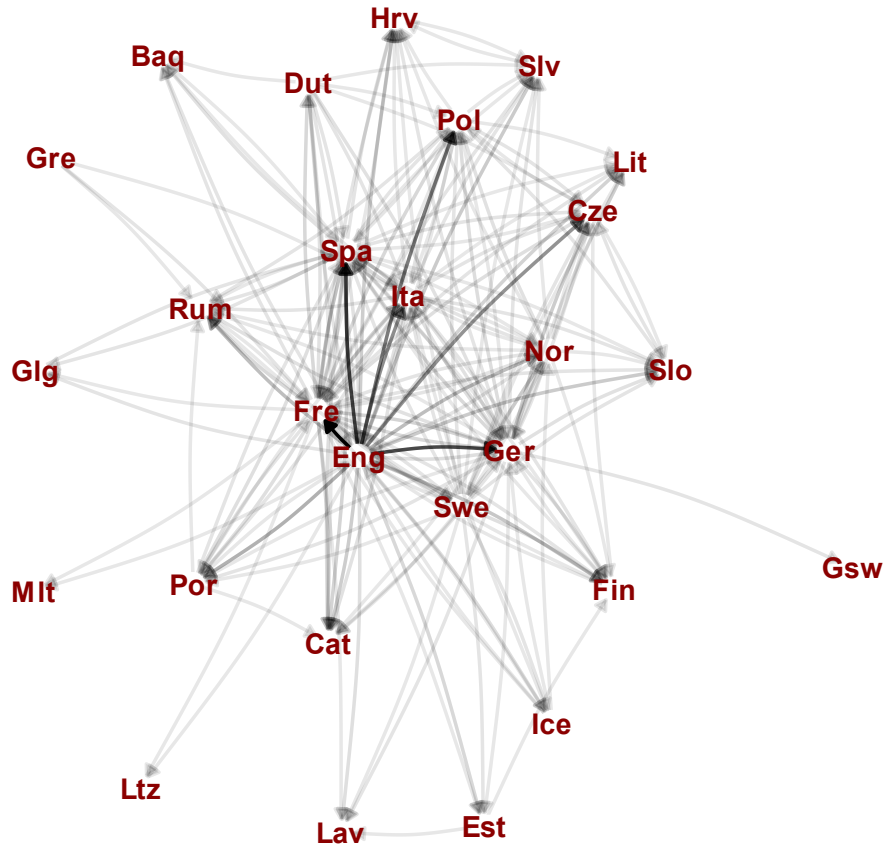


## Sender perspective



- Examples: Cultural imperialism (Ritzer 2012; Tomlinson 2012), supply-driven translations (Vimr 2020)

# Why do we observe this exchange pattern?



**Sender perspective**

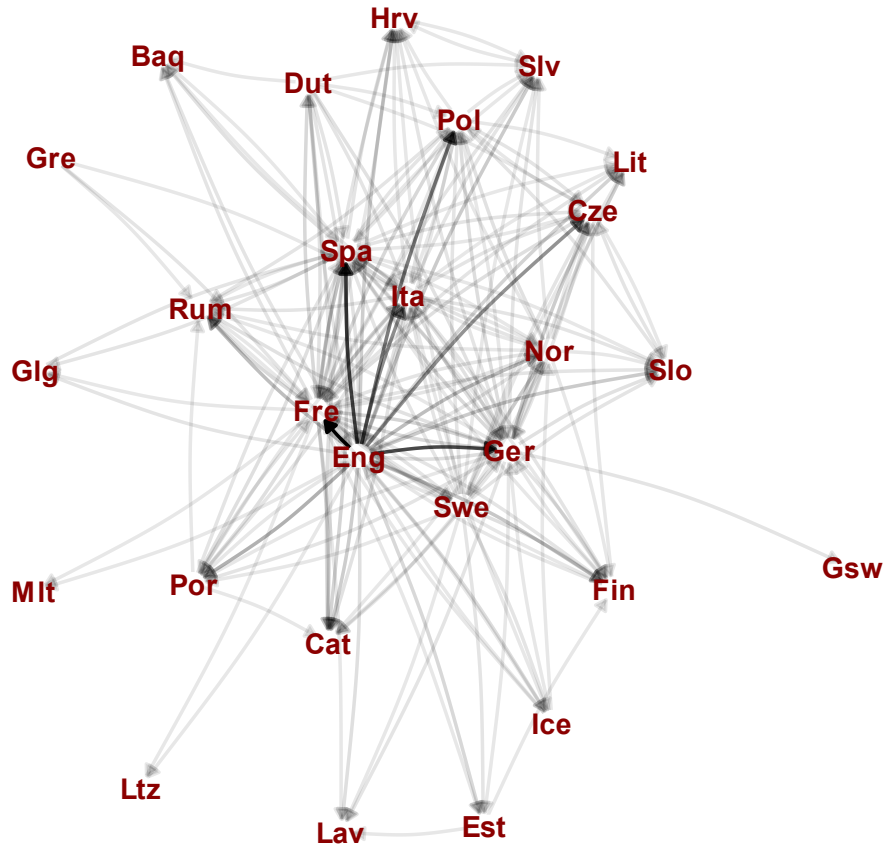


**Receiver perspective**



- Examples: Cultural hybridization (Kraidy 2002), demand-driven translation (Toury 2012)

# Why do we observe this exchange pattern?



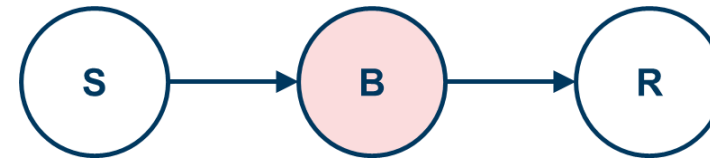
## Sender perspective



## Receiver perspective



## What about the intermediaries (**brokers**)?



- Little research, except Kuipers (2011; 2012), Franssen & Kuipers (2013), Smits (2016)

# Transborder cultural brokerage

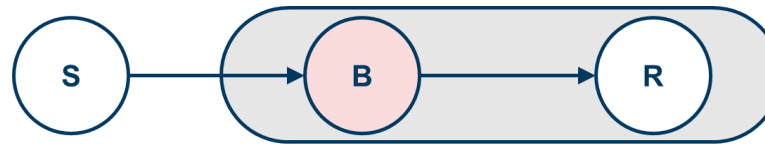
## Transborder cultural brokers

- Actors who enable and manage the exchange of cultural goods – in their material and symbolic dimension – across geographic, political, and linguistic borders

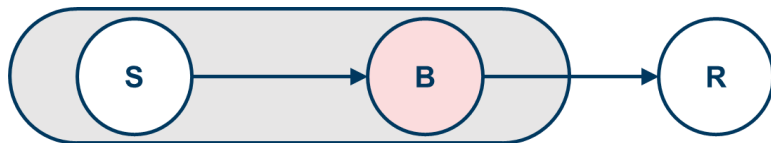
# Transborder cultural brokerage

## Transborder cultural brokers

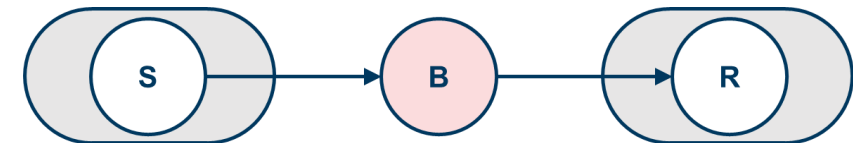
- Actors who enable and manage the exchange of cultural goods – in their material and symbolic dimension – across geographic, political, and linguistic borders



(1) Gatekeeper



(2) Representative



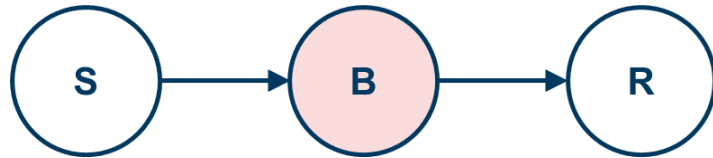
(3) Liaison

Inspired by Gould & Fernandez (1989)

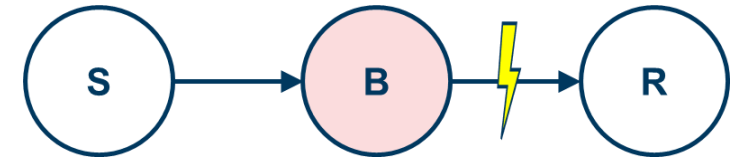
# Transborder cultural brokerage

## Brokers as filters (Hirsch 1972)

- Brokers select which goods are forwarded from the sender to the receiver



VS





# Transborder cultural brokerage

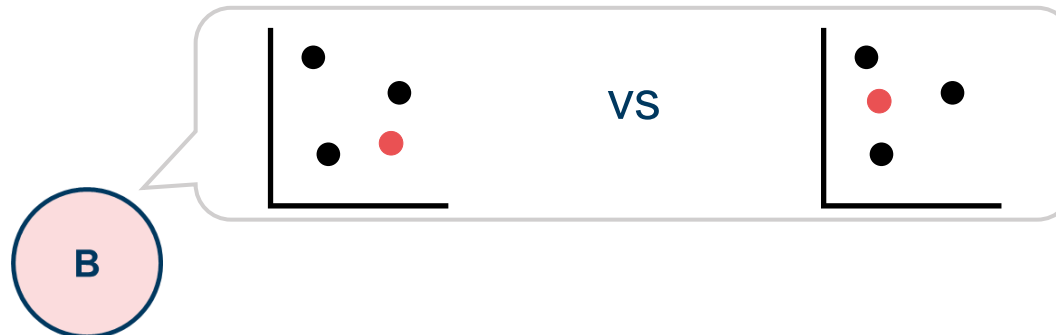
## Brokers as filters (Hirsch 1972)

- Brokers select which goods are forwarded from the sender to the receiver



## Brokers as qualifiers (Callon et al 2002; Maguire 2014)

- Brokers strategically position the good in relation to other goods



# Our perspective

## Basic assumption

- To explain which cultural goods (do not) cross borders and to illuminate how these goods are received, it is necessary to examine the positions, relations, interests, and practices of transborder brokers
- Understand cross-border flows of cultural goods as the **aggregated outcome of the actions of differently-positioned transborder cultural brokers**

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**But: How to explain the actions of brokers?**

# A (preliminary) framework

## Basic assumption

- Broker actions are shaped by their relative position within **cultural industries**

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## Definition: Cultural industries (Hirsch 1972)

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## Two perspectives on cultural industries

- Cultural industries as **netchains**
- Cultural industries as collections of **fields**

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## Two perspectives on cultural industries

- Cultural industries as **netchains** → Focus on manifest relations of interaction and exchange between actors (Henderson et al 2002; also: Becker 1974; DiMaggio 1977)
- Cultural industries as collections of **fields** → Focus on latent/objective relations of dominance and similarity between positions (occupied by actors) (Bourdieu 1983; Childress 2019)



# Positions

# Cultural industries as netchains

**A: Creative field** (e.g., writers)

B: Boundary spanners (e.g., literary agents and scouts)

**M: Managerial field** (e.g., publishers)

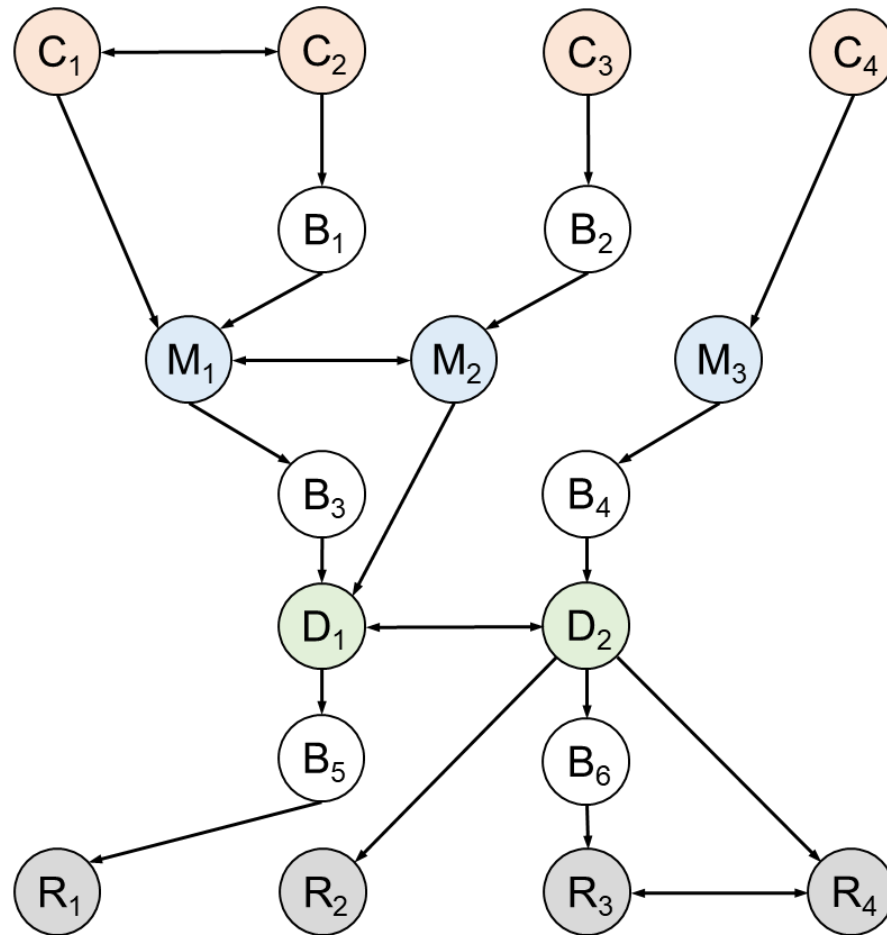
B: Boundary spanners (e.g., sales and marketing personnel)

**D: Distribution field** (e.g., mass-media, booksellers)

B: Boundary spanners (e.g., critics)

R: Recipients (e.g., readers)

# Cultural industries as netchains



**A: Creative field**

B: Boundary spanners

**M: Managerial field**

B: Boundary spanners

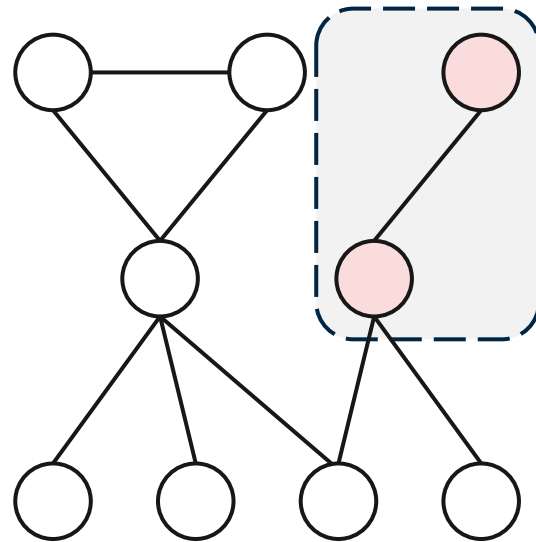
**D: Distribution field**

B: Boundary spanners

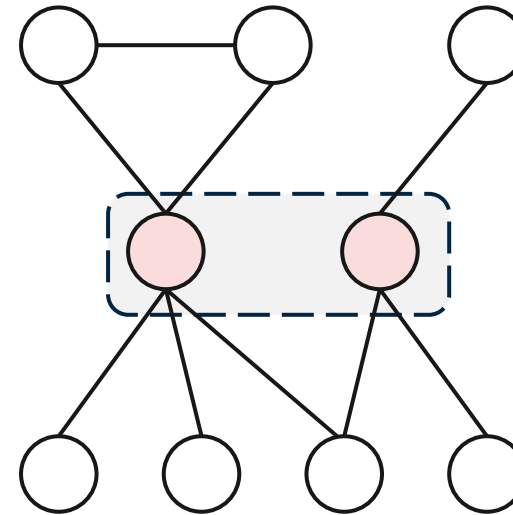
R: Recipients

# Cultural industries as netchains

## Netchain position as (social) capital (DiMaggio 1977)

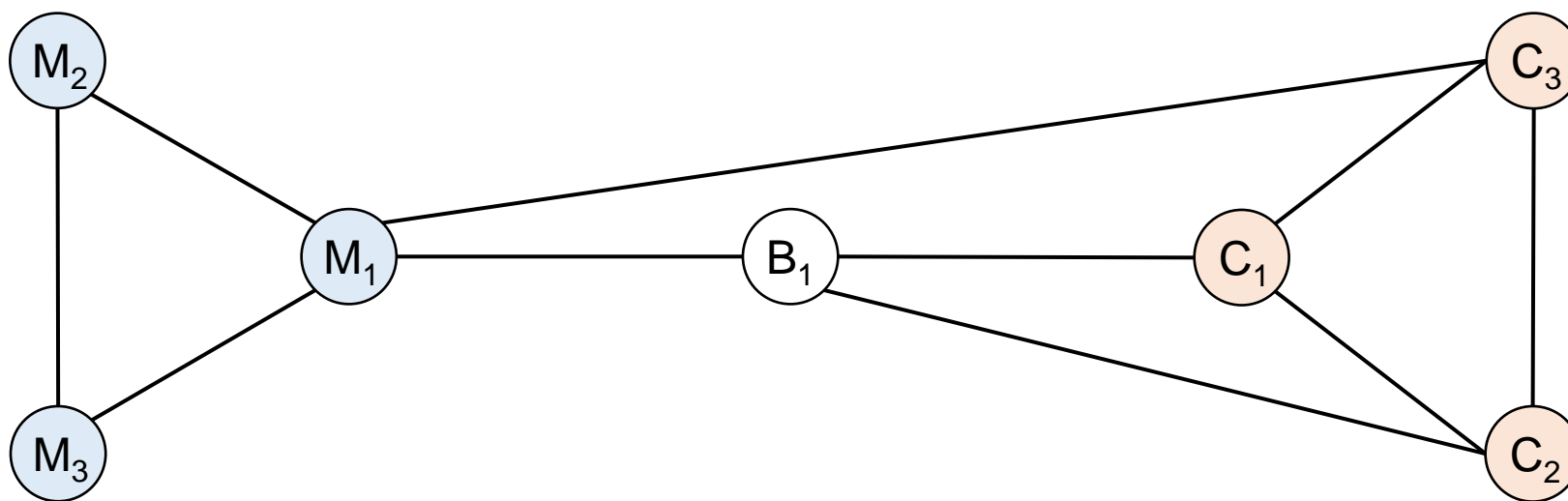


(1) Vertical integration



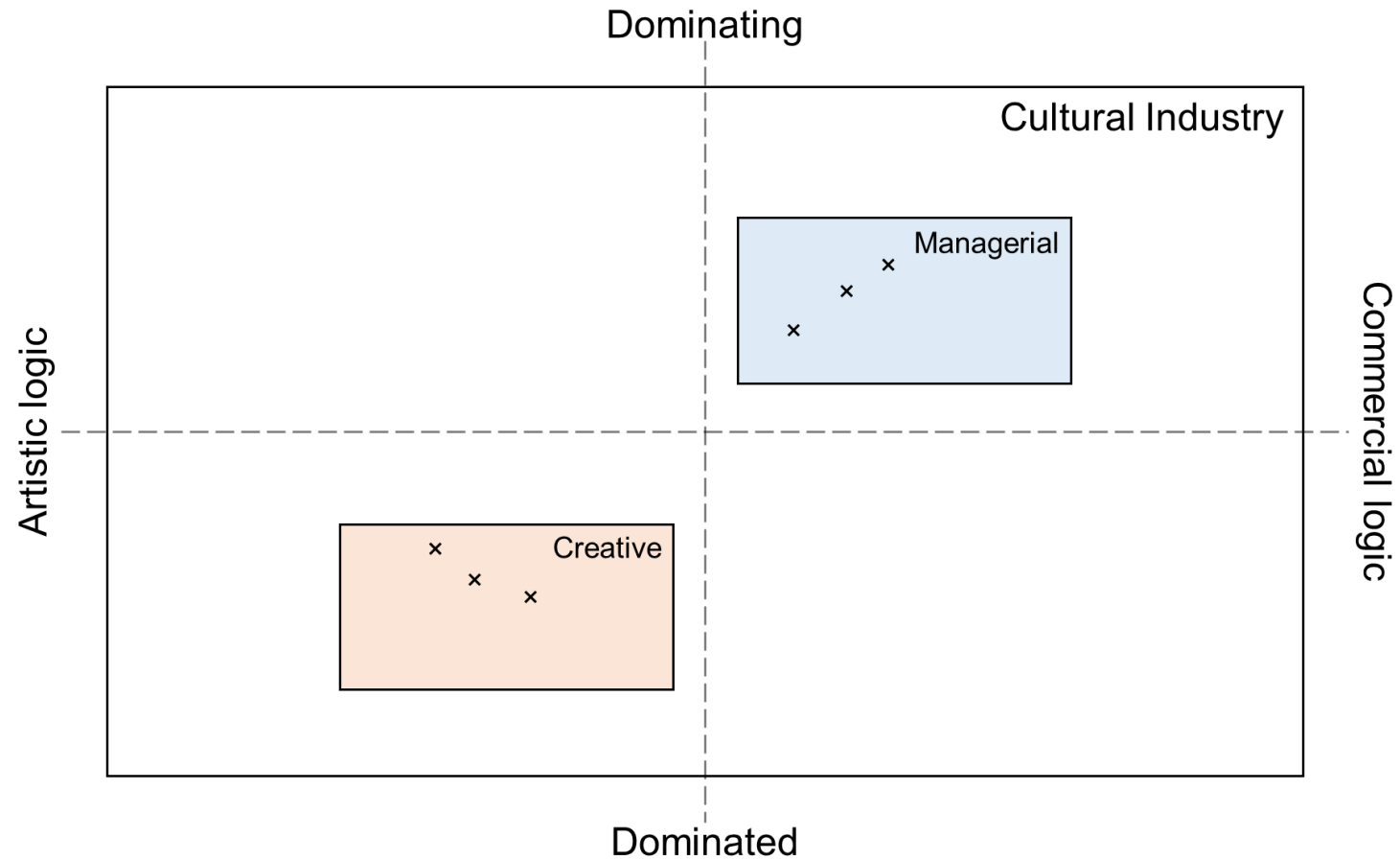
(2) Horizontal integration

# Centrality: Another source of capital



# Cultural industries as fields

# Cultural industries as fields



# Networks and fields: Similar but different?

## **Networks are not fields** (and vice versa) (Bourdieu 1996)

- Fields are defined by **objective relations between positions** that structure field-internal interactions
- Networks are defined by **inter-personal relations between actors**



# Networks and fields: Similar but different?

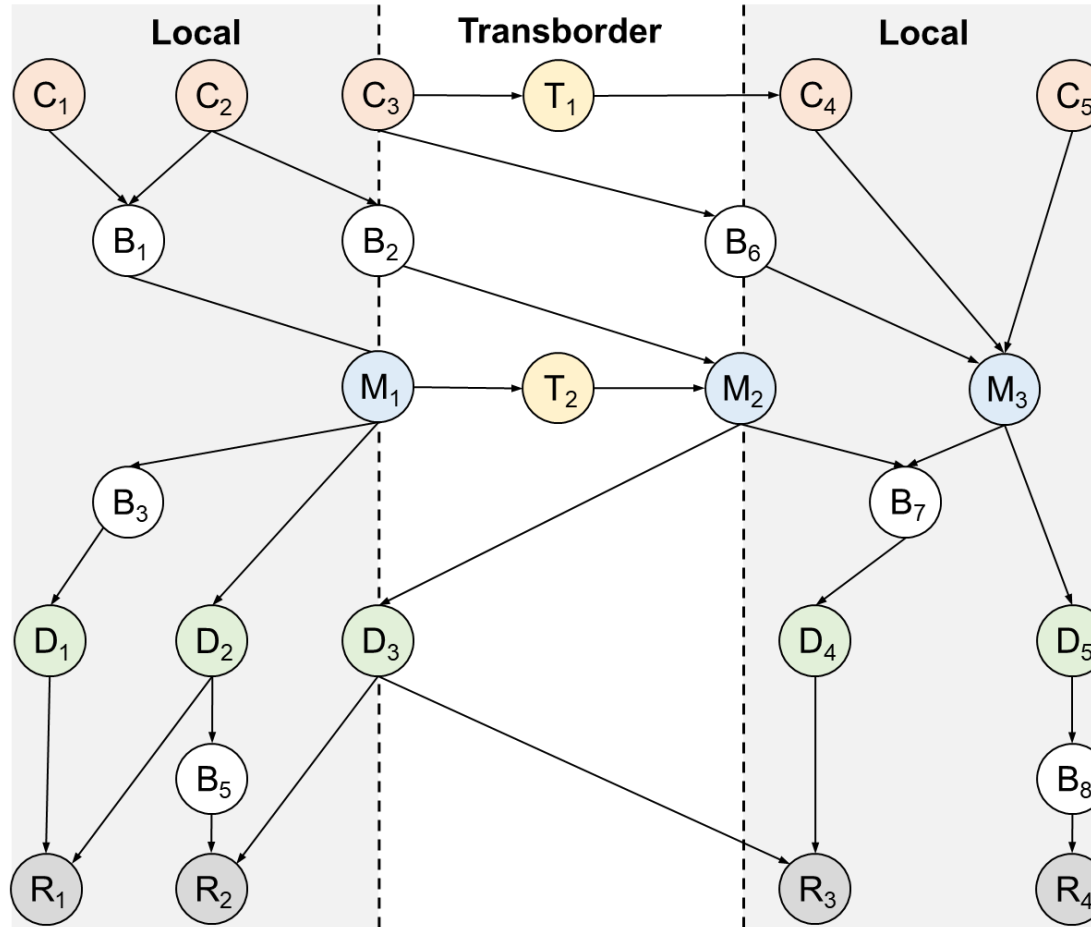
**Networks are not fields** (and vice versa) (Bourdieu 1996)

**Networks and fields are inter-related** (Bottero & Crossley 2011; Crossley 2013)

- Positions within networks are social capital – strategic resources that actors leverage in field-internal struggles to improve or maintain their objective field position
- Given the strategic value of networks, actors actively invest into their inter-personal relations and try to shape the network structure to their advantage

# Transborder perspective

# Transborder perspective: Netchains



**A: Creative field**

B: Boundary spanners

**M: Managerial field**

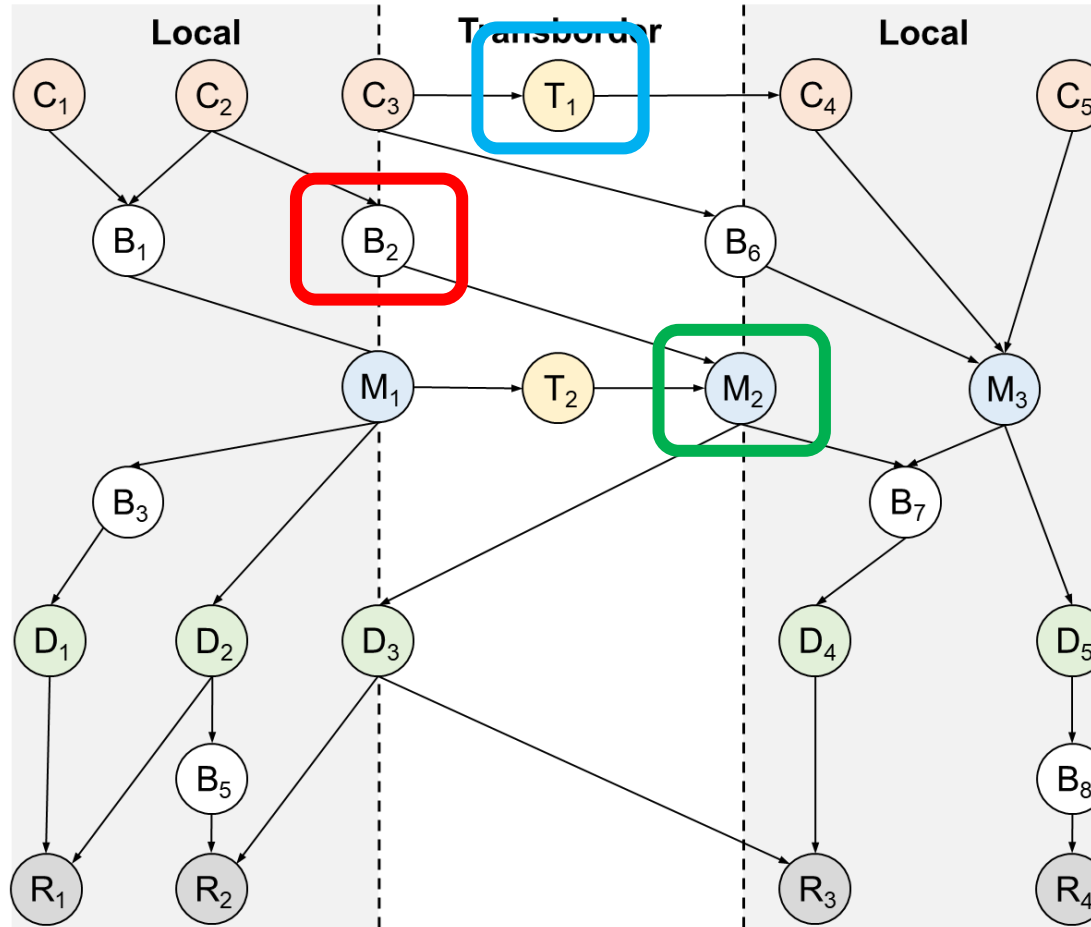
B: Boundary spanners

**D: Distribution field**

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R: Recipients

# Transborder perspective: Netchains



**A: Creative field**

B: Boundary spanners

**M: Managerial field**

B: Boundary spanners

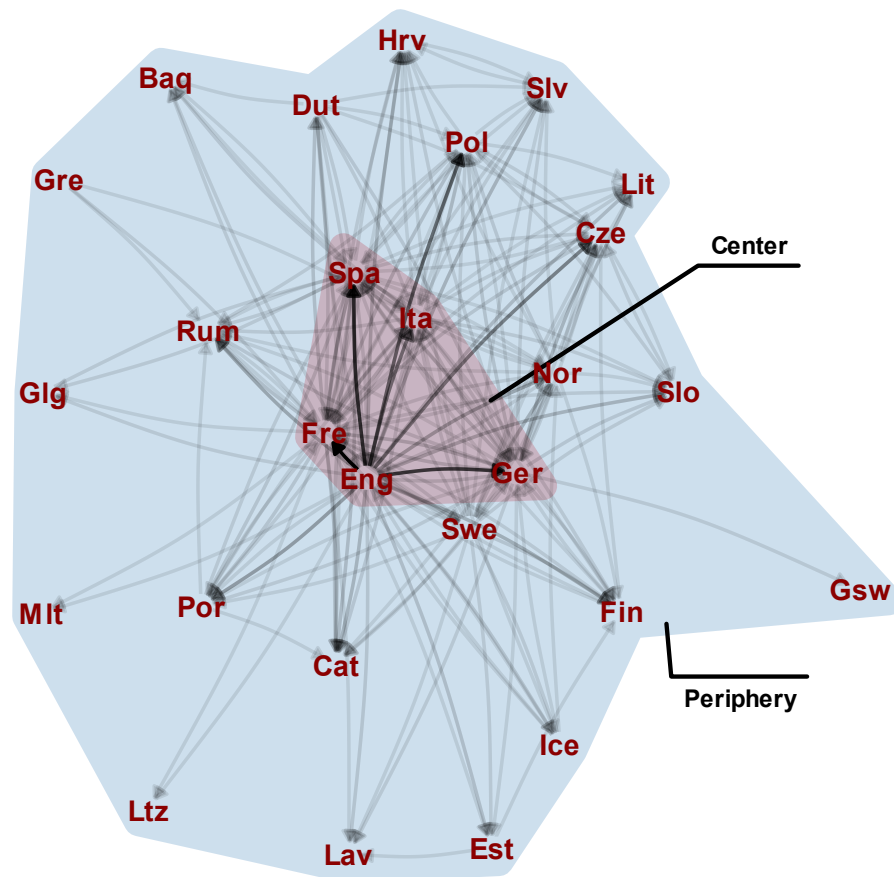
**D: Distribution field**

B: Boundary spanners

R: Recipients

# Transborder perspective: Fields

## Center-periphery structure (e.g., Casanova 2007)



- Local fields on different sides of political, geographic, and linguistic borders stand in **relations of domination**

# Summary

## How to track broker positions?

- Positions can be tracked along **two dimensions**: (1) dominating-vs-dominated, (2) artistic-vs-commercial
- Positions in both dimensions are shaped by brokers' **position in the netchain** (which profession? vertical or horizontal integration?)
- Positions must be tracked (1) **within** and (2) **between fields**
  - E.g., dominated positions in dominating fields vs dominating positions in dominated fields

# **Outlook: Positions and action**

# Broker strategies by position

Broker type	Position of domestic field	Position within domestic field	
		(c) Artistic	(d) Commercial
Representative	(a) Center	Little active interest in foreign fields as recognition in domestic field affords global visibility	Denationalize cultural products to reach largest, most undifferentiated audience
	(b) Periphery	Promote symbolic value and stylistic distinctiveness of domestic products (niche-building)  Reliance on state funding and national cultural institutes for financial backing and promotion	Promote commercial viability of domestic products by highlighting similarity with international bestsellers (imitation/appropriation)
Gatekeeper	(a) Center	Build prestige by introducing established books and authors from the periphery to the global centers  Reliance on state funding for financial backing (e.g., translation grants)	Low interest in translations of little-known authors and books from peripheral countries
	(b) Periphery	Build prestige by discovering avantgarde works from other peripheral languages	Translation of bestsellers from the centers (English-speaking countries, in particular) as comparatively safe investment



# Thank you!



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## We have a working paper!

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# Back-up slides

# More on filters and qualifiers

## Brokers as filters (Hirsch 1972)

- Brokers select which goods are forwarded from the sender to the receiver
- Selection problems: oversupply, quality uncertainty, reception uncertainty
  - Solutions: professional habitus, institutionalized cues (e.g., awards and sales figures), institutionalized categories for the classification of cultural products (e.g., genres), non-competitive networking with similarly positioned actors, imitation of successful competitors

# More on filters and qualifiers

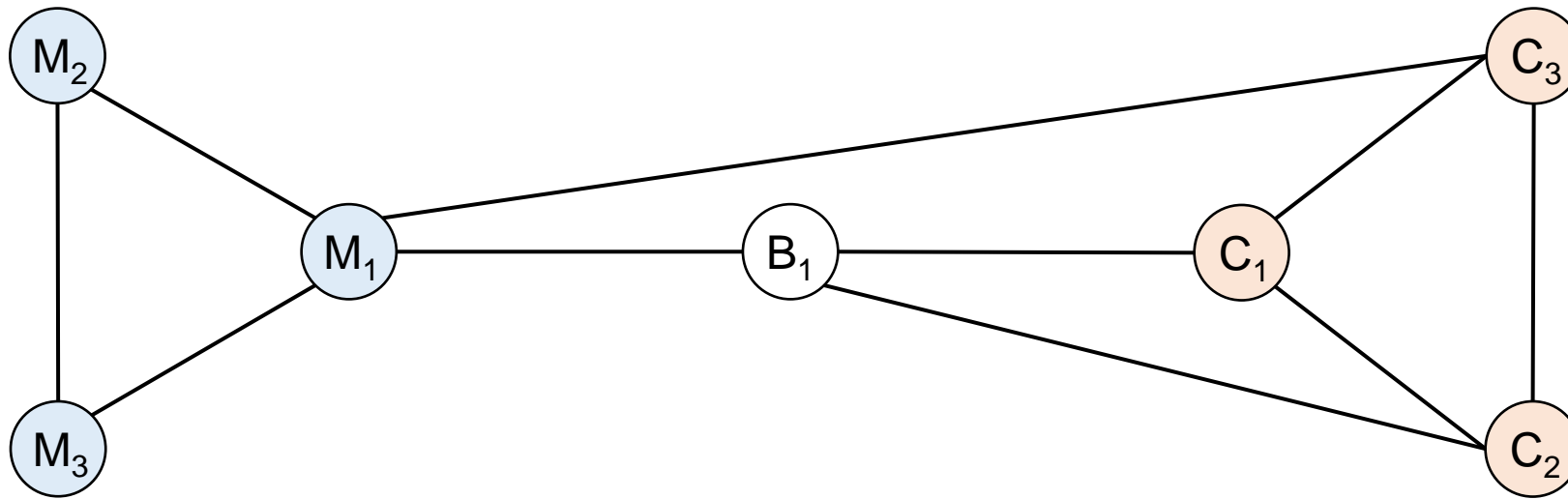
## **Brokers as filters** (Hirsch 1972)

- Brokers select which goods are forwarded from the sender to the receiver

## **Brokers as qualifiers** (Callon et al 2002; Maguire 2014)

- Brokers strategically position the good in relation to other goods
- ... by (a) selecting the qualities that should (or should not) characterize the good and (b) establishing how these qualities compare to the qualities of other goods
- Brokers establish qualifications (in a competitive process) by drawing on a set of devices (Muniesa et al 2007) and their professional authority

# Centrality: Another source of capital



# Positions and action: A first sketch

- We assume that **actors are guided by interests**
  - Action is **intentional**: Brokers know what they want, and they can formulate a plan of action that they think will help them to realize their interests
  - This plan of action or strategy springs from brokers' **subjective perception of the action situation** – it is not necessarily the most objectively rational or efficient strategy to realize their interest
  - Actors might not be able to explicitly formulate all the considerations that go into their plan (e.g., the feel for the game that they acquired via socialization into the profession)
- **Which interests?**
  - Field perspective: actors are interested in **improving or at least maintaining their position**
  - What this interest implies practically differs between fields and even between the different poles within one field
- The actions that spring from an interest are **affected by the position** of the actor
  - The same interest (e.g., in writing a critically acclaimed book) might lead to different actions among dominated writers than among dominating writers

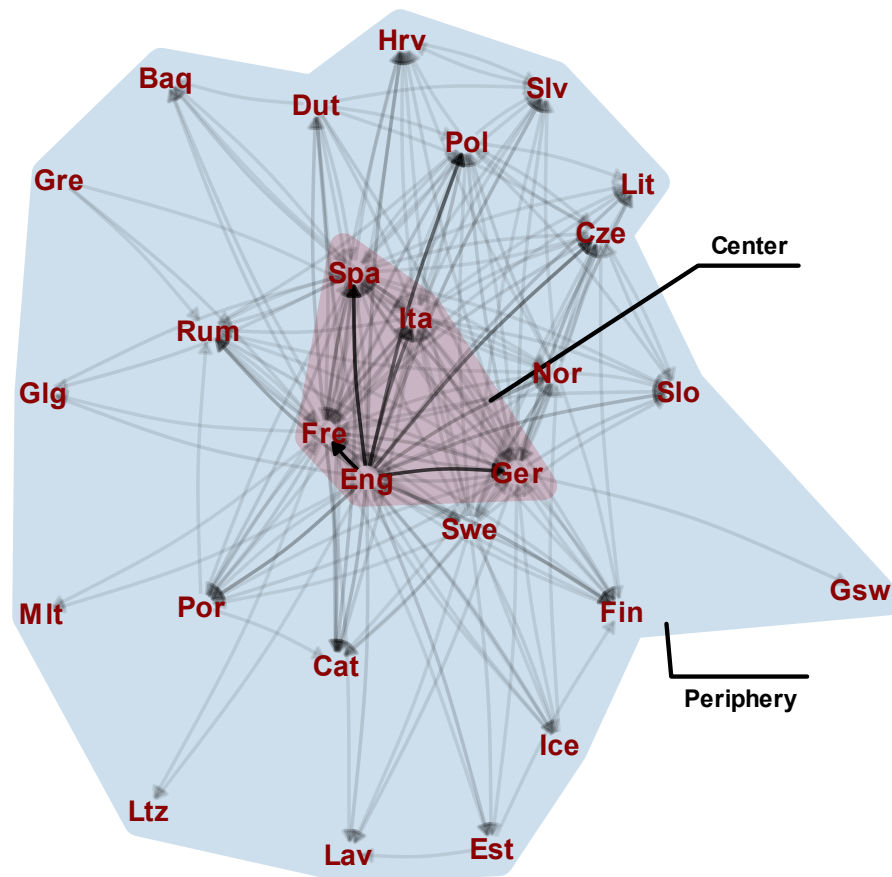


# Data: Book translations

- **Target population:** All translated literary books published between 2018 and 2020 within the EU-27, the UK, and the EFTA-countries (currently ~ 120,000 translated books)
  - Still missing: Austria, Bulgaria, Denmark, Greece, Hungary, Liechtenstein, Netherlands
- **Data fields (all countries):** Author, publication year, translated title, original language, target language, classification [mostly UDC or DDC]
  - Additional (most countries): publisher, country of publication, translator
- **Scope**
  - Focus on **literature**: drama fiction, poetry → not always possible to separate from: (auto)biographies, children's book, guides, speeches, humor, literary science/critique
  - Data from **national libraries**: Comprehensive list of national publishing activity based on **legal deposit** regulation (except in Cyprus and the Netherlands)

# Center-periphery structure

## Center-periphery structure (e.g., Casanova 2007)



- Fields on different sides of political, geographic, and linguistic borders stand in **relations of domination**

**Tab.1:** Average number of translations between blocks

	Receiver	Center	Periphery
Sender			
Center		2421	434
Periphery		59	11

Note: Partition based on direct block model for valued networks (Nordlund 2020)

# Eurolit: Mixed-methods design

