

# Understanding, Capturing and Fostering the Societal Value of Culture



Barcelona, June 2023

## Axis 3

# Cultural Information System

Axis 3 will promote an experimental data collection operation by cultural information institutions in collaboration with alternative data providers (i.e. cultural and creative organisations, cultural sites, etc.) aimed to enlarge the coverage of the plurality of cultural values in cultural practices. The feasibility of implementing innovative measures will be assessed to better cover the plurality of cultural values in cultural practices.

Partner	Case Study
UPORTO	(Main case) The portuguese cultural information system
CNRS	(Control case 1) Information systems in French national cultural administration - DEPS-DOC (Department of Studies, Forecasting, Statistics and Documentation)
UNIBO	(Control case 2) LUQs – The process of accreditation of regional museums in the Emilia Romagna region

**Cultural information** systems are today one of the **fundamental bases of democratic cultural policies** at the national and European levels. Through the complex construction of indicators – that cross very diverse domains of activity and are obtained by mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative), preferably with the participation of civil society and the cultural field – **we can make diagnoses**, evaluate results and guide the decision-making process.

To this end, **it is essential to mobilise some concerns**, namely:

- a systematic approach in their construction and application
- transparency in their use
- comparability in the European context
- adequacy to the singularity of cultural phenomena and values

Finally, they must be understood as an instrument of communication and involvement between all the actors involved, from technicians and experts to producers and cultural receivers.



## **Main case** (Statistics Portugal):

- To produce, in an independent manner, high-quality official statistical information, relevant to the society, while promoting the coordination, analysis, innovation, and dissemination of the national statistical activity and ensuring integrated data storage
- Comparison between national and European levels
- Quantitative approach
- Centralized



## **Control case 1** – EPS-DOC (Department of Studies, Forecasting, Statistics, and Documentation):

- Maintaining comparability of data over time (particularly for cohort studies, surveys on public funding of culture, surveys on French cultural practices, on the economic weight of culture, on household cultural spending, etc.)
- The possibility of harmonizing data with other national or international organizations providing statistical data in the cultural sector (i.e. INSEE, Eurostat)
- Correspondence between national and territorial data systems, notably for the study on public funding of culture, where each level of administration (local, departmental, regional, national) has its own terms and its own interests to classify and distinguish
- Articulation between **i)** an exploratory survey; **ii)** a quantitative survey; **iii)** a more in-depth qualitative study



## **Control case 2** – National Museum System and regional accreditation:

- Fostering transparency and comparability among museums
- Indicators as self-regulatory/disciplinary devices for those responsible for managing cultural activities
- Establish scores and standards of quality of museums in Italy
- Quantitative logic

However, qualitative dimensions expressing more detailed and specific kinds of information about each museum were articulated using more dialogical, verbal communication.



# Methodology

## Main Case

We began with a collaboration with the Survey on Adult Education and Training: Partnership between Statistics Portugal, the Ministry of Culture (Cultural Strategy, Planning, and Assessment Bureau), and the University of Porto (Fieldwork: 2023): our aim is to improve **an existing statistical tool**.

However, we also want to build a set of principles and recommendations that will allow the design of the Portuguese cultural information system to be reformulated. To this purpose, we held two workshops with the participation of more than 20 cultural organisations (artistic groups, bookshops, and cultural facilities). The workshop's purpose was to create a **hermeneutic and reflective circle capable of proposing guidelines for the renewal of the Portuguese cultural information system**, involving a team of scholars from the University of Porto and a set of organizations from the cultural and artistic field.

**Comparative cases:** Documental analysis





# Diagnosis

## The State of Art of the Portuguese Information System

There are **three primary sources of information production** on cultural activity. The statistical apparatus, academic research, and studies carried out by independent organizations in the cultural and artistic field.

**1** As far as statistical apparatuses are concerned, we rely on international and national data. In the first case, we highlight Eurostat, which presents information on the following domains:

- Cultural participation (practice and attendance) and culture in cities (such as satisfaction with cultural facilities of city residents and "cultural infrastructure");
- Private (household) expenditure on cultural goods and services;
- Price index of cultural goods and services;
- Public (government) expenditure on culture

- Cultural employment;
- Characteristics and performance of enterprises engaged in cultural, and economic activities & production sold of cultural goods;
- International trade in cultural goods;
- International trade in cultural services;



# The State of Art of the Portuguese Information System

In the second case, the **National Statistics Institute (INE)** compiles the Culture Statistics with 216 indicators where the following domains stand out:

- Education
- Employment
- Consumer price index of cultural goods and services
- Enterprises in the cultural and creative sector
- International trade in cultural goods
- Online cultural participation
- Cultural heritage; visual arts; printed and literature materials; cinema; performing arts; video distribution; broadcasting
- Public funding for cultural and creative activities



# The State of Art of the Portuguese Information System

There is also a portal, **PORDATA**, which, from various sources, including INE and EUROSTAT, compiles statistical series with temporal and territorial comparability, including the European Union.

Regarding culture, **it provides data** on:

- Libraries and Books
- Cinema
- Expenditure by cultural domain
- Live performances
- Museums and Galleries
- Periodicals



## The State of Art of the Portuguese Information System

2

The academic field has sought to conduct localised studies on equipment and event audiences, monographs on municipal cultural policies or, still, in much smaller numbers, qualitative studies on cultural reception.

In 2022, for the second time in national history, a significant study was carried out on the cultural practices of two Portuguese people (Pais, Magalhães and Antunes, 2022). The previous one was carried out in the distant years of 1985-88.

There was a concern about collecting information about:

- The frequency of cultural spaces
- The regularity and diversity of practices, in an extensive perspective that addresses the arts, do not forget leisure, amateur creation, expressiveness, and sociability, even reaching manifestations of popular culture and public space (festivals, etc.)
- The comparison between online and offline
- The survey of indicators on "the motivations and obstacles that mobilise or not the Portuguese for the exercise of these practices (Idem. 26)"



## The State of Art of the Portuguese Information System

It is worth mentioning, finally, the OPAC – Portuguese Observatory of Cultural Activities, a structure established in December 2018 at ISCTE - Instituto Universitário de Lisboa, and which has produced, among other more localised studies, research on:

- Public museums
- National Survey on Culture, Recreation and Sports Associations
- Study of the Artistic and Cultural Sector in Portugal
- Student Reading Practices



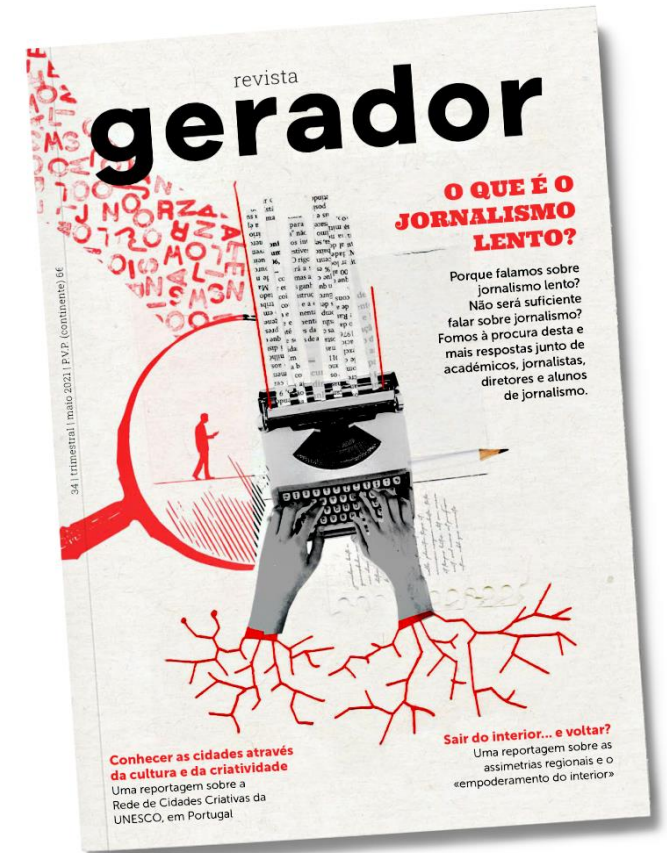
## The State of Art of the Portuguese Information System

3

Through the organisation of civil society, we highlight a unique example, extremely interesting, of concern with **listening to people about the cultural dimension of Portuguese society**.

Called “O Gerador”, it’s an "independent platform for journalism, culture and education", which promotes an annual survey (1200 interviews as a representative sample of the Portuguese population) assessing “the perception of the population living in Portugal about culture, its relationship with society, the way it impacts personal life, the knowledge about the effective cultural practice and the search for the reasons why there is not a more present cultural consumption”.

Thus, a wide range of information is collected on films, music, theatre, visits, global consumption of culture, cultural references, the relationship between culture and economy, and the perception of the European Capital of Culture 2027, which will be held in Portugal.



## The State of Art of the Portuguese Information System



In addition to the classic indicators, there is a concern to know in-depth about the impact of culture on individual representations, crossing them with **five essential dimensions**: 1) Education, 2) Financial Situation, 3) Well-being, 4) Cultural Offer, and 5) Information. Likewise, an attempt is always made to ascertain the reasons for non-appetence and lack of adherence to cultural activities.

# The State of Art of the Portuguese Information System

## Control case 1:

- The survey of French cultural practices covers a vast range of practices (digital, leisure, outings)
- Some of the research selected in the annual program concerns practices that are still little or not at all covered by ministerial initiatives. For example, DEPS-DOC funded research into "40 years of hip-hop music in France", in 2022
- Data from all the surveys of French cultural practices carried out from 1973 to 2018 have been made available to researchers in the sociology of culture





# What remains to be done

The discussion during the workshops allowed the listing of cultural phenomena that are not included in the garb of indicators of the current statistics, namely:

- The number, typology, and location of independent bookshops, as well as their turnover
- The weight of children's and youth literature in the book market
- Everything that happens after the moment of cultural practice (significant appropriations, conversations, sociabilities, and itineraries after the end of the event)
- The informal cultural circuits
- The non-public (motivations for the absence of membership)

"Namely studies on the non-public, which is a category also activated in the context of audience studies. Because we are working in conquered territory, but the truth is that we have a whole other world that doesn't come. And knowing why it doesn't come is as important as knowing why and how it comes." (Focus Group 1, 1h49min)

# What remains to be done

- Leisure practices not consecrated as culture (or expanding their limits)
- The circulation of shows and the importance of decentralisation
- The results of public investment in culture
- Uniqueness of audiences by an institution and artistic genre
- Uniqueness of cultural audiences by comparison with the universe of the Portuguese population

"Most of the studies are mainly about quantitative data and much information about the reception experience is missing (...). We feel that there is very little information not only about the moment when the public is in front of the work but the whole arc that goes from the moment when the curiosity of going to see or entering arises, about the moment when there is contact with some information... Until the moment of arrival at the institutions, the contexts of reception, and the public's relationship with the spaces. And then, yes, of course, the peak of this arc that is the moment of reception of the work itself, but also everything that comes after, how it is when leaving the hall, what other spaces - in the cultural institutions - are available in the post-performance period and what repercussions there are of that experience when the public leaves those spaces." (Focus Group 1, 1h13min)

# What remains to be done

Several speakers also referred to the **absence of studies on cultural reception** and the experiences that occur at the moment of fruition, even if this resulted from ethnographic work with small groups or interpretative communities. **In particular, deeply knowing the dimensions of the "new economy of attention"** (dispersion, fragmentation, lack of concentration, overstimulation, atomisation of experience).

The need for cultural organisations to build instruments to collect information that can be gauged was also mentioned:

- Comments and suggestions for improvement
- Location of critical influencers (online and offline)
- Impact of social media
- Impact of dissemination in the public space (streets, squares, public transport, universities, cafés...)



# What remains to be done

Not unanimous, the articulation of efforts with the academy was defended to synthesise and articulate the already existing information on cultural practices. In this context, the importance of longitudinal analyses is stressed, following the path of cultural practitioners, their biographical crossroads, and the life cycle's effect. Nevertheless, it also refers to the urgency of holistic approaches **that relate Culture to well-being and mental health**, along with all the benefits of cultural practice, in promoting a sensitive culture and the prudent.

"Of Bourdieu's distinctive practices, and the art forms he mobilises to study audiences and frequency of cultural activity... They are not very operative in our context. And therefore, this also forces us to redo our form of attention and rethink what we mean by Culture beyond this traditional notion of high Culture and mass culture. Because things are not like that today. However, there are some studies when they referred to the effect of the arts, which is always a process... The British, not by chance, have been studying the impacts of Culture, and it came out in 2007 and 2005. The first was done by 14 English universities and is called "Assessing the intrinsic impacts of a live performance".



# What remains to be done

“So, a study by 14 universities tried to analyse the impact on people of performing arts activities. A year earlier, another study had appeared, also mentioned, "Gifts from the Muse - Reframing the Debate About the Benefits of the Arts" that also tried to make a study that could somehow inform public policy on the benefits of artistic activity and of attending the artistic activity. However, these studies are not definite; what is interesting about them is that they are not categorical in saying, "A human being sees this and gets better as a human being". We see this thing in the narrative about the art we have acquired. Because there are other aspects that, for example, interfere with that, these are obviously of the social, family, and economic spheres, which are highly relevant. But these are studies that, due to their diversity, may also help us understand possible paths of action or those that have more effect or different effects on the public and how we reach the masses, such as:

- The gateway experiences
- The quality of the arts experience
- The intrinsic worth of the art experience to the individual”

(Focal Group 2, 0h01min)



# What remains to be done

Some speakers suggested as a model for this intervention an association between academia, the Ministry of Culture (and its decentralized bodies), and representatives of cultural organizations through the constitution of **regional culture observatories**, which would allow a polycentric and multidisciplinary operation.

These observatories, with small professional teams, would develop both quantitative analyses and qualitative studies, favouring the deepening of themes rather than the standardization of procedures and the speed of results.

Mention was also made of the importance of creating a **register of oral testimonies about the cultural experience**, both in audio and video, to **i)** capture the nuances and complexity of verbal and non-verbal language; **ii)** build a database of testimonies that would always be available, by accumulation, for secondary analyses.



# What remains to be done

## Control case 1:

- DEPS-DOC studies **are not sufficiently concerned with the anthropological dimensions of culture**, the links between culture and well-being, and the amateur forms of these practices
- The "national" dimension of the cultural practices sample, which, due to its statistical limitations, does not allow precise appropriation of the results at more limited scales (a region, a town)
- **What is lacking, therefore, is a cooperative observation program between the national scale and regional and local scales**





# What remains to be done

## Control case 2:

- Indicators are based on merely procedural questions
- **What is missing, therefore, are the not-generic, and substantive aspects of museum quality** (i.e. questions like “Does the museum have a website?” pulls a yes/no reply and binary information; However, the existence of a website doesn’t mean this is updated regularly, has meaningful information, etc; the same issue considers other specific aspects of a museum, such as its collection, dissemination, or activities



# Final Remarks

- The Portuguese cultural information system is highly centralised and pays little attention to cultural activities. There is a notorious lack of articulation in the cultural and artistic field and with academic expertise.
- The French case shows a consolidated system with solid links to researchers, broadening the very notion of culture and allowing for broad temporal comparisons. As in the Portuguese case, the qualitative dimension is underdeveloped.
- The Emilia Romagna case is more restricted and focused, as it focuses on quantitative indicators of museum quality, allowing their comparison and seriation.



**Thank you!**

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