

Three ideas for further reflection from ICCPR 2018

2018 marks one hundred years of the Republic of Estonia. Together with the various events to celebrate its national identity, the capital city of Tallinn played host this summer also to the 10th International Conference on Cultural Policy Research (21st – 25th August). This year's theme was *The cultural governance of global flows: the past and future*.

The conference featured up to ten parallel sessions where nearly 180 papers were presented, together with panel discussions and round tables, covering many themes such as – to name just a few – cultural diplomacy and cultural identities, museum management, arts festivals, public funding for the arts, policies for audiovisual industries etc.

A couple of sessions attracted my curiosity as they were about the digital transformation in the cultural sector, featuring topics in a way new within the context of cultural policy but which are now “buzz-words” in business management across all economic fields, such as **data visualization** and **open data**.

Another paper sparked my interest with a provokingly title “The death of arts marketing”: it argues we are facing a **paradigm shift from consumption to enrichment**, i.e. a new focus on intrinsic, co-created and aesthetic value, where the those making and experiencing art take central stage in defining its value.

Finally, some papers tackled the evergreen problem of how to define cultural value and the legitimacy for public funding for the arts. In particular a paper presented the case study of Adelaide Festival in South Australia where **contingent value methodology** is currently being trialed to define cultural value.

I will now discuss more in details the key ideas that emerged during the session I attended.

DATA IS HARD WORK: MANAGING DATA VISUALIZATION, OPEN DATA POLICY AND COLLECTION DIGITIZATION

Annette Naudin from the Birmingham Centre for Media and Cultural Research, Birmingham City University, discussed opportunities and challenges of using data and data visualization tools to inform decision making [1]. Her paper was based on a case study: Arts Connect, a UK organization actively sustaining quality arts and culture provision for children and young people, commissioned Birmingham City University to create a tool to visualize children and young people's cultural engagement. The tool was meant to be useful in identifying gaps in provision, which imply inequalities of access to the arts and culture. To develop such a tool, data had to be collected from various organizations and then upload on the data visualization software. In fact, Arts Connect adopts a partnership model working alongside museums, artists and other cultural organizations. This paper was mainly a reflection on arts organizations' attitude towards collecting and sharing data.

It can be argued that there's a general agreement on the fact that having datasets can be of great use in planning strategic actions in any economic fields and both Arts Council England (the UK funding body for arts organizations) and NESTA (the UK National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts) have championed this approach. In fact, many arts organizations are already familiar with the practices of data collection and sharing as this is a requirement for the grant funding agreement.

Despite all this, the Arts Connect project encountered significant challenges which Naudin summarized as “data is hard work”. In particular, the project revealed the key importance of social capital and relationship building to get other partner organizations on board. Secondly, a lack of staff skills and knowledge in managing data emerged as having a negative impact on the project’s success.

To exploit the potential of data to benefit the whole cultural sector, data need to be shared. However, the idea of promoting collaboration among art organizations also encountered some resistance. In fact, art organizations operate in a highly competitive environment to obtain funds and some of them expressed concern about sharing their data as this might have affected negatively their competitive advantage.

Another very interesting paper was presented by Marie Vítová Dušková from the University of Economics Prague [2]. She investigated the barriers cultural organizations in the GLAM (galleries, libraries, archives and museums) sector encounter in the publication of **open cultural content**. Within the public sector there is, in fact, a strong emphasis on open data as they are believed to be instrumental in promoting transparency, participation, bringing about economic benefits such as developing smart cities. Regarding the cultural sector, the EU institutions are committed to build a global cultural commons for everyone to use, access and enjoy, via funding initiatives such as OpenGlam [3] and Europeana [4]. Given the fact that providing access to culture is part of the organizational mission, all art organizations should actively make their collections available as open data. However, we all know that this is far from the reality: open data remain a new and difficult-to-master technology for many institutions.

Dušková conducted interviews with practitioners from GLAM organizations and identified three sets of barriers: legal, technological and managerial. Legal barriers refer to licensing, intellectual property, data protection etc. Technological issues may include data and metadata availability, data quality etc. Finally, managerial barriers include costs for publishing in terms of staff training and time needed, defining an open data strategy, assessing clearly the potential benefits, loss of revenue when publishing content for free etc. The latter group of barriers is the most difficult to overcome. In fact, perception of legal and technological barriers depends on managerial attitudes. Legal and technical issues are not actual obstacles. Information on copyright and licensing as well as training for staff on digital skills are available. The management needs simply to decide if they wish to invest time and money on these projects.

On the one hand, there is a general consensus on the potential benefits of open data, especially for the education sector and for research, but on the other hand, such benefits are hard to quantify. Given the fact that publishing open data is, strictly speaking, not a core activity for GLAM, its importance remains an individual matter in the hands of whoever is leading the art organization.

Data access was also the topic of a paper by Olga Kolokytha et al. [5], from the University of Vienna. She looked at audiovisual archives of public service providers in Austria, Greece [6] Hungary and Poland. The key point which emerged from her research was that digital does not necessarily mean more democratic or accessible due to obstacle in digitalization and copyright legislation. The digitized materials represent only a portion of all data available in the archives. In fact, as we have seen, to digitize a collection requires time and staff effort but archives face the same funding cuts as the GLAM sector with the additional consideration that the workload increases at a very fast pace as audiovisual material is constantly produced daily in great quantity. Then there are, for example, geographical constraints: the ERT archive in Greece allows online access to its content but only for users located in Greece due to territorial copyright restrictions. The Hungarian NAVA [7] archive allows unrestricted online access only to 1/5 of its collection. The whole archive can, however, be accessed at 170 access points operating in institutions such as public

libraries, schools and consulates. On the one hand, this has allowed, for instance, the scheduling of more than 3402 screenings with 50.000 participants so far in local libraries in small towns and villages [8]. On the other hand, having only a given number of access points poses limitations as travelling involves both time and money. Hence, it is an obstacle to achieving real open access for all.

If we now move beyond Europe to look at ICT usage in cultural organizations in Brazil we realize that many organizations are not exploiting the full potential of new technologies especially with regard to increasing access. Luciana Piazzon Barbosa Lima [9], from Cetic, the Regional Center for Studies on the Development of the Information Society in Brazil, presented the results of the ICT in Culture survey 2016 [10] which involved a sample of 2,389 cultural organizations, some public other privately owned, namely archives, heritage sites, libraries, cinemas, museums, theaters and culture points (a specific type of organizations receiving funds from the Cultura Viva program, created by the Brazilian Ministry of Culture).

Regarding computer usage the survey showed that among archives and cinemas the use of computers was practically universal; less so for libraries and museums, with heritage sites showing the lowest rate: only 69% of those heritage sites included in the survey used computers. Similarly, wi-fi was present in less than 50% of libraries, museums and heritage sites. Even patchier was the provision of wi-fi access to the public: less than 50% across all type of organizations surveyed.

Internet was then used mainly to provide information on programming and customer service. Selling of products and services online occurred in 56% of cinemas and 23% of theatres. Among archives only 12% sold services online. The equivalent figure for heritage sites was 10% and 7% for libraries.

Looking at website ownership and social media presence the survey showed that 73% of cinemas had their websites, compared to a small portion of libraries, only 9%. In general presence on social media was more common: cinemas reached 94% while theatres 62%. Clearly creating a social media profile has no economic costs and can be done within a few minutes.

The resources available on the website were mainly about presenting the organization's activities. Virtual tours and streaming of videos reached 25% and 15% respectively among all types of organizations surveyed.

The survey showed also little provision of catalogue of collections, confirming a tendency already identified in the previously discussed paper. 70% of archives and 58% of museums had already started a process of digitalization but including only half of their collections. Similarly to what Dušková observed in her research, also for Brazilian organizations the main difficulties encountered were lack of funds and lack of digital skills among the staff.

In most of the cases digital collections are accessible to the public at the site where the organization operates but not via the website. There is clearly an untapped potential to increase access to culture. The findings of this survey can have strong implications for the development of new policy measures to support ICT infrastructures firstly, with the aim to be able later on to increase access to culture.

THE DEATH OF ARTS MARKETING

This is the provocative title Ben Walmsley, from the University of Leeds, chose for his paper: *The death of arts marketing: the paradigm shift from consumption to enrichment*. He questions the validity of arts marketing both as a practice and as an academic discipline. His paper argues for a reconceptualization of

arts marketing, replacing the focus on neoliberal processes of consumption with a more humanistic approach, essentially based not on the famous 4P of marketing but on elements of experience and engagement with the arts, a model where the definition of cultural value lies with the audience and not with the market.

Walmsley takes as his starting point the historical framework for the arts marketing provided by Rentschler [11] who traced the development of the discipline both as an actual practice within arts organization and as a field of research in academia, identifying three distinctive periods: the Foundation Period (1975–1984) when art organizations started to appreciate the benefits of marketing; the Professionalization Period (1985–1994) when investments in arts marketing became common practice and organizations focused on operating in a strategic way, applying the principles of management and accountability. This was also the period when art marketing emerged as an academic discipline. Finally, we have the Rediscovery Period, from 1995 onwards, characterized by the adoption of relationship marketing based on a more collaborative approach involving also the audience. Examples of this preference for co-creation and audience participation are UK theatre company Punchdrunk [12] which does many site-specific and immersive works, the notion of participatory museum advanced by Nina Simon [13] and projects such as Google Arts and Culture [14].

To verify and update Rentschler's theory, Walmsley conducted a content analysis of research articles published in academic journals between January 2007 and December 2016. The findings confirmed that over the past twenty years, there has been a paradigm shift in arts marketing scholarship from neoliberal processes of consumption towards relational and collaborative practices of engagement. The author argues that art marketing has now entered what he called the Enrichment Period (2007 to date), a phase characterized by a renewed emphasis on cultural value, a refusal of purely economic value and a reclaiming by artists, audiences and scholars of subjective, intrinsic, co-created and aesthetic value, drawing on research in the fields of experimental aesthetics and emotional psychology.

NEW WAYS OF UNDERSTANDING VALUE

Defining cultural value is a vexed question in cultural policy research with all the various approaches proposed so far, intrinsic, instrumental, economic value, having their limits. Dr. Barnett from Flinders University looked at how public value is constructed in the reporting processes in the assessment of arts and culture, i.e. how data about cultural activities are communicated and interpreted [15]. She argued that the conferral of value is the outcome of a multi-stakeholder dialogue involving governments, funding agencies, cultural organizations and individual artists.

Measuring an artistic activity (no. of tickets sold, demographic characteristic of people involved etc.) is only the first step. These figures need then to be reported (i.e. official reports to be submitted to a funding body; reports published on the organization website as a way to communicate its mission and impact etc.). Starting from the notion of "**participatory evaluation**" [16] she explores the idea of reporting as a social process, i.e. it derives its meaning from social actions.

Adopting a purely numerical approach to culture might satisfy government's requirements but leaves artists, art professional and researcher unease as there is always a surplus of value that resists numerical reductions but gets overlooked precisely for this reason, the impossibility to express it as a figure for some official report. In line with the claim that arts marketing should be audience-centric as we have just seen, similarly the determination of cultural value cannot ignore the people experiencing it whether directly or indirectly. This theoretical approach stems from an underway research project, Laboratory Adelaide, which

Dr. Barnett presented at the conference [17].

The project has been implementing various versions of a willingness to pay, i.e. contingent value methodology survey instrument to access the views and valuing of users and non-users, local and non-local cultural publics of the Adelaide Festival in South Australia. The aim is to investigate value beyond ticket sales, attendance data to assess people's attitudes.

In contingent valuation analysis both users and non-users are asked to put a dollar value on the worth of a cultural event to them. It is particularly interesting the fact that this methodology includes also non – users. In fact, non-users' reasons for valuing something even if they have no intention of using it, can be grouped into three main categories: existence value, option value and bequest value. In the case of Adelaide Festival, existence value refers to the belief that only by the fact of existing, the festival is perceived as improving the reputation of the city, providing additional jobs etc. Option value is the belief that it is still better to have the option to attend the festival in the future rather than not having this opportunity: personal circumstances might change, the festival might book an artist the person particularly likes etc. Bequest value is about thinking that it might be good for your children to attend the festival, even if you are currently non attending. The study looked in particular at non-users' willingness to donate money to save the festival, assuming hypothetically that the festival were struggling economically to stay viable. Counter intuitively, **non-users' attitudes are quite positive and this proves that taking into considerations only aspects such as ticket sold, hence considering only actual users of cultural activities, can fail to capture a significant other component of cultural value.**

To conclude, the papers discussed in this article offer just a very limited vision of the conference as many more researchers presented their work. However, these papers definitely open up a space for further reflection and research on which policies to implement to support the digital transformation of the art sector and on how to give central stage to audiences, both in the marketing strategy and in the evaluation process. We should expect more debate to come and the appointment is now for the next edition of ICCPR in 2020, to be held in Japan at Doshisha University.

Footnotes

[1] Naudin, Annette, Cultural policy and data visualization for advocacy in arts education. Paper presented at ICCPR 2018

[2] Dušková, Marie Vítová, Cultural Content as Open Data: Legal, Technological and Managerial Barriers. Paper presented at ICCPR 2018

[3] OpenGLAM is an initiative run by Open Knowledge. It promotes free and open access to digital cultural heritage held by GLAM. <https://openglam.org/>

[4] <https://www.europeana.eu/portal/en>

[5] Kolokytha, Olga, Rozgonyi, Krisztina, Korbiel, Izabela, Sarikakis, Katharine, Future Data from Audiovisual archives: Hurdles in knowledge and culture making.

[6] ERT Archive – <http://archive.ert.gr/> – Accessed 02/09/2018

[7] Hungarian National Audiovisual Archive – NAVA – <https://nava.hu/what-is-nava/> – Accessed 02/09/2018

[8] Kolokytha, Olga et al. ibidem

[9] Piazzon Barbosa Lima, Luciana, Senne, Fabio, ICT in culture: use of information and communication

technologies in Brazilian cultural facilities.

[10] The results of the survey were included in the conference paper but are available also at this link: <https://cetic.br/pesquisa/cultura/indicadores> – (in Portuguese). Accessed 02/09/2018

[11] Rentschler, R. 1998. Museum and performing arts marketing: a climate of change. *Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Society*, 28(1), pp. 83–96.

[12] <https://www.punchdrunk.org.uk/>

[13] <http://www.participatorymuseum.org/>

[14] <https://artsandculture.google.com/>

[15] Barnett, Tully, Meyrick, Julian, The Role of Reporting in Value, Impact and Meaning

[16] Crossick, G., and Kaszynska, P. (2016). Understanding the value of arts & culture. The AHRC cultural value project. <https://ahrc.ukri.org/documents/publications/cultural-value-project-final-report/> Accessed 30/08/2018

[17] Barnett, Tully, Taylor, Mark, Value or benefit: digging in the data for new ways of understanding value in arts and culture

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Rentschler, Ruth, 1998. Museum and performing arts marketing: a climate of change. *Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Society*, 28(1), pp. 83–96.

Walmsley, Ben, The Death of Arts Marketing: A paradigm shift from consumption to enrichment. Paper presented at ICCPR 2018

Webography

<http://archive.ert.gr/>

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