



Understanding, Capturing and Fostering the Societal Value of Culture



The UNCHARTED project received funding under the Horizon 2020 Programme of the European Union

Grant Agreement number: 870793

|                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| <b>Deliverable number</b> | D2.3   |
| <b>Title</b>              | <b>Report on the emergence of values in television and new media</b> |

|                                      |                            |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>Due date</b>                      | June 2020                  |
| <b>Actual date of delivery to EC</b> | 30 <sup>th</sup> June 2020 |

|   |                   |                          |          |                          |                   |                                     |
|---|-------------------|--------------------------|----------|--------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <b>Included (indicate as appropriate)</b> | Executive Summary | <input type="checkbox"/> | Abstract | <input type="checkbox"/> | Table of Contents | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
|---|-------------------|--------------------------|----------|--------------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------------|

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**Context:**

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Partner responsible for deliverable</b> | Goldsmiths, University of London, and TRI   |
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| <b>Deliverable version number</b>          | 1   |
| <b>Dissemination Level</b>                 | Public  |

**Statement of originality:**

This deliverable contains original unpublished work except where clearly indicated otherwise. Acknowledgement of previously published material and of the work of others has been made through appropriate citation, quotation or both.



UNCHARTED

Understanding, Capturing and Fostering the Societal Value of Culture

## REPORT ON THE EMERGENCE OF VALUES IN TELEVISION AND NEW MEDIA

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## 1. Introduction

This report explores the plurality of values attributed to digitally mediated cultural participation. Notably, we emphasise participation in *new* media forms, exploring modes of remote cultural participation that are digitally mediated through live stream and teleconferencing platforms. Our case studies will therefore not address *old* (analogue) media, such as printed newspapers, linear broadcast television, or analogue radio broadcasting (Jenkins, 2006). Significantly, online cultural participation, on the rise for several decades, has radically accelerated under the Covid-19 pandemic with cultural and creative organisations moving to new modes of remote delivery to maintain operation under social distancing measures.

Four case studies of cultural participation are presented, two from the UK and two from Norway, each of which will map the values emanating from two modalities of mediated cultural participation:

*Dialogic cultural consumption:* Participation in fixed digital culture with interaction among participants, such as collective viewing and commenting on a cultural performance through Twitch, Facebook, Instagram TV or YouTube. The content can either be pre-generated and uploaded to the platform or streamed live to the platform.

*Distributed cultural co-creation:* Participation in co-created digital culture, such as the co-performing of amateur musicians through video conferencing platforms, or arts-based initiatives predicated on co-production between audiences, artists, and curators.

The four case studies below will attend to a sequence of research questions drawn from the UNCHARTED rubric:

- What cultural values do participants ascribe to digitally mediated forms of cultural participation?
- How does digital mediation impact on the production of cultural values for cultural activities that are traditionally experienced through physical artefacts or offline co-presence?
- What role has the digitalisation of contemporary cultural life under Covid-19 played on the conception and attribution of cultural values to participation in digitally mediated cultural activities?
- What conflicts or tensions emerge across the values attributed to mediated cultural participation and how are they resolved in practice?

## 2. Case Study One: Reimagine, Remake, Replay: The Participatory Museum Online

### 2.1. Introduction to Institutional Context

Reimagine, Remake, Replay (henceforth RRR) is a museum engagement initiative, supported by Heritage Lottery Fund (now National Lottery Heritage Fund), in Northern Ireland enabling 16–25-year-old participants to respond to museum and heritage collections through digital making practices, such as 3-D printing and virtual reality technologies. Prior to the advent of Covid-19, RRR oversaw a variety of in-person programmes in nine museums across the country. However, social distancing and lockdown measures implemented to counter the pandemic resulted in the closure of all RRR venues and the cessation of all in-person programme activities. The organisation responded with a rapid transformation to remote delivery and a remodelling of programme activities online. This new programming ranged from ‘analogue’ creative activities undertaken via teleconferencing platforms, such as creative writing and embroidery courses, to programmes which used remote online software,

such as Meshmixer, Gimp, and Sketchfab, to facilitate online workshops in 3D modelling, digital illustration, and other modes of digital creative practice.

## 2.2. Case Study Methodology

A mixed methodology was deployed in order to capture the values attributed to remote participation. Two online focus groups (total N=12) were held with current RRR participants in February 2021. Respondents were self-selecting and responded to a call to participate circulated on the RRR Slack platform. Notably, there was an equal split in focus group attendees between those who had attended in-person activities prior to the pandemic and those who had only attended online iterations. The focus group transcripts were thematically coded in NVIVO by members of the research team through an inductive approach (Thomas, 2006). These thematic values were manually entered into a codebook which was then triangulated with two parallel data sources to maximise reliability: four semi-structured interviews with RRR staff members and a discursive analysis of various online videos interviews with participants and organisers reflecting on their experiences of RRR programmes during the pandemic.

## 2.3. Articulated Values and Value Grammars

### Participation rates

Drawing on Heinrich's axiological measures (2020), attending the online programmes is a clear index of perceived value. Indeed, the focus group respondents all stressed the positive aspects of online participation in the RRR programme. However, interviews with RRR staff illustrated that the move online had nonetheless resulted in a dip in recruitment and retention over the last year. Notably, the average age of the participant increased from 16–18 for the pre-pandemic offline programming to 23–25 for the online pandemic programming. The active participation of this older constituency of user suggests a value grammar, potentially different to that of a younger cohort, in justifying participation online during the present moment. Notably, organisers suggested that many of these older participants would have not attended in-person sessions, but the tedium of lockdown, the ease of remote access, and the socio-emotional rewards of attending RRR activities online enticed them to participate.

### Emotional Values

A prominent value which emerged across the focus group discussions was the role that remote participation played in both suppressing the anxieties associated with living through a global pandemic and counteracting the frustrations of attendant national lockdowns. Respondents clearly valued the agency and, in the words of one participant, the 'pure escapism' provided by the remote programmes, citing the importance of focusing thoughts on productive activities in the face of a pessimistic and anxiety-inducing environment. Such notions clearly align with literature on focused entrainment, illustrating how ritualised cultural participation is used as a device to moderate negative emotions (Fancourt et al, 2019). This ability to deploy RRR participation as an emotional regulation strategy intersects with and informs many of the other values articulated by participants, illustrative of the interdependency of cultural values in this context.

### Social Values

The relational constrictions of Northern Ireland's Covid-19 lockdowns effectively outlawed face-to-face social relations outside the space of the home. Unsurprisingly, significant justificatory emphasis was placed on the RRR programme's social role and its value in 'coping with those feelings of loneliness'. This social value was emphasised by all respondents across a variety of contexts, ranging from individuals who were isolated in University Halls and to those in their mid-20s who had returned to the family home during the pandemic. Beyond the notion of mere mediated socialisation,

respondents valued the supportive ecosystem that emerged around the programmes with RRR sessions used to 'check on' the wellbeing of other participants. More broadly, the inclusion of local creative and museum professionals in online programmes was valued for enabling participants to remain 'plugged into' the region's ostensibly dormant creative and cultural ecosystem. A more pragmatic social value ascribed to participation was the notion that the routine engagement via the programme offered an 'opportunity to remake lost social skills that lockdown seemed to deplete'. Respondents thus valued the ability to consolidate their social competencies through the videoconferencing interactions facilitated by RRR programme activities.

### **Spatial-Temporal Values**

In-person RRR programmes previously took place across a geographically diverse set of locations with participants attending sessions in their local museums and makerspaces rather than a central RRR hub. The move to remote online programmes enabled these RRR cohorts to attend in one virtual location, which fostered new connections across Northern Ireland. This virtual space was valued by participants and organisers alike, particularly considering the significance of social values in justifying online participation in RRR. The ability to hold sessions with professional contributors from across the UK, such as Manchester's Shy Bairns Collective, was also celebrated, efficiently and economically broadening the scope and reach of RRR. Indeed, the time efficiency of accessing programmes online was valued: 'I think you can be so time efficient when everything is online. You are not darting between physical places; you can do multiple things in one evening.' More abstractly, a temporal value emerged which presented participation in the programme as a means of structuring time itself during a monotonous year, where days blur together: 'time has ceased to exist; RRR is marker'. The prospect of weekly participation was equally valued with RRR being 'something to look forward to across the week' as it added a sense of moment and progress in the context of lockdown tedium and stasis. Moreover, within the context of the extensification of the workplace through mandatory working from home, participation in RRR online programmes was also prized for legitimising the carving out of time for creative activities when the divide between work and leisure became increasingly indistinguishable.

### **Identity Values**

The ability to sustain or remake self-identity in a period when many identity-forging activities were outlawed was clearly viewed as beneficial by participants. This ranged from merely being a participant in the RRR programme when other diverse hobbies could not take place under lockdown, to more specific subject identities, such as being an artist, consolidated by participation in the programme online.

### **Capability Values**

Online participation was valued for emboldening participants to undertake creative or artistic activities during the working week with RRR deemed a 'creative boost'. Indeed, both online and offline participation in RRR was celebrated for being a 'space' of creative production which exists in neither the context of neoliberal higher education, with its focus on examination and return on fee investment, nor highly competitive and precarious employment in the creative and cultural economy. A crossover from the offline RRR programmes that was viewed as beneficial in the online context was the process-driven approach to RRR activities: 'there is a value in not stressing about getting it perfect'. This culture of process rather than product emboldened participants to undertake various self-directed creative activities outside the RRR sessions. Participants reported exploring the creative potential of digital technologies, such as SketchFab, and more traditional analogue creative practices such as painting and sculpture during their free time. These self-directed creative activities shared many of the values of RRR participation and were credited as part of a repertoire of strategies to 'cope' with the pandemic moment.

However, respondents also recognised how pre-pandemic workshops had resulted in technological skill acquisition. The continuation of programming online was similarly valued for this reason, particularly regarding the remote-access creative software, i.e. Gimp, SketchFab, etc. For those who were furloughed or unemployed, the continued acquisition of technological competencies which could be deployed in future creative careers gave an important sense of momentum during a period of demoralising stasis. Participants not only valued the access to such software but also the remote access to professionals who could teach the skills needed to operate the software effectively.

### **Aesthetic Values**

Value attribution centred on traditional aesthetic values is conspicuous by its relative absence. Indeed, there were few references to the aesthetic or metaphysical value of artworks or objects and limited discussion of concepts such as beauty or artistic value. This absence could be attributed to the emphasis of the online programmes on a mode of productive or presumptive participation rather than focusing on passive aesthetic contemplation. Alternatively, the lack of aesthetic values could be the result of an axiological regime where non-aesthetic values, notably socialisation, were more prominent or more useful in negotiating the present moment.

## **2.4. Value Conflicts and Tensions**

Participants were relatively consistent in what they valued from online participation: the distraction from the Covid-19 environment, the ability to structure time in monotonous lockdowns, the facility to transcend spatial limitations, the consolidation of identity, creative and technological skill acquisition, and the agency and legitimacy to create during lockdowns. These clusters of values— emotional, social, identity, spatial-temporal, and capacity—did not appear to operate in conflict or tension with each other but rather existed in an overlapping and mutually sustaining plurality.

While value tensions or conflicts were minimal, a minor fault line in axiological priorities did emerge regarding the extent to which online experience was valued, or evaluated, as a platform for social or for creative practices. In contrast to respondents who prioritised the social affordances of online activities, the lack of organic, improvisational co-creation in teleconferencing platforms was criticised by others who deployed an axiological grammar more focused on informal creative experience. However, those expressing this disappointment at the formality of online experience deployed other value clusters to counteract such disincentives, or negative values, and to resolve a potentially detrimental value conflict. Indeed, participants cited a lack of co-present co-creation, the inability to access RRR hardware, such as 3D printers and scanners, and the impossibility of undertaking activities in the spatial surrounds of a museum as clearly demotivating factors which have been overcome to legitimise participation in remote RRR programmes.

Ultimately, a plurality of values were deployed relationally by RRR participants to justify participation despite such limitations. We propose that value tensions or conflicts would be more present in a study of supply-side cultural production or cultural policy where values compete more explicitly for singular justificatory legitimacy. Participative values can be presented hierarchically in regard to relative prioritisation, with socialisation perhaps *most* valued, but ultimately such values are constituted collectively as part of a socio-emotional resource which seeks to counter a coherent, universal set of absences instigated by the present pandemic environment.

## **3. Case Study Two: Online Choir Worlds**

### **3.1. Introduction to Institutional Context**

The social distancing regulations associated with curbing the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic alongside the evidence of significant aerosol transmission through group singing has meant that choirs in England have had to move to new modes of online delivery (Public Health England, 2020; Datta, 2020). In response, this case study explores the values that choir members attributed to remote choir participation, focusing on their experiences of choir participation during the third English lockdown, instigated on 6 January 2021.

### **Online Choir Technologies**

Virtual choirs existed prior to the pandemic, most notably those associated with composer and choir leader Eric Whitacre. However, our focus is on traditional co-present choirs that have transitioned to online delivery to maintain operation during the Covid-19 pandemic. We investigated how participants valued this new mode of remote participation across a range of experiential technical modalities. These online choir modalities have been seen to comprise ‘multi-track, whereby individuals record a solo which is mixed into a choral soundtrack; live streamed, where individuals take part in sessions streamed live over social media; live tele-conferencing, for spoken interaction and/or singing using tele-conferencing software’ (Daffern et al 2021:1). However, by the third English lockdown all the choirs were deploying aspects of all three technological solutions which we deem a ‘Hybridised Teleconferencing Multitrack’ modality. Moreover, our research captured the recent take up of ‘Networked Music Performance’ technologies by choirs where members can, for the first time, hear fellow singers online via intermediary platforms, like Jamulus or Jamkazam (Cairns et al, 2020). Such experiential differences across these technological modalities will be seen to generate different values for users.

## **3.2. Case Study Methodology**

Participants were drawn from eight UK choirs that are part of four separate choral organisations. The choral organisations were selected by the research team as paradigmatic examples of differing technological modalities, varied musical repertoires, and levels of musical competency. Thirty-five semi-structured online interviews took place in March 2021, with the objective to identify cultural values ascribed to remote participation. The coded values were corroborated through informal participant observation of online sessions and interviews with ‘choir organisers’: musical directors, administrators, and chairpersons.

## **3.3. Articulated Values and Value Grammars**

### **Participation rates**

Many choir organisers recognised that the move online had not been successful in the retention of members from in-person activities. For example, a mixed-repertoire choir organisation which had 900 members across multiple choirs prior to the pandemic was reduced to 200 active participants for the online sessions. This decrease in participation would appear to suggest that for a significant proportion of the pre-pandemic participants, the online offering is not *valuable* enough to justify continued attendance via remote technologies. Indeed, respondents were very clear about the significant disincentives of online participation (i.e. lack of co-presence and limited musicality) and yet still attended the sessions, deploying a variety of non-musical values to justify remote participation. Significantly, the source of many of the non-musical values was not the singular rehearsal or performance event, for instance a two-hour session one evening a week, but rather participation in a wider online ‘choir world’ operative across the week. These valued choir worlds comprised a rich ecosystem of online quiz nights, open mics, Facebook groups, WhatsApp groups, and Ukulele lessons, across the different choir formations.

### **Distributed Evaluation Metrics**



For teleconference rehearsals both choir members and choir leaders had no clear idea of the quality of the distributed performance and struggled to conceive of the 'success' of a session musically. The lack of an immediate feedback loop for collective competency, often cited as the reason other members have not participated online, demanded the deployment of non-musical evaluative grammars at a choir level—notably social, technological, and non-musical competency driven measures—and a highly personal musical value assessment in the context of singing alone in front of a laptop. This individualised value assessment was often presented as uncomfortable. Many respondents reported that they participate in a choir for the security of collective, almost impersonal, music making and singing alone at home exposes one's own limited abilities as a 'solo singer', a subject position that many resisted. Indeed, one of the values articulated in regard to co-present choir singing is the lack of personal musical accountability, often framed under the notion of collective musical expression, with the value or quality of a performance or a rehearsal attributed to group, rather than individual, responsibility. This anxiety regarding personal accountability is somewhat ameliorated in the multi-track recordings made by choir members under lockdown for online public distribution (e.g. as a YouTube video). However, these start as asynchronous individual performances, often the result of multiple, individual takes, which are subsequently mixed and mastered by choir leaders to produce a coherent collective sound (sometimes suppressing poor individual performances). Networked Music Performance technologies, where participants can hear each other in real time, clearly offer a more effective synchronous feedback loop highly valued by users and musical directors from both an experiential and pedagogic perspective, although these were also engineered and edited in real time. While celebrated by all users in comparison to Hybridised Teleconferencing Multitrack modalities, Networked Music Performance solutions were criticised for lacking relational spatial-sonic experience, i.e. the ability to co-locate aurally with fellow singing parts (sopranos with sopranos, for instance), which is seen as a significant aspect of co-present singing.

### **Emotion Regulation Values**

Choir members and choir organisers were keenly aware of the positive impact participating in the online choir world had on regulating negative emotions throughout the pandemic and over the three Covid-19 lockdowns. Drawing on Fancourt and Steptoe (2019), participation in online singing activities can be framed as a mode of stress aversion through immersive total concentration or entrainment. This notion of the restorative impact was a common recognition across different choir participants who often linked the conclusion of the online rehearsal session with peace of mind, relaxation, and invigoration. For the more informal recreational choirs, the ludic dimensions of online rehearsals were valued as a distraction from the dispiriting realities of a third lockdown. Meanwhile the high musical competency of the more professional choirs demanded a degree of focus that was seen as providing a valued moment of distraction through entrainment.

### **Social Values**

It was clear in the interviews with the choir organisers that sustaining a supportive choir community was a significant motivation for maintaining the online operation. It is this social connection and the associated value of 'belonging' that many respondents framed as the most valuable aspect of online participation. Indeed, those who chose to participate in online choirs despite serious criticisms of the online experience, tended to offer a range of social values to resolve clearly articulated musical disincentives to remote participation. The rich social nexus of the online choir world was also deemed valuable as a vector and communication channel for personal, non-pandemic related news which further strengthened social ties and existed as a cypher for a more normal choir sociality. For individuals who had been negatively impacted by the pandemic, such as those who had been hospitalised or lost employment, the regular sociality of the online choir world was credited as beneficial.

### **Spatial-Temporal Values**

Another cluster of non-musical values centre on the spatial and temporal affordances of online choir participation. Respondents noted how continued participation in the choir rehearsals on specific evenings each week existed as a welcome marker of time during a period of extended monotony. The space-time compression afforded by online operation was also noted by participants who recognised the potential for transcending immediate localities and attaining an international reach of the choir. The ability to transcend spatial and practical limitations was clearly prized for widening access to the choir beyond those who can attend in-person choirs. Indeed, respondents themselves were geographically spread, some contributing to choir worlds from the other side of the Atlantic.

### **Identity Values**

For experienced singers, online singing was viewed as maintaining an important aspect of individual identity during lockdowns. These singers tended to value the opportunity to sing online yet compared this unfavourably to in-person experiences, deeming it simply 'better than nothing'. Individuals newer to singing tended to treat choir participation as a casual hobby or entertainment rather than a form of deeply personal cultural enrichment as found among experienced singers. For newcomers, singing plays a notable, but not central, role in their identity consolidation. Nonetheless, the identity consolidation implications in the continuation of choir activities online were increasingly valued by choir newcomers as other identity consolidating activities were rendered impossible under lockdown.

### **Capability Values**

It was notable that the vast majority of participants were digitally literate, already well versed in the teleconferencing platforms used by choirs and easily able to adapt to the demands of home recording. Networked Music Performance software requires a more intensive technological set up for participants both to contribute and to hear the blended mix. This has resulted in choir members valuing their upgraded technological competencies. Notions of increased self-confidence fostered by participating in traditional choir formations continued to be valued in online iterations and the structured online interactions reinforced social competencies, particularly under the collapse of normal social relations. More practically, and a key motivator for actors with developed or longstanding singing experience, was that the mere existence of the choir afforded, and incentivised, continued personal rehearsal and musical development.

### **Aesthetic Values**

Some respondents clearly ascribed a form of aesthetic value to in-person choral singing that was seen to translate, somewhat, to the online experience, particularly in the heightened emotional moment of the pandemic. However, while references to the affective or emotional resonances of individual pieces were made by participants, it remains that the aesthetic experience was not a primarily value ascribed to online participation.

### **Value for Money**

Value for money is a traditional index of assumed value and, understandably, most participants who had overcome the disincentives of online participation deemed online choirs 'value for money'. Despite its experiential drawbacks, online participation in the choir was for some presented as 'priceless', particularly when viewed as a resource to ameliorate the socio-emotional impacts of lockdown. However, those who were more critical of online experience expressed concerns about subscription costs (even when these were reduced) but continued to pay in order to preserve the choir for a return to offline operation post-pandemic.

## **3.4. Value Conflicts and Tensions**

It is clear that a plurality of values emerge when looking to participants in online choir worlds. Most are closely associated with counteracting the impacts of Covid-19 and occupy certain spaces of value production: emotional, social, spatial-temporal, identity consolidation, and capabilities. Many of these are deployed to rationalise a mode of cultural participation that is unsatisfactory when applied to the valuation criteria of offline, co-present singing. It is notable that such value justifications appear with relative coherence within individual choirs. For the more open, recreational choirs, the values of fun, silliness, and self-expression are important: 'Not a huge pressure', as is a focus on enjoyment over accuracy: 'Be wrong, be strong'. However, as one moves towards the more formal, professional choirs, the values of proficiency, intellectualism, and professionalism become increasingly dominant: 'The music is amazing, and the quality of the musicianship is very high. I get a kick out of that'. Such a tension could be read in terms of two contrasting value grammars – one framing choir participation as a more ludic endeavour and the other predicated on a conception of the choir as an intellectual endeavour. Indeed, the former would appear to value online choir experience as more directly ameliorating the universal set of absences generated by the pandemic moment. Moreover, for those who had serious animadversions about online singing experience, remote participation was sometimes justified under the rationale of preserving the choir for a post-pandemic return to normality rather than any specific values attributed to online delivery. For many of these participants, online participation was thus rationalised through values of continuity and obligation, rather than satisfaction – or even enjoyment, as some participants refused to perform online but attended online sessions to be seen to support the choir. Nonetheless, for the vast majority of respondents across the choirs, it remains that online participation was valued as a socio-emotional resource and a modality that enabled a valued aspect of their pre-pandemic cultural life to continue, albeit in a radically different manifestation, during a period of unprecedented upheaval.

#### 4. Case Study Three: The Cultural Rucksack and Culture Schools

##### 4.1. Introduction to Institutional Context

The extracurricular schools of music and performing arts, *kulturskolen*, and the Cultural Rucksack (CR) are two core public policy programmes in the distribution of professional, high quality art experiences and cultural education to children and youth in Norway. Both such distribution and cultural education has been regarded important objectives in Norwegian cultural policy since the 1960s (Mangset and Hylland, 2017). From its start, *kulturskolen* has offered educational services in art and culture subjects, mostly in pupils' leisure time. In the beginning, the activity was predominately music-based, however, from the 1990s, activities such as theatre, dance, visual arts, literature, film and arts and crafts are included. From 1997, with what is currently §13–6 in the Education Act, *kulturskolen* was made obligatory in all municipalities, administered and financed by the municipalities. The CR is a national programme established in 2001 distributing art and culture to all Norwegian pupils from the age of 6 to 19. The concept mainly involves school tours, where artists perform custom made productions for school classes. From the start, both *kulturskolen* and the CR have operated in a predominantly analogue format, either in the form of productions adapted to school classes, or in the form of master-apprentice lectures to individuals or groups. During Covid-19 social distancing and lockdown, for several months, both concepts migrated to online platforms like Zoom and Teams, where they rearticulated themselves both aesthetically and socially.

##### 4.2. Case Study Methodology

Various empirical sources representing different positions and points of view were used in order to explore the values attributed to digital cultural education and participation. Within the context of the CR, online interviews were conducted with bureaucrats in all regional Rucksack-administrations,

artists and producers of three selected Rucksack-productions, and teachers in schools in which the selected productions had been distributed online (total N=27). Additionally, one online focus group interview was conducted with a school class, which had experienced one of these productions. Within the context of *kulturskolen*, a combination of online surveys (quantitative and qualitative) and focus group interviews were used. One survey was distributed to every single *kulturskole* head teacher in the country (response rate: 62%, N=212). Subsequently, five schools, representing a diversity with regard to size, geographical location, and online activity level, were selected for further investigation. We carried out online focus group interviews with *kulturskolen* teachers in four of the chosen schools (N=17), and an online survey which were answered by pupils and their parents in the five selected schools (N=150). The survey results and the interview transcripts were analysed thematically, in order to sort out how the emigration to digital platforms have influenced the values of cultural education and participation, compared with existing knowledge of what normally, before Covid-19, have been at stake within these two cultural arenas.

### 4.3. Articulated Values and Value Grammars

#### **Educational Values**

Compared to physical school tours, online distribution of CR productions through platforms like Zoom or Teams is articulated to allow for a wider and more effective distribution, potentially securing a larger school audience access to particularly high quality, successful or popular productions. Flexibility is also articulated as a surplus of digital versions of *kulturskolen*, e.g. as classes can be held despite of quarantine or physical absence. Online platforms further allow *kulturskolen* to offer pupils exclusive master classes within niche competences by guest teachers situated in distant locations. Recorded educational material, distributed alone or in combination with live streamed teaching, is flexible and allows repetition.

The close face-to-face encounter between artist and child, and between master and apprentice, has a strong position in the cultural field, as well as within pedagogics. Many artist and school interviewees expressed that online sessions never can make up for such physical encounters. However, our case study shows that the educational value of online musical lectures to individuals or small groups seems to vary with the level of skills and ambitions of the pupils. Novices, as well as particularly ambitious pupils in advanced levels, seem to be the groups that are most difficult to offer a sufficient online education. Novices, often very young children, lack the basic skills and perhaps also the language they need to fully understand, and they often are in need of physical demonstration and bodily correction. In order to progress, the advanced level pupils also need detailed bodily instruction, and the live streaming technologies still lack the sound quality and synchronism that are needed for fine adjustment of technique and tone. According to our analysis, pupils in medium or average levels of skills and/or ambitions possess basic skills and language, and thus seem to be a bit less challenging to teach. However, regardless of the level of skills and ambitions, there are obviously a strong need for the development of a specific *digital didactics* that makes the *kulturskolen* able to exploit the advantages of digital formats, and to compensate for their disadvantages.

#### **Spatial-Temporal Values**

The default sentiment in the art education field is that physical presence is a cornerstone of art and cultural experience. Hence, spatial value is the value of being together physically, and many informants advocate the strength of this presence in terms of being able to *smell* or *feel* the audience (for artists) or the artist (for the audience). Interestingly the two senses that formerly were seen the most important to experience art, to see and hear it, is not emphasized the same way. What the empirical material shows, however, is that digital formats challenge the sense of presence in interesting ways. In a school performance where an author brought one of his informants, an IS-warrior that had contributed to a book on young, Norwegian Muslim men who had joined the IS in

Syria, this informant's presence in the (digital) room was experienced as particularly strong. Even stronger than in a real-life scenario in the classroom, because his image came so close on the screen, at home. The spatial dimension thus resolved, transgressing the otherwise limiting format of digital mediation. The former perceived advantage of being able to smell and feel the presence of an IS-warrior was thus replaced with another sense of proximity. In combination with being able to, in a secure environment, asking questions about this man's actions, thoughts and beliefs, this gave the pupils an *enforced* sense of togetherness, not the opposite. Other digital, spatial values are found in the material, e.g. the possibility to bring together participants from large communities, meaning schools, artists or art teachers from vastly different regions or even countries can meet. This also affects a temporal value aspect; even though bringing participants from different places together means having to overcome temporal challenges (time zones are the most obvious), digital technology at the same time offers the opportunity to overcome some of these challenges, e.g. by mixing live interaction with pre-recording content etc.

### **Democracy Values**

Another pre-Covid-19 conception about spatial value was that physical presence enhanced participation, because of the ability the artist or the teacher had to encourage the audience (e.g. pupils) to respond interactively. However, as some former research points to (Evrard and Krebs, 2018), online formats give an optional opportunity for participation that potentially benefit other parts of the audience than a physical environment does. This increased participation by new groups often take place without replacing anyone, rather supplementing, and consequently adding a democratic dimension to participation. In our empirical material, such democracy value comes to show through the opportunity digital formats forms for alternative communication. Where classroom environments offer a format where spoken communication is preferred, the digital platforms additionally offer the opportunity for e.g. chat functions. From our material, we see that this option enables new audiences to participate, e.g. by asking questions in the chat that they otherwise would keep to themselves.

### **Social Values**

Even though *kulturskolen* recently, to some degree, has developed and tested out new educational formats, a traditional master-apprentice format still dominates, often organised in sequences which leave little room for small talk and relational work (Berge et al. 2019). With a Covid-19 turn to online platforms, a stronger need for flexible and more frequent communication between lecturers and pupils emerged, in order to organize and prepare, but also to keep up relations and educational spirit and progression. Even though it was a challenging situation, the total amount of communication seemed to increase. Our study also documents that the communication between the lecturers and the pupils' parents was enhanced quite a lot. This communication was particularly important in the beginning, in order to make sure that technical and logistic issues were taken care of and to make the online education possible to carry out. However, it also had positive impacts on the social relation between the lecturers and the pupils. Also in the CR, the online formats offer more flexible communication opportunities. In pre-Covid physical formats, the artists leave the school after the performance, and the pupils normally do not have the opportunity to contact them. Online performances also come to an end, but it seems to be easier for pupils, at least those over a certain age, to contact the artists afterwards in order to ask questions, get some advice and in certain cases even develop a social relation. Online formats also offer flexible opportunities for the artists to follow-up their audiences.

As mentioned earlier, online formats offer the possibility to bring pupils and audiences together from distant locations, and thus lift *kulturskolen* and the CR out of their local, place-bound contexts. So far, these possibilities are not fully exploited within the contexts of these measures. However, the experiences during Covid-19, have made teachers, artists, producers and bureaucrats more aware of

these possibilities and the impact these might have on *kulturskolen* and the CR as tools for cultural and social exchange on a national, European or even global level.

#### 4.4. Value Conflicts and Tensions

Digital technologies undoubtedly have changed the premises for cultural participation and education. Recent decades, from the Internet's early days to the period before the pandemic outbreak, the research literature in this field have mobilized different discourses with regard to cultural values (van Dijck, 2020). Some of the literature has accentuated the positive possibilities, opportunities, and advantages brought fore by 'the digital turn', among them the possibilities to reach out to new audiences (e.g. Turrini, Soscia, and Maulini, 2012), and the emergence of new forms of participation (e.g. Bonacini, 2018). Other parts of the literature are characterized by a more critical discourse, accentuating the downsides of the digital turn when it comes to cultural participation, democratization and power structures (e.g. Bishop, 2018). In our analysis of *kulturskolen* and the CR during Covid-19, we once again detect the same ambiguous picture of optimistic and pessimistic attitudes among stakeholders to the impacts and values of cultural education and participation through digital platforms. It seems that value conflicts and tensions that have been present for a long time within this particular part of the cultural policy field have been reinforced during Covid-19. Several tensions and areas of tensions are observable, of which we find two particularly interesting. The first is related to the status of the body in the valuation of educational progression and art experience. Here we observe an increased accentuation of the physical encounter as an irreplaceable cornerstone in the education of music, drama, dance etc., and also an insistently highlighting of the importance of the bodily aspects of watching, hearing, smelling, listening and touching the art. However, it is also possible to observe the opposite, a curious attitude to what innovations digital formats might offer. One example is the discourse that points out the possible impacts of digital technologies on learning (e.g. learning to play an instrument) and art experience through so called *gamification*, understood as the practice of adopting game elements, such as goals, rules, competition, reward structure, immediate feedback, levels, storytelling etc., into a non-game context in order to motivate and increase interest around a cultural learning activity or art experience (Deterding et al., 2011; Ngyen 2020).

The second tension is related to the relationship between paternalism on one hand and audience demand on the other. For both *kulturskolen* teachers and artists within the CR, this tension deals with the question to what extent should pupils' or parents' desires and demand decide the content of what is taught or played in the classroom? And to what degree the ambitions and desires of *kulturskolen* teachers and CR artists? Many artists' and teachers have clear preferences for what pupils should have to learn or experience, rooted in values that originate from a western *bildung* tradition (Bjørnsen 2012). Children may want to vote out classical piano or acting in favour of hip hop dance or maker spaces, but many teachers and artists feel it is their obligation to socialize them into feeling and acting differently. Our data shows that many teachers and artists eager to utilize and comply with the digital environment, at the same time felt their autonomy limited by the same environment.

### 5. Case Study Four: Cultural Values and Digital Audiences at Live Streamed Concerts

#### 5.1 Introduction to Institutional Context

Live, digitally streamed concerts became the new norm of concert production in mid-March 2020, when the current pandemic hit Norway. Streamed concerts had been technically possible for years, but prior to Covid-19, the actual examples of these kind of concerts had been few. In a short while, the numbers and importance of this kind of digital cultural distribution increased exponentially.

Although the digital distribution technology did not represent an innovation in itself, it was uncharted territory for both producers and consumers. Most artists had seldom or never held a live concert from their own living room or on a stage with no audience in front of them. Likewise, thousands of people were (digitally) present at their first live-streamed concert in March and April 2020. There were a handful of streaming platforms that were established in the last two weeks of March, and dozens of others would follow. Among the most relevant ones are Brakkesyke2020 ('Cabin Fever2020'), DigitalScenen ('The Digital Stage') and Koronerulling ('Clubbing Together'). Most of the concert promoters/producers in this early phase used the Facebook platform and infrastructure.

After the first initial phase of digital concerts, the interest in these concerts seem to decrease somewhat. This development coincided with the first attempts to re-open society in May and June 2020. This included the opportunity to stage live performances for a limited audience. Nevertheless, even if the number of digital concerts and number of artists streaming their performances have decreased, these kinds of concerts are still relevant more than a year after the first Covid concerts.

## 5.2. Case Study Methodology

A combination of empirical data was used to inform the analysis of relevant values in this case. Firstly, we employed data from a pilot study that was initiated in March 2020, including a small sample of interviews with artists and concert producers and observational data from the first phase of digital concerts. Secondly, we have used survey data from a survey distributed via the Facebook group of digital concert platform DigitalScenen Pro ['The Digital Stage']. The survey was directed towards digital concert audiences and asked questions on the experience of and valuation of digital attendance. The number of respondents was 30. Thirdly, we have attended around ten digital concerts ourselves (both live-streamed and pre-recorded), with an aim to experience the concerts from an audience perspective. The field notes from these concerts are included in the empirical data, including observations of real-time audience comments. Fourthly, we have also used data extracted from the Facebook feed of some of the digital concerts. The comments and emojis from these feeds have been imported into separate documents.

## 5.3. Articulated Values and Value Grammars

### **Comparative valuation**

Digital concerts tend to be compared to physical concerts, both implicitly and explicitly. This was also one of the topics for the survey. In that sense, the articulated values and value grammars in this case are partly discussed in a relational perspective. The values attributed to digital concerts are related to the values attributed to physical concerts, often by comparison. Furthermore, the relevant values are also interrelated and challenging to separate. The values discussed below is hence to be read as different aspects of experience values rather than separate and/or isolated values.

### **Social and identity values**

Some of the primary non-aesthetic values of a traditional concert are undoubtedly social: the value of experiencing something together with other people. In a digital concert setting, the social value potential is clearly different. In the survey, we asked to what degree one would say that digital concerts had given the sense of experiencing music together with other people. 3% answered 'to a very large degree' or 'to a large degree', while 41% answered 'to some degree'. 55% answered 'not significantly' or 'not at all'.

Being at a digital concert makes it difficult to socialize in traditional ways. One respondent described the difficulties like this: 'Difficult to: talk to others, see how many that are watching, observe excitement and other reactions, singing together, dancing together, giving something back to the

artist, exchanging trivia on the music, expressing emotions.’ This can be read as this specific respondent’s list of essential social values at a (physical) concert.

In other words, the survey answers leaned rather heavily to the negative side, but clearly not unanimously. There is evidently social potential and social values at play also in digital concerts. From other parts of the data, we see that some of the digital concert events are highly social and communicative. The tools for this communication are mainly the tools available in the social media platforms used by the artists, with Facebook as the clearly most important. In a live-streamed event on this platform, the artist can communicate with the digital audience in the comment feed of the event, in addition to the traditional musical communication. (Some artists have an assistant or a producer commenting in and reading from the feed.) More importantly, the digital audience can communicate with the artist and with each other as the concert unfolds. Through tagging, someone can direct a comment to someone they know or would like to know. Through the use of the ever-increasing library of emojis, it is possible to show non-verbal forms of appreciation. And through different response alternatives, you might react or respond to the comments from other participants.

In several of the attended concerts, the social media activity in the feed of the event served clearly to create a sense of a common experience and a collective happening. In a sense, the frequency of comments and the likes and the tagging and the responses created a digital imagined community. In some instances, the group of people attending the concert seemed to be people who knew each other, or that were from the same local community. In these cases, there might be relevant values of identity at play here as well. In other cases, there seemed to be elements of flirtation (‘can I have this dance’) or attempts to get to know new people.

As we will return to below, the level of communication and social interaction was widely different in the concerts observed in this case. On the other end of the spectrum, some concerts had no form of communication or interaction whatsoever. In general, however, the interaction between artist and audience seem to represent an important social value for the digital concert attendees. The survey asked the question of what characterized a good digital concert. Several of the respondents emphasized the artist-audience interaction as a hallmark for a good concert, ‘otherwise it can just appear as a YouTube video’.

### **Aesthetic values**

Even if there are several levels of social and non-aesthetic values attributed to any concert, the core of such an event is arguably the performance or creation of a piece of music. The experience of music could therefore be imagined to represent a core value for both digital and physical concerts. For the digital ones, that does not necessarily seem to be the case. The positions on this issue vary. A survey respondent can represent the pessimistic side of the spectrum: ‘I am not a big fan of digital concerts. Basically, I lose most of the experience when it comes through the screen.’

As mentioned, the survey respondents were asked to identify the characteristics of good and bad digital concerts. The answers point to a very little degree to the actual musical quality of the performance. They emphasize the already mentioned value of interaction, and even more importantly, the technical production value of the concert. A number of respondents point to the importance of technical quality as the main factor for giving a digital concert value and quality: ‘Sound and video in sync! That is the most important.’ And: ‘Sound and video has to be good. And the internet capacity of the stream has to be good, to prevent lagging.’ Conversely, technical difficulties of the transmitted concerts represent negative value, or as removing potential aesthetic values.

The digital concert experiences also illustrate the relative difference of sensory stimuli when compared to the physical concert. A physical concert generally is characterized by a number of sensory



stimuli, including the value of being more or less immersed in sound. The experience of a digital concert, e.g. on a laptop, will on the other hand need to compete with the sensory input from the room and the immediate surroundings of the screen transmitting the music.

### **Spatial-Temporal values**

Any kind of concert takes place, in more senses than one. The experience of being present together with other people; sharing an experience in time and space represents a fundamental quality for the non-digital concerts. To be present at a concert is an also experience of a room, of an ambience; of three dimensions. For digital concerts, the sense of presence, co-presence and simultaneity has to be created through other means.

These combined spatial and temporal values might be described as a value of liveness. A survey respondent describes the totality of the physical concert experience in the following way: 'People go to concerts for the total experience, that is, to experience the music in raw form, feel the energy and the community that are created at a physical concert'.

At digital concerts, there are potential signals of liveness to create an imagined synchronicity, in addition to the imagined community described above. One kind of liveness indicator is of course the real-time comments and reactions on social media platforms, being a commentary track alongside the performance. All platforms and performances do not have or use this option, however. This leaves a lot of symbolic importance to the remaining indicator of liveness: the small, red, LIVE icon at the top left corner. As the only visible signal of the performance happening at the same time as the experience of it, there is a considerable amount of trust placed in the pixels of this small icon.

### **5.4 Value Conflicts and Tensions**

A physical concert represents a totality of values that is difficult to recreate in a digital format. Digital concerts hence also function as reminders of the values of the non-digital, traditional, material, analogue performances; the physical, material, spatial, immersive and multi-sensory qualities. A survey respondent describes a specific kind of reminder: 'The longing to stand in a huddle is the worst thing about digital concerts.' We might read the implicit or explicit comparison between physical and digital concerts as a kind of value tension. The digital concert format is still rather new to most people, and the valuation of this format will then tend to be held up against the physical, real concerts. It is hence challenging to value digital concerts purely on their own terms.

Another possible tension that is evident in our data, can be read as differences of genre. Although our selection of concert events is limited, they seem to represent or reproduce the traditional traits of different genres. This relates especially to whether the music – the art – should speak for itself or if communication with an audience is an integrated part of the musical performance. A contemporary avant-garde concert and a Bach recital were clearly the most introvert and non-communicative of the concerts observed: no talking, no presentations or greetings, nobody looking in the camera. The pianist from the Bach recital was interviewed on the experience of performing digitally, and he explained it in this way: 'You sit concentrated to the degree that you in many ways sit and play to yourself.' On the other hand, the concerts representing entertainment, dance and popular music, were ripe with interactions, both between artist and audience and among the attendees themselves.

## **6. Value Conflicts, Tensions and Resolutions**

The values attributed to the different modes of digital participation and co-creation in the four cases analysed in this report are comparable and partly overlapping. All values discussed need, however, to be understood in the light of the particular context for our cases, which are in different ways rooted

in the present pandemic moment. The forms of participation studied in this report represent an ad hoc digital turn, created more or less by necessity. Though it provides a window onto digital participation in culture under Covid, this basic fact also affects how we can interpret the relevant attributed values in our cases. Firstly, it means that digital participation (and thus experienced values) is generally compared to a physical counterpart from 'normal' times. During the Covid pandemic, digital participation substitutes for participation that is physically co-present. Furthermore, the relative novelty of the digital format in our cases also makes it challenging for the participants to evaluate and value the participative experience on its own terms, without an inherent comparative perspective. Secondly, researchers, as well as case participants, are in the midst of the pandemic. This makes it difficult to separate temporary from lasting changes and to distinguish genuinely new values from established values wrapped in a pandemic shroud. In this way, participants and researchers alike might all be affected by a certain *crisis bias*.

In our four cases we identify value clusters that co-exist as attributed values within the separate values. At an individual level, the attributed values do not seem to represent explicit value tensions, in the sense that individual participants attribute conflicting values to one and the same experience. From an individual participant perspective, differing values seem to co-exist without specific tension, even when some values are thought to be more important than others.

Nevertheless, looking at the cases from a broader perspective, we infer certain general tensions among the expressed values. The most important of these is a certain tension between aesthetic and non-aesthetic values. This could be phrased as a tension between intrinsic and extrinsic values of *culture* in cultural participation. We see that digital cultural participation is valued by some for the creative, cultural and aesthetic content of the participation. Other participants seem to put more emphasis on the non-aesthetic values of the participation, with social aspects mentioned frequently across all cases, even while participants have chosen to partake in *creative and cultural* activities online.

In cultural educational practice there is visible tension between a ludic and an educational perspective. A similar tension exists between the orientation to the creative *process*, which is often ludic, in choirs and makerspaces which is contrasted to an imagined orientation to a polished product (e.g. a singing performance or artwork). In online concerts, choirs, and makerspaces, 'success' is often defined in terms of the technical aspects of a show, rehearsal, or creator session with less focus on the quality of the aesthetic materials. Further, the use of digital tools in educational practice has led to a strengthened accentuation of the importance of the physical and bodily aspects of cultural education. Relatedly, the absence of co-presence was a key theme in case studies on choirs, makerspaces, and concerts, although the advantages of distributed participation, such as bringing together dispersed audiences or producers mitigates this to a degree. In this way, hybrid forms (combining in-person with digital participation) are seen as a potentially useful future form of participation. Similarly, in digital cultural education, the pandemic digital turn might have expanded a division between optimism and pessimism related to the use of digital tools in cultural participation. This suggests that digital or hybrid participation may become more common, with the consequence that values and tensions related to these forms may shift in the future. In the case of digital concerts, digital performances seem to represent or reproduce the traditional traits and implicit valuation criteria of different musical genres and the tensions in values across them.

Another evident value tension in all our cases is related to the inescapable comparative perspective in the attribution of values in our cases. Some of the values experienced are directly linked to an experience of making the best out of the situation, representing the best available alternative, given the circumstances. In other words, digital participation is attributed value as the best possible alternative to the physical, preferred option. This way, the potential qualities of digital participation is

a reminder of the qualities of the 'normal', non-digital situation. This comparative dimension was found in interviews with choral singers and with makers in the RRR project. It is also evident in the case of digital concerts, where the attendance serves as a reminder of the physical, material, spatial, immersive and multi-sensory qualities of physical concerts.

## 7. Conclusion

Even though the case studies were chosen to be different, in terms of artistic genre, connections to arts or educational organisations, embeddedness in government policy, the size of producing organisations, and national context, results uncovered significant overlaps in articulated values. The key value clusters across the four cases include: capability values, democracy values, educational values, emotional and emotion regulation values, identity values, social values, spatial-temporal values, and value for money. At the level of individual cultural participant, conflicts or tensions among values were not apparent. Instead, clusters of experiential values sit more or less comfortably with each other, although such values could be hierarchically arranged by what is more or less important to a given individual. On a broader scale, researchers identified tensions, notably between aesthetic and non-aesthetic values, with the latter receiving more discussion from digital cultural participants in the Covid era. Discussions of digital participation during the Covid pandemic are inflected with a comparison to in-person equivalents. The case studies uncovered multiple, overlapping value clusters and noted areas of tension, but it remains unclear whether these clusters and tensions might change as the world moves to a 'new normal'.

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