Measuring social impact of art and culture: the use of benchmarking tools

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Summary

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"Technically speaking, an impact is a special form of change, generally fast, violent and irreversible, due to the clash between an active agent (impactor) on an impacted area. Originally, impact has been used mainly in a negative sense (as in environmental impact)...In our specific case, impact is used instead as a desirable change due to exposition to/participation in/practice of art and culture in various forms. It is 'a dynamic concept which pre-supposes a relationship of cause and effect. It can be measured through the evaluation of the outcomes of particular actions, be that an initiative, a set of initiatives forming a policy or set of policies which form a strategy"

C. Landry et al., The Art of Regeneration: Urban renewal through cultural activity, 1996

Once upon a time...

«Evaluating the social impact of participating in the arts has long been a sort of *terra incognita*, a continent whose existence is known, but which remains unexplored. ...The sketchiness of the information encouraged some to argue that El Dorado lay there, while others asserted it was a desert, a wasteland best avoided. Our research has sought to throw some light on this shadowy region by establishing a base for further exploration. ...If the flora and fauna are unfamiliar, we have at least encountered no monsters»

F. Matarasso, Use or Ornament, 1997

Main problems

- Social impact evaluation of the arts always fails to establish a convincing underline causal link underline between desired social changes and involvement in the arts

- underline Scarcity of harmonised data underline characterises the entire cultural sector and some crucial subjects, like cultural access, participation and practice are severely underrepresented by statistics

- underline Outcome versus outputs underline: evaluation usually happens soon after the arts activity takes place, so that the alleged life-changing effects of the experience (which, realistically, will take some time to become evident) are likely to be completely missed out in the evaluation

Why should we measure the social impact of culture?

- <u>Monitoring</u>: the collection and analysis of factual quantitative data about arts and cultural provision and its use

- <u>Evaluation</u>: the use of appropriate methods to research and understand arts and cultural practice and the responses of those involved in it

- <u>Advocacy</u>: the process of improving understanding of and debates about art, culture and their place in society

"The primary responsibility for that lies with the cultural sector. If it feels misunderstood or undervalued, it is pointless to complain: it must find ways of improving the situation"

F. Matarasso, On 'the very idea of measuring cultural value, 2012

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The social impact evaluation

There is now a general agreement on the approaches that should always be adopted, which include:

- **<u>Cherishing participation from diverse components of a community</u>** (in particular, the viewpoints and experiences of those who are perceived to be emarginated or disadvantaged)

- **<u>Adopting both quantitative and qualitative methods</u>**

- **Producing within the cultural and social sectors <u>usable/ sharable knowledge</u> that can be referred to and used for specific communities and valuing asset-building activities**

The MCP Broker project

MCP Broker (**https://mcpbroker.eu/**) was a project aimed to enhance and stimulate the cultural participation of migrants by improving the capacity of their local cultural public institutions to interact with them.

In a more specific way, the project objectives were:

- To promote the engagement of the receiving communities in interacting with the migrants, based on the mutual respect of their rights, obligations and different cultures

- To ensure equal treatment and improve diversity management in the public and private work places, service provision, education systems, media and other important arenas

The MCP Broker benchmarking tool

In order to analyse diversity management in cultural institutions, the MCP working group implemented a benchmarking tool, which tracks the potential journey of a cultural institution from a <u>basic level</u> where the institutions recognise the need to reflect society's diversity by adapting rules and making statements, through <u>two intermediate levels</u> to an <u>advanced level</u>, where the cultural institutions as organisations fully reflects society's diversity and promotes participation.

Benchmarks for each level are defined in six different areas:

(a) audience/visitors, (b) programme/repertoire/collections, (c) partners/collaborators, (d) employees, (e) board members, (f) suppliers.

The MCP Broker benchmarking tool

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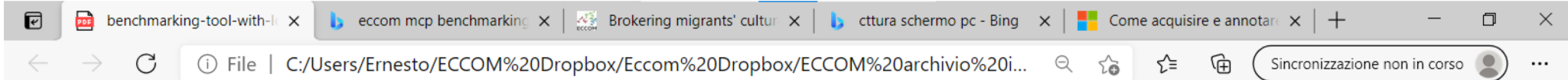
Benchmarks for Diversity Management in Cultural Institutions

"Brokering Migrants' Cultural Participation" Project

mcp broker

	INSTITUTIONAL VISION AND POLICY	VISITORS / AUDIENCES	PROGRAMMING, REPERTOIRE, COLLECTIONS, NARRATIVE	PARTNERS / COLLABORATORS	STAFF	BOARDS, GOVERNING BODIES	SUPPLIERS
ADVANCED LEVEL	**How the CI perceives its role with regard to MCP:** • The CI considers itself as an organisation that should fully reflect society's diversity, and the CI's policy documents or contracts with third parties contain statements to this effect. **How the implementation of MCP is tackled by the CI:** • There is a commitment to fully reflecting intercultural innovation at all institutional levels, and the CI's policy documents or contracts with third parties contain statements to this effect. • There is a commitment to building intercultural competence into the institutional fabric and into decision-making processes, and the CI's policy documents or contracts with third parties contain statements to this effect. **Funding:** • MCP work is supported through core funding across budget lines. **Evaluation:** • Evaluation results are shared internally and externally. Feedback opportunities are created. Feedback is acted upon.	**How visitors/audiences are perceived:** • The CI works on developing cross-cultural, hybrid audiences. **How visitors/audiences are identified, approached and targeted:** • Since MCP is no longer seen as a separate domain, targeting policies have become superfluous. **How participation is promoted:** • The CI encourages project ownership. Participants' voices (whether migrants or autochtonous) are included in interpretation, documentation, exhibition spaces, cultural productions.	• The CI produces a diversified programme with a significant component of hybridised cultural production which represents intercultural innovation of new, inclusive and shared narratives around collections or repertoires. • The CI sees itself as a place where knowledge is not only transmitted, but co-produced. • The CI creates or offers spaces of intercultural engagement.	• The CI defines itself as a hub (or contact zone) for multiple collaborative relationships with other organizations, acting as a player in a network of a great variety of players (e.g. schools, hospitals, prisons, community based organisations, anti-discrimination and anti-racism NGO's, international arts and cultural partners, diaspora local ethnic communities, universities (academies), statistics authorities). **Purpose of collaborations:** • To optimise the diversity of its productions and its reach of the population and furthermore to be active outside of its core institutional locations.	• The CI's workforce reflects the diversity of the country's population at all institutional levels.	• The composition of the CI's leadership and board reflects the diversity of the country's population.	• The CI's pool of suppliers is composed of businesses which apply diversity and equality principles in their employment practices. • Key suppliers are associated with the CI's diversity management training programme. • The CI privileges relations with suppliers who do not only meet migrant representation criteria but also hold knowledge about diversity issues because
UPPER INTERMEDIA	**How the CI perceives its role with regard to MCP:** • The CI sees itself as a cultural space for interaction, participation and cooperation. • MCP/diversity policies are seen as a tool for internal change. **How the implementation of MCP is tackled by the CI:** • The CI has identified inter-communal tensions and frictions which it attempts to help deal with, i.e. by enabling changes of attitudes and behaviours. • The results of consultation processes (started to break down barriers to access and participation and to diversify programming) are fully integrated in the CI's MCP policy. • The CI has created dedicated structures to ensure that its commitment to MCP is enacted throughout the organisation (e.g.	**How visitors/audiences are perceived:** • The CI considers the needs, cultural preferences and aspirations of people with a migration background on an equal footing with those of autochtonous people. **How visitors/audiences are identified, approached and targeted:** • The CI has developed a thorough knowledge and understanding of the local situation in terms of intercultural dynamics and immigration or integration policies, by carrying out background research and/or other activities in preparation for its MCP projects (e.g. interviews with colleagues, visitors and cultural mediators of immigrant background to investigate cultural consumption patterns of migrant communities; desk research on local migration patterns). • The CI collects information about MCP, upon which consistent policies can be built, regularly. • The CI promotes interaction and a new or stronger cohesion between different groups or mixed audiences (by origin, social and cultural background, age, gender, education or profession).	• The CI stages/exhibits artists with a migration background without bracketing them in the culture of their origin. • The CI actively engages mixed groups drawn from the autochtonous population and a range of migrant groups/communities in the development of narratives around collections or of cultural productions and programmes. • The CI proactively engages citizens with a migration background as a resource in order to prompt its traditional public into alternative ways of seeing the collections or cultural repertoire, as well as to initiate new knowledge systems, relationships, or interpretative communities. • The CI attributes high importance to methodology (as opposed to content), e.g. it promotes the re-negotiation of interpretations, active engagement with objects, mutually supportive learning, emotional and sensory access, opportunities for self-representation, and the challenging of stereotypes.	• CI has a growing number of strategic collaborative relationships with other organizations and networks belonging to different sectors of civil society in order to enhance MCP. **Purpose of collaborations:** • To implement an internal commitment to address diversity and society	• Diversity and equality principles are integrated into the CI's recruitment procedures. Such principles can concern the specificities of job descriptions, the means of advertising jobs - public vs via networks, the composition and competence of the recruitment team etc. • Special efforts are made to recruit people with a migration background as artists and performers. • Diversity management is being applied.	• The CI has a proactive policy of selecting members with a migration background in its board on the basis of competence. • Leaders and other members of the board with a migration background receive equal treatment from their institution. • Board members receive training on diversity and equality principles.	• Diversity and equality data gathered from successful tenders and bidders is monitored and is used to set procurement targets.

MEMEX (www.memexproject.eu) promotes social cohesion through collaborative, heritage-related storytelling tools that provide access to tangible and intangible Cultural Heritage (CH) for communities at risk of exclusion.

MEMEX social goal is to design guidelines and recommendations to promote actions for social inclusion with strategies for audience engagement and development.

This will be achieved through the following objectives:

- Social analysis for communities need

- Guidelines to benchmark social inclusion

- Design of new audience development strategies

MEMEX: social impact evaluation

- Data-collection instruments: interviews, observation of the storytelling workshops and participants' stories.

- The social impact evaluation will be set up around <u>four main dimensions,</u> assessed in <u>different moments</u>:

  - Cultural

  - Social

  - Spatial

  - Emotional

MEMEX: the use of MCP benchmarking tool

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The social impact evaluation in MEMEX is based on a qualitative approach:

- **Rich and in-depth understanding of social phenomena**

- **Most suitable for interpretation of experience and meaning**

- **Assess change**

The analysis of the results will be carried out against the MCP Broker benchmarking tool, reviewed for the MEMEX purposes

MEMEX: the benchmarking tool (in progress)

LEVEL	MEANINGS OF CH	EXPRESSION OF CH	CULTURAL PARTICIPATION
H I G H	**Level of knowledge about the concept of CH:** individuals understand CH as a multidimensional concept with both tangible and intangible elements; they are able to identify CH expressions from both their own country and the neighbourhood/host country. **Significance and values attributed to CH:** respondents attribute a high level of importance to preserving and promoting CH and see it as a valuable economic source; participants feel strongly identified and proud of the CH of their (nationality/group) and believe this to be an important aspect in bonding them as a community.	**Participation in activities related to expression of own CH:** individuals participate in one or more activity related to the expression of their own CH. **Perception of possibilities for CH expression:** respondents feel they can freely express their own CH in. **Significance attributed to being able to express own CH:** participants give a high importance to being able to express, maintain and exchange their own CH within host societies.	**Level of cultural participation (in host country):** individuals participate very frequently in cultural activities during their free time. **Level of cultural participation (in country of origin):** In the case of immigrant respondents, individuals used to participate very frequently in cultural activities during their free time. **Perception of possibilities to participate in CH of host country:** respondents feel they can freely participate in the cultural life/offer of (host country). Potential limitations to their participation are not related to direct or indirect social exclusion factors, but to individual ones (such as a lack of interest). **Use of internet for purposes related to cultural participation:** individuals use the internet for practical (such as finding general information and booking tickets) and educational or creative purposes (such as learning about cultural places and activities and creating content) related to cultural participation.

Questions? Comments?

Thank you for your attention
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