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## Trabajo Final de Máster

To what extent do current European cultural policy evaluation methodologies take into account a general and complex approach to cultural value?

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To what extent do current European cultural policy evaluation methodologies take into account a general and complex approach to cultural value?

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Master's Degree in  
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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Project Description & Relevance

Public policies are created to address specific needs and demands of citizens, and facilitate growth and development of the society. In order to set successful policies, it is essential that policymakers have access to reliable and informative data regarding the existing gaps in services as well as the previous attempts to fix them or similar problems; however, within the cultural sector this is difficult to obtain due to the complex nature of cultural consumption and its effects beyond the economic dimension. This paper explores the current data collection standards for cultural entities and assesses their interpretation within the evaluation methodologies for specific policy implementation initiatives within Europe. The aim is to explore the way culture is operationalised within them and to identify examples of good practice and progress as well as areas for improvement.

Evaluating policies is a key step in the policy-making cycle and enables informed decision-making. The right to participate in the decision-making process is part of the essential cultural rights that all citizens hold and lack of transparent, detailed, and accurate evaluations infringes upon this. Without evaluations, the public lacks the means to hold policy-makers to account for the expenditure of their money and cannot determine whether their cultural needs or demands are being addressed on a collective scale.

This question has recently gained increased significance within Europe due to the Covid-19 pandemic and Ukraine-Russia conflict, which have both resulted in an economic downturn. Periods of financial hardship historically result in reduced investment in Arts and Culture as they are viewed as non-essential to everyday life and so are the first spending to be reduced to allow for other expenses that can generate further profit. Because of this, efforts to legitimise investment in culture are mainly focused on proving the economic benefits to the government rather than the welfare benefits to the individual, dismissing the holistic benefits that cultural policies can provide.

Currently the main indicators for cultural engagement in European countries, such as the UK (DCMS) and Spain (Ministerio de Cultura y Deporte), are ones such as museum attendance, employment in cultural industries, and self-generated income of publicly-funded cultural venues. The ideas of cultural value that underpin these

measures are quite utilitarian and I would like to explore whether more holistic indicators have also been implemented in order to cater to the developing ideas of culture. Where these measures of well-being have been implemented, I will assess whether accurate assumptions are being made and whether the complexities of capturing a subjective variable are taken into account to produce verifiable results.

Additionally, proper evaluation of projects aids their improvement and development, as well as that of follow-on or similar projects. This can improve innovation within the cultural field and increase the speed of development through the reduction of trial and error, by identifying the specific ways that policies are succeeding and failing. This in turn enables targeted solutions. In today's economically unstable environment, evaluation is an essential step in the prevention of the waste of resources, and the targeting of cultural policies to aid those most in need of them.

## **1.2 Objectives**

The primary goal of this project is to assist with enabling effective cultural policy-making at a time where the faces of cultural and creative industries are rapidly changing due to new technologies, changes in culture consumption habits, and pressures from the Covid-19 pandemic. The direct aims of this research are to establish already existing good practice within cultural policy evaluation in terms of capturing cultural value and identify gaps where improvements could be made to provide for more accurate, meaningful, and impactful evaluation.

## **1.3 Research Questions**

The key question I aim to answer within this paper is: to what extent do current European cultural policy evaluation methodologies take into account a general and complex approach to cultural value? In order to answer it, we must also look at what the existing evaluation standards and recommendations are with regard to cultural policies in Europe, and to what extent they are being followed. Additionally I will investigate whether the current evaluation methods give a solid ground to the legitimisation of cultural investment by confirming already-held views of the leadership and public, or whether they are used as sources of knowledge and are themselves sources of cultural value.

## **1.4 Hypothesis**

My hypothesis is that there are gaps in the way we assess the impact of cultural policies and that culture continues to be viewed through an institutionalised lens, dismissing the value of culture as a good within itself, and as a means for social development. I will also examine whether the evaluation process is often minimised to fulfil requirements of the funding institutions, rather than be used as a source of learning and development.

## **1.5 Methodology**

In order to answer the primary research question, we must firstly look at the evaluation guidelines issued by cultural institutions within Europe, to investigate whether there is an awareness of the complexities that surround capturing social value. The guidelines below originate from the UK, the European Commission and the Council of Europe, and have been analysed in order to contextualise the chosen case studies and establish the standards up to which these examples should be held. Consequently, I will analyse specific case studies to verify whether the guidelines are being used in practice and to what extent are the evaluations effective at assessing the performance of the cultural policies. The selection of the case studies to be analysed is being directed by the impact the public policies have on cultural projects. There is a substantial body of research regarding cultural management in the UK that renders it impactful enough to act as a benchmark for other analyses during the past years. Therefore, it is essential to examine the evaluation methods utilised in practice recently as well as their added value to cultural policy shaping strategies. I have also chosen to look at Poland where development of cultural management has been slower but has, in the recent years, shown signs of change and innovation.

As part of this research, it is imperative to compare cultural initiatives that share similar characteristics and objectives in order to explain the relationship between their objectives and outcomes as well as the effectiveness of the evaluation process. Both of the projects I have chosen to analyse are aiming to improve cultural education of young people. The projects are also driven by national policies which are implemented and assessed on a local level. This allows us to view how aggregate reports can be created based on small-scale evaluations, which can then be applied on a macro-scale to the evaluations of funding institutions as a whole. Although there are differences in the scale and specific objectives of the two

programmes, they are similar enough to be able to form a meaningful comparison between their evaluation methodologies.

The first public policy project evaluation comes from Arts Council England. The scheme I have chosen to look at is the Cultural Citizens Programme (CCP) pilot, which aims to introduce 11–14 year olds from disadvantaged backgrounds to publicly funded arts, cultural venues and sites in and around where they live as well, in order to give young people the confidence to continue their engagement with local arts organisations. This pilot programme was carried out in three different locations across England from September 2016 to August 2017. Evaluations were carried out at each location and were then combined to form a nation-wide evaluation report, published in November 2017, which drew conclusions to be applied in the event of a full roll out of the scheme in the future. According to the evaluation, the pilot programme was deemed a success but, despite this, it has not progressed past the pilot stage as of June 2022.

The second initiative I have chosen to analyse is a grant programme conducted by the National Centre for Culture (NCC, Polish: NCK) in Poland, by the name of *Bardzo Młoda Kultura* (BMK) – translating to *Very Young Culture*. This 3-year initiative aims to bring together the spheres of culture and education to promote the development of social competencies among young people, through the use of culture. The underlying aim of the programme as a whole is to use culture as a tool for shaping socially important skills and attitudes among young people, in particular those related to cooperation, communication competences, creativity and innovation in action. This is a nation-wide programme with local applications and an extensive evaluation effort as it is a recurring programme awaiting its third iteration. The evaluation process is used as a way to improve the functionality of the programme with each iteration. Due to the large scale of the programme, I have chosen to focus on the evaluation of its implementation within the Mazovian Voivodeship in 2020.

For both of these cases, I have used publicly available evaluation reports, from both the funding institution and localised programme implementers, as a means of testing the utility of the evaluations as resources for policy-makers external to the funding institution for learning and forming part of the policy-creation cycle on a national and international level.

To gain a more intimate understanding of the ideas of cultural value that underpin the methodologies and the specific context, I have also conducted interviews with actors within policy-making and implementation in England and Poland. I have

interviewed an official working at a London Borough, whose responsibilities include reviewing potential public policy projects and securing funding for them. Additionally, I talked to Ilona Howiecka-Tańska from the Research Department at Copernicus Science Centre in Warsaw – a leading cultural institution in Poland. Her work is focused on understanding the phenomena of learning and play in museum settings, and so she is able to provide an insight into how cultural value is perceived on an institutional and national level within Poland. Finally, I interviewed Agnieszka Bąk, the Manager of Data and Research at the National Centre for Culture, who is directly involved with the evaluation of the *Very Young Culture* initiative, in order to acquire an understanding of her first hand perspective of the project.

In order to assess the approach of each case to cultural value, I will look at what ideas of cultural value underpin the projects, how they are operationalised, what metrics are being used to assess their impact, and to what extent the results of the evaluation within themselves provide value for the wider policy world. As participants in the political system, cultural policy actors must look to the top for guidance and expectations on how to best legitimise the investment into cultural policy projects; therefore, I will also discuss the cases in relation to the national and organisational evaluation guidelines to see the extent to which the cases reflect the concepts of cultural value emphasised by the guidelines.

## 2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Within this theoretical framework the reader will find information regarding cultural value, the role of evaluation in the policy-making cycle, the complexities of capturing non-economic effects of cultural policy and the current key evaluation guidelines for policy-makers in Europe with specific reference to the UK and Poland.

### **2.1 Value of Culture**

The value of culture can be viewed in two ways: the value can be instrumental or intrinsic. An instrumental perspective measures value through the utility of a policy to society in practical ways. The most common way to capture this is through the measurement of economic impacts, such as calculating the amount of jobs created or revenue generated; however, an instrumental evaluation can also take into



account more complex factors, as long as they prove that the policies are ‘useful’ to the society in some way (Mulcahy, 2006). The specific metrics chosen to demonstrate the utility of cultural policies are often defined by the central goals of the governments, which are usually economic in nature (Belfiore, 2021). This causes policy-makers to place an excessive focus on chasing empirical proof of success, in order to obtain a larger amount of funding, thus abandoning the learning function of impact assessments.

On the other hand, an intrinsic view of cultural value maintains that culture is inherently beneficial to society, without the need for any further specifics. While it is true that some cultural investments have an intrinsic value, such as purchasing a painting for a public museum collection due to its aesthetic appeal, this approach to cultural value can be limiting to policy-makers as it does not account for the cultural needs of the public. Not all cultural policies are equal in their targeting of cultural needs and demands, and justifying them as ‘good’ based on the idea that all culture is intrinsically ‘good’ consequently dismisses the central purpose of policies as a means of achieving an improved society.

## **2.2 Evaluation Within Policy-Making**

Before we dive into the details surrounding evaluation methods used to capture cultural value generated by policy interventions, we must first examine the purpose behind public policy evaluations and how this impacts the methodologies applied to cultural policy.

The role of evaluation within the policy-making cycle is to be the link between current projects and those being planned for the future, through the measurement of the cultural value created, and the identification of the methods by which these effects were achieved. Results of evaluations of public policies should be published publicly (CCV, 2021) not only in the name of transparency and accountability, but also to facilitate the learning process (Council of Europe, 2020). They should be used internally and inter-institutionally to expand the pool of knowledge and development of policy interventions. Evaluation also feeds into one of the key cultural rights of the public – the right to participate in the decision-making and governance. As mentioned by Nicolás Barbieri (2020), the participation of the public in the policy-making process leads to greater democratisation of culture and improved targeting of future policies; therefore, access to evaluation can be viewed as a means in improving equity in cultural participation.

In line with these purposes, the Centre for Cultural Value included within its evaluation principles (2021) that, where possible, evaluation should prioritise the learning over monitoring goals of evaluation and understanding over judgement. It also states that evaluations should be people-centred and co-create with representatives of beneficiary groups to determine the evaluation's purpose, method and interpretation. By taking into account the complexities of cultural values, evaluations can take on a more effective role in the policy-making cycle by connecting on a closer level with the beneficiaries, as well as enabling continued learning for policy-makers. Therefore, it is essential that, where possible, evaluations are made publicly available, are easily accessible, and are clear for all stakeholders to understand.

## **2.2 Economic vs Other Effects**

The problems related to the evaluation of culture are not new or unknown. There are many researchers who have highlighted why cultural value is so hard to capture, as well as the institutional problems that exacerbate the issues. These recommendations have been incorporated into institutional evaluation guidelines to varying extents, as we will see later on.

The first hurdle in creating effective evaluation methods within culture is to define what is meant by 'Cultural Value' in order to figure out what to measure. John Holden's *Capturing Cultural Value: How Culture Has Become a Tool of Government Policy* (2004) segments cultural value under the umbrellas of economic values and 'other'. According to Holden, cultural value is created through artefacts and processes, but also through the engagement, culture embodies its own value. Within Holden's paper, cultural values are categorised as:

<b>Economic Values:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Commercial</li> <li>● Use</li> <li>● Non-use</li> </ul>	<b>Other Values:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Historical</li> <li>● Social</li> <li>● Symbolic</li> <li>● Aesthetic</li> <li>● Spiritual</li> </ul>
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For the purposes of this paper, I will focus on the ways we capture Social Value created by cultural policy. While it is necessary to capture the creation of all of these types of values, it is a contribution to the 'Social' dimension of public well-being that

is most difficult to operationalise. 'Operationalisation' here is understood to be "the process through which you decide what you are going to measure to understand a concept" as defined by Susan Oman (2021). It is important that this operationalisation and the relevant measures are disclosed within the evaluation methodology, in order for outside actors to be able to assess and challenge the reasoning behind the evaluation through replication of the calculations and verification of assumptions (Belfiore, 2021).

Of the non-economic cultural values, the social dimension of cultural policy is the one that is the most relevant, as it demonstrates the effects of culture on the 'well-being' of individuals, and therefore, on the societies that those individuals make up. These 'well-being' effects are notoriously hard to measure in culture, due to the difficulty in proving a causal relationship between policy and impact. For example, it is reasonably simple to demonstrate the linear relationship between a policy to hire more teachers and the subsequent improved academic performance of students, but it is far more difficult to prove that attendance of the reading of a book at a public library inspired a student to participate more in class, and achieve higher grades as a result. However, it is essential for evaluations to consider this dimension, and to challenge the view that economic growth is the sole overarching goal of public policy (Belfiore, 2021).

This difficulty is explored by Oman (2021), who discusses the measurement of the aggregate effects of cultural investment on well-being as an indicator of the intrinsic value of culture. She concludes that the use of general well-being questionnaires at the final stage of a project are too broad to demonstrate a direct causality relationship between intervention and outcome, especially as these questionnaires are unable to capture the complexities of cultural participation. Culture is not consumed or valued equally by all, as the recipients have varying levels of access, familiarity and income, to name but a few. Depending on the policy, these factors may be more or less relevant, but they do increase the complexity of operationalising the objectives within the evaluation methodology. The outcomes of any policy intervention are specific to its social context and history, and without analysis of the effects of these contexts, we cannot ensure replicability of outcomes in similar interventions in other locations, which limits the value of the evaluation itself.

Another issue affecting evaluation methodologies is that of an exploratory versus confirmatory approach to data collection (Oman, 2021). Often there is a burden of proof placed upon culture by an instrumental policy framework, accompanied by

the pressure of high expectations of success from politicians. This can lead to the collection of 'bad data', caused by vague and ill-defined methodologies, and resulting in the lack of verifiability, transparency and replicability of the methodology (Belfiore, 2021). Essentially, policy evaluations that are focused on *confirming* a funding body's already preconceived ideas of what the results are going to be, leads to that body being more likely to have a narrowed view of the final outcome, in turn ignoring the aforementioned social complexities and drawing misleading conclusions. This stands in opposition to using the evaluation process to *explore* the arising consequences – both intended and not. A confirmatory approach limits the conclusions that can be drawn from evaluative processes and holds back the development of policies. Unfortunately, this approach is common, as policymakers often do not engage in acquiring factual evidence, as they lack the background knowledge required to understand the results, identify the prominence of unreliable data, and maintain awareness of political constraints in policy creation.

Yet another dimension that hinders the complete capture of well-being effects of cultural policies is time. Cultural experiences in particular can have unexpected long-lasting impacts on the lives of individual consumers. Therefore, while it is necessary for data collection and analysis to be timely, it is also important to carry out assessment activities during the lifetime of the project and to continue gathering feedback and results beyond the immediate post-implementation period. This will enable policymakers to capture effects beyond the immediate outcomes of policy interventions. Additionally, the wrong choice of timeframe can impact the narrative that the results portray (Oman, 2021), leading to misguided conclusions.

### **2.3 Current Evaluation Recommendations**

The key resource regarding policy evaluations in the UK is *The Magenta Book*, published by Her Majesty's Treasury (2020). This document is intended to be used by professionals within the areas of policy, delivery and analysis, to assist these professions in constructing evaluation methodologies from the inception of a project. The most recent version was published in 2020 but editions date back to 2003. *The Magenta Book* views evaluation to be a method for learning and accountability, and expresses this in three dimensions: process, impact, and value-for-money. The demonstration of 'value-for-money' is purely utilitarian in nature; nevertheless, as I found out from my interview with a public servant from England, this is the most valued assessment due to the financial strain placed on public institutions in recent years.

The recommendation to include an analysis of the process of policy implementation suggests a focus on more complex ideas of value. With regard to the complexities of cultural evaluations it is the measurement of the impact, or “What difference has an intervention made?”, that is the most relevant. It is important to note the difference between ‘impact’ and ‘outcomes’, where ‘outcomes’ are understood to be the direct early and mid-term results and ‘impact’ as the long-term effects produced by a policy intervention.

The primary recommendation made within *The Magenta Book* is to operationalise the policy intervention by establishing a ‘Theory of Change’ to understand the process of the intervention and how it is expected to reach its outcomes. The guidelines advise policy-makers to set out the assumptions upon which the intervention is based along with supporting evidence and to examine the wider context within which the intervention will operate. The examination of the context should consider factors such as other policy changes or changes in economic, social and environmental factors. The report is supplemented by a guide titled *Handling Complexity in Policy Evaluation* (2020) which addresses in further detail the best methods to capture social complexities which may impact the outcomes of interventions.

Although *The Magenta Book* is applicable to other policy areas aside from culture, it also recognises the difficulties of impact assessment resulting from external influences such as broader trends, coincidence, selection bias and other interventions occurring at the same time. The recommendations include three approaches to impact assessment: experimental, quasi-experimental, and theory-based. Experimental and quasi-experimental approaches involve the analysis of the affected parties prior to the intervention and after. These approaches are best-suited for interventions isolated from factors external to the policies where a linear relationship between action and outcome can be demonstrated. In the case of cultural policy, the theory-based approach is most appropriate. This approach tests the links between interventions and outcomes to ensure that there is sufficient evidence to attribute the outcomes to the inputs. There are many specific methodologies that can be applied to this approach, but the selection of them is dependent on the unique features of the project to be evaluated.

The European Commission recommendations are much more brief in comparison to the UK. They are included within the *Better Regulation Guidelines* (2021) and accompanying *Toolkit* (2021). There is little mention of the complexities surrounding the measurement of non-economic outcomes and impacts within the guidelines,

but the toolkit does provide more detailed instructions regarding the practicalities of constructing an evaluation, which allows it to serve as a more helpful instrument for policymakers. Rather than a 'Theory of Change', the EU Commission suggests the consideration of the 'intervention logic'; however, these are equivalent in principle and can be used interchangeably. The toolkit does take into account that some specific policy areas may require unique evaluation criteria and outlines ones such as utility (stakeholder satisfaction and how it varies across different groups) and equity (how fairly are the effects distributed among different social groups).

In relation to Poland, both of my interviewees remarked that there is a lack of institutional guidance regarding capturing cultural value and the evaluation of public projects in general. Policy-makers are left to rely upon their own research and on the use of academic papers or case studies to formulate their methodologies.

#### **2.4 Evaluation Techniques Beyond the Economic**

In order to capture policy impacts beyond the contributions to the economy, more qualitative techniques must be used, in addition to a deeper study into the demographics of the beneficiaries of these policy interventions. The recommended techniques for general evaluations are: desk reviews, direct observation (such as site visits or conferences), interviews, focus groups, questionnaires and surveys, case studies, and benchmarking (Council of Europe, 2020).

Intuitively, surveys appear to be the best technique for measurement of 'well-being' and other qualitative metrics; however, the utility of responses is limited by the questions asked (Oman, 2021). Additionally, the formulation of questions can be subject to subconscious confirmatory bias, thus justifying pre-existing assumptions, discrediting valuable evidence, and limiting the possibilities for evidence-based policy development. This exemplifies why developing a solid Theory of Change (HM Treasury, 2020) is key to a fruitful evaluation. It establishes the links between cause and effect that should be tested using the surveys, rather than putting the focus on proving the result of the policy intervention directly.

Interviews, focus groups, and site visits are the best methods to capture unintended effects and impacts on an individual level. They conform to the exploratory approach to data collection as they are more focused on learning about the experiences of participants and what conclusions can be drawn from them as opposed to collecting numerical data as evidence of preconceived ideas of success.

# 3 DISCUSSION

Within this section, the reader can find a discussion of how cultural value is operationalised and captured by cultural policy evaluations – within guidelines and real-life cases.

## **3.1 Implications of Institutional Guidelines on Measuring Cultural Value**

As mentioned previously, *The Magenta Book* (HM Treasury, 2020) is a blanket guide for evaluations of policies from all fields, not just that of culture; however, it is accompanied by a *Supplementary Guide Handling Complexity in Policy* (HM Treasury, 2020). This guide is very detailed in the description of why considering complexity matters when assessing policy interventions, the ways it can impact the accuracy and usefulness of evaluation, and the methods policy-makers can use to account for it in their projects. It demonstrates that the UK government has awareness of policy outcomes beyond the instrumental, and actively encourages the measurement of them.

There is guidance provided on how to select the appropriate methodology depending on the nature of the policy intervention, specifically in terms of the purpose of evaluation and the attributes of the social system complexities. This is an effective resource for policy-makers as it addresses the specific responses to issues generated by different features of complexity, while acknowledging the limitations of time, funding and human resources that public institutions often struggle with. Using these guidelines, cultural policy-makers are encouraged to view cultural value in complex ways and consider how societal factors impact the delivery of their projects.

The evaluation guidelines for receivers of the Arts Council National Lottery Project Grant (ACE, 2018) consist of a list of questions for project operators to ask themselves when establishing the monitoring of their project. They contain no mention of the unique challenges that culture presents for evaluation. Applicants and receivers of ACE funding are also provided with a self-evaluation toolkit, which encourages users to assess the quality and impact of their project on the basis of the strength of the project vision, impact, quality, repeat and new audiences. Each factor is expected to be assessed on a scale of performance and importance using a score out of ten, with an option to reflect in written form on any improvements that could be made. These measures are extremely basic and are entirely subjective.

Providing basic resources such as the *Self-Evaluation Toolkit* gives the impression of understanding the importance of evaluation on the part of the institution, but leads to the treatment of evaluations as a checkbox activity rather than a part of the policy project. ACE does supply links to further resources, but as an extension of the central Government's authority on cultural policy, the lack of direct guidance for their beneficiaries is a weak point in the organisation. Without setting clear expectations of evaluations and educating users of the importance, ACE is limiting the capture of cultural value and reducing the opportunities for project operators to gain a deeper understanding of their own project as well as to learn from similar initiatives that have already been implemented.

Regarding European guidelines with specific relation to Poland, both Ilona Łowiecka-Tańska and Agnieszka Bąk expressed to me the scarcity of public institutional resources that could serve as the basis for evaluation methodologies within the cultural realm. However, Bąk did mention that the introduction of EU funding opportunities in Poland normalised the inclusion of evaluations in policy projects, even if they are lacking in detail or comprehension of the value that evaluation can add to the development of projects. Inadvertently, this contributes to (supports?) Holden's (2004) idea of grass roots value creation through the independent development of evaluation, challenging the traditional concept of centrally driven, top-down delivery.

### **3.2 Locating Case Studies**

To locate case studies of evaluation methodologies for analysis, I have explored a large number of policymaker's databases; however, despite many of them claiming to have publicly available evaluation reports, there are minimum to none that contain information regarding the methodologies, or even detailed results beyond a few statistics exemplifying supposed success.

In order to see whether the recommendations from *The Magenta Book* are being applied in real life cases, I began by looking through the Arts Council England website. As the primary funding institution for cultural policy in England, I expected to find a clear and transparent review of the results of initiatives they have supported. However, a search for 'evaluation' brought up only 69 results, which is extremely low in comparison to the 840 projects and institutions who were granted funds by the Arts Council in the 2018-22 period alone. The lack of publication of results of sponsored programmes on the funding institution's site suggests a disconnect between the funding institution and its projects, and implies that there is little



engagement of the project partners in measuring and publishing their achievements in a measurable manner. The internal evaluation of each sponsored initiative or institution aims to prove to the funding institution that they are deserving of further investment, but those results should also be used as a resource for taxpayers to verify that the funds they contribute to are being used in effective ways.

The poor evaluation standards continue on the individual project level. I tested a random 10% sample of the 840 ACE-funded projects, in order to determine whether they demonstrated any awareness of the impacts of their activities. I found that over 60% of the grant-receivers' did not publicly present any assessment of their actions at all, indicating that all monitoring is carried out internally and results are viewed as statistics to verify the performance of the project. Just over 20% of the institutions made some mention of the impact they have made through their projects, expressed in basic terms such as number of attendees, investment spend generated, or number of partners. These figures do not allow stakeholders to draw any meaningful conclusions regarding the impacts made, perpetuating a lack of transparency of their actions. Only a little over 17% of the sampled institutions presented evidence of evaluation of their actions beyond a few superficial figures. Even within this small segment, the standards of evaluations varied but I have chosen to include the institutions that demonstrated, even in a small capacity, the use of evaluation as a means of capturing 'other' cultural value to facilitate learning.

The lack of consistency among these projects is surprising when considering the strength of policy evaluation guidelines provided by the central government of the UK; however, this deficiency may be caused by the fact that the government guidance is not reflected within the Arts Council England's own recommendations.

This trend continued among other institutions such as: the European Parliament; UNESCO; Culture 360; Ministries for Culture of Poland, Spain, and Netherlands; EU CULT Committee; and Generalitat de Catalunya. Although all are involved in setting cultural policies, they lack the centralisation of data necessary for the dissemination of knowledge. UNESCO does have a database of project outcomes; however, when searching for published results, the user will find most links to be invalid. Although this is a technical fault rather than an operational one, it exacerbates the problem through limitation of access.

Overall, I have found it surprising that despite highlighting the need for policy evaluations and the different methods that should be implemented, there is a lack of desire for public accountability. This is demonstrated by the scarcity of detailed case

studies. Results are not made available by not only the organising parties/institutions, but also their funding partners. This echoes the obscurity which exists within the definition and implementation of evaluative methodologies in the first place. Cultural policy implementation lacks the followthrough of evaluation practices that would be expected of publicly funded initiatives, leading to compartmentalisation of objectives and difficulty in mutual learning across cultural institutions in Europe and beyond.

### **3.3 Cultural Citizens Pilot Programme**

#### **3.3.1 Introduction**

The Cultural Citizens Pilot Programme (CCP) was funded by Arts Council England (ACE) and was implemented in 2016-17 in three areas of England: Barking and Dagenham, Liverpool and Blackpool, and Birmingham. The evaluative documents publicly available for this programme are:

<b>Title</b>	<b>Brief Description</b>
<i>Evaluation of the Cultural Citizens Programme pilot: Overall report</i> (Thomson, Louisa, et al., 2017)	Outline of evaluation methodology, summary of local self-evaluations, presentation of overall results and recommendations for the future of the programme
<i>Response to the Evaluation of the Cultural Citizens Pilot</i> (Arts Council England, 2018)	Reflection of the funding institution (ACE) on the results of the evaluation

#### **3.3.2 Operationalisation**

The objectives of the programme are explicitly listed as:

- “To introduce 11-14 year olds from disadvantaged backgrounds to publicly funded arts and cultural venues and sites in and around where they live
- To give young people the confidence to continue their engagement with local arts organisations” (Thomson, Louisa, et al., 2017)

From the objectives, we can see that the underpinning idea of cultural value is leaning towards the social and intrinsic. The programme relies on the belief that contact with culture in any form will be beneficial to the youth, and works to achieve Goal 5 of the ACE strategy: “to give every child and young person the opportunity to experience richness in the arts”, specifically in relation to youth from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

In order to operationalise the intrinsic value of cultural engagement, CCP started by defining what is the idea of a ‘Cultural Citizen’ that they envision the youth to become and the barriers that stop them from achieving this.

**Being a Cultural Citizen means being....<sup>6</sup>**

- **Culturally aware** – I know what’s on offer to me and how to get involved
- **Culturally literate** – I can talk about arts, culture and heritage and explain what they mean to me, my friends and my community
- **Culturally productive** – I can make, perform, sing, act, play, compose
- **Culturally knowledgeable** – I understand the process of creating things, and that helps me make sense of my own experience and understand other cultures that might be different to my own
- **Cultural leader** – I can lead so that as young people we can contribute to and shape what’s on offer, including taking on roles in arts and culture organisations
- **Culturally aspirational** – I can see what future career pathways in the arts might look like




Figure Source: Thomson, Louisa, et al.(2017) *Evaluation of the Cultural Citizens Programme Pilot: Overall Report*.

The evaluation of the project itself was conducted with the purpose of learning about *how* the project was delivered, identifying and understanding the short term outcomes and impact of the programme, and developing recommendations for future rollout of the full programme. The goals of the evaluation demonstrate some awareness of the value that evaluation itself can create, in terms of its contributions of knowledge to other cultural policies. However, as a pilot programme, the implied goal of evaluation should be to prove the legitimate investment potential of implementing the programme to the funding institutions. In the context of reduced

public investment in the UK, the measurement of value-for-money is key, but in the case of the CCP, their evaluation does not appear to take this into account.

The defined characteristics of a Cultural Citizen were used as the basis for surveying the experiences of the participants. The underlying aim of cultural participation was segmented into the fields of creation and consumption. Although both of those aspects of cultural participation could be defined in economic terms, this evaluation chose to focus on testing the connection between participation in cultural activity and improvement of social skills. In this way, CCP was able to demonstrate a complex approach to the creation and measurement of cultural value.

### 3.3.3 Capturing Value

The characteristics chosen to operationalise the concept of a Cultural Citizen require measurement through qualitative evaluation techniques, with a focus on self-assessment. The operators of the programme chose to use surveys and interviews as the main techniques for capturing the cultural value of the project.

The operators of the pilot programme in the three localities conducted a survey prior to the commencement of the programme, to provide a baseline for the experiences of the participants before their involvement in the CCP. The survey was then repeated upon completion of the programme to measure the development of social skills, such as teamwork and confidence, throughout the programme. This survey also assessed the expectations of young people entering the programme, but limited the complexity of the answers through the use of defined options. While use of preset options aids the standardisation of responses, it overlooks the possibility of unexpected responses which could have the potential to challenge the institutional viewpoint and express an individual understanding of cultural value. To account for this, participants were also asked about their initial opinions of the programme prior to commencement during the evaluation interviews; however, the reliability and significance of these responses is slightly diminished due to the time elapsed between commencement of the programme and evaluation. This is mainly as a result of the young age of participants (14-15 years old), which can translate to susceptibility to suggestion and loss of interest in participation over time.

Conversely, the evaluation methodology noted that the choice of evaluation techniques itself generated cultural value. Encouraging young people to participate in the evaluation interviews provided the participants with a vocabulary and confidence to engage in critical reflection of their experiences, translating to

increased understanding of cultural experiences and adding to the individual perceived intrinsic value of culture. In this way, evaluation of the CCP was not only a reflection on the policy but formed a part of its implementation.

The interviews also proved beneficial in the identification of unexpected shortcomings of the programme. Participants were given the space to express their dissatisfactions which led to a better understanding of the ways CCP could be improved in its next iteration, as well as identifying general issues with youth engagement in culture. For example, some participants felt that the planned activities did not reflect their need for autonomous exploration or inclusion.

Finally, participation and active engagement of participants within the programme were measured through the creation of an award that the teens received upon the conclusion of the programme if the operators judged them to have taken advantage of the opportunities presented to them. The amount of awards granted versus the number of participants was used to measure the rate of active participation in the programme. Of course, this metric is dependent on the subjective judgement of the operators when judging whether a participant is deserving of an award. Nevertheless, it is a measure that potentially paints a more accurate picture of the engagement of participants than if self-evaluation was used. Individual fears and perceptions of what constitutes active participation could sway the responses of young people.

#### 3.3.4 Limiting Factors

Within this project, the main constraints of evaluation were time and resources. As CCP was a short-running pilot project, it did not possess the financial and human resources to implement a detailed analysis of outcomes, or to undertake testing of relationships between the inputs and effects. The programme evaluation report (Thomson, Louisa, et al., 2017) noted that the implementation additional survey placed an undue burden on the operating staff, as well as the respondents, resulting in a decreased quality of data.

Additionally, the producers of the aggregate project evaluation found disparities between the application of evaluation methodologies among the local operators of the programme. Differences in response rate and format of surveys created difficulties in standardising the three project assessments.

### **3.4 Bardzo Młoda Kultura Mazowie/Very Young Culture Mazovia**

#### **3.4.1 Introduction**

As described before, the *Very Young Culture* grant programme (referred to from here on by its Polish acronym BMK), carried out by the National Centre for Culture (NCC/NCK in Polish) in Poland, is a long term programme supporting cultural education among Polish youth. The documents analysed here evaluate the second edition of the programme which ran from 2019 to 2021. This case study was chosen due to the detailed documentation of the evaluation process, as found on the NCC website. There are 11 reports available online regarding this programme, 7 of them relating to the most recent edition, including an Ex-Ante evaluation. The other 4 documents relate to the first edition of the programme, but contain far less detail regarding the evaluation aspect, relying on a selection of key figures to communicate the performance of the initiative. Simply based on the increase of information available from the first edition to the next, it is clear that the importance of improved, detailed evaluation as a means for improvement of the programme was recognised.

The reports available for the 2019–2021 edition in chronological order of publishing are as follows:

<b>Title</b>	<b>Brief Description</b>
<i>0. Report on the Ex-Ante Evaluation of the Very Young Culture Programme 2019–2021</i> (Szczurek & Szostakowska, 2020)	Conclusions and recommendations from the first edition of the programme, ex-ante evaluation, contextualisation of the programme within the cultural education environment in Poland
<i>1. Report on the State of Diagnosis in the Very Young Culture Programme 2019–2021</i> (Jaskuła & Korporowicz, 2020)	Methodology recommendations regarding the monitoring and evaluation of the programme, diagnosis of differences between methodologies on a local level
<i>2. Evaluation Summary 2019</i> (Zarzecki, 2020)	Summary of the chosen evaluation methodology

3. <i>Evaluation of the Second Edition of the Very Young Culture Programme - Local Projects</i> (Evaluation Centre, 2021)	Conclusions from the grant-awarding process and implementation of local projects (national-scale analysis), identification of further needs and expected changes for the near future
4. <i>Cultural Education in Virtual Spaces - a summary of the regional SWOT analyses of the Very Young Culture Programme</i> (NCK, 2021)	SWOT analysis of the programme and recommendations
5. <i>Voivodeship Diagnosis Under the Very Young Culture Programme for 2021 - Guidelines and recommendations for regional operators</i> (Bąk, Broszkiewicz, Knaś, 2021)	Guidelines for evaluation of projects on a regional and local scale
6. <i>Summary of the regional evaluation reports of Very Young Culture</i> (Rudnicki, 2021)	Summary the regional self-evaluations carried out by the local project operators

As the meta-analysis of the local project outcomes is currently ongoing, I have primarily looked at the evaluation report (Szczęblewska, 2020) from the Mazovian Voivodeship to explore how the national evaluation methodology was applied on a more local level. The scale of this report is also more comparable with that of the CCP.

### 3.4.2 Operationalisation

From the outset, it is clearly visible that the NCC has taken into consideration how to best construct the evaluation methodology to reap the greatest benefits, in terms of improving the programme for future editions. As we know from Oman (2021), the key to a successful evaluation begins with planning and operationalisation, starting with a clear understanding of the Theory of Change (HM Treasury, 2021) or intervention logic (EU Commission, 2021) of the initiative. There is explicit acknowledgment and definition of this step within the *Evaluation Summary 2019* (Zarzecki, 2020). According to Agnieszka Bąk, establishing a clear evaluation methodology for the second iteration of the project was intended to tackle the inequality of knowledge and experience of evaluations among local project operators.

The strategic goals of the programme are broadly described on the NCC website ([nck.pl/bardzomlodakultura](http://nck.pl/bardzomlodakultura), Last accessed June 2022) as *“strengthening the role of cultural education”* and *“to build a system in which culture is a tool for shaping socially important skills and attitudes, in particular those related to cooperation, communication competences, creativity and innovation in action”*. Based on this, we can predict the necessity of the evaluation to go beyond the economic dimension to capture the progress the programme makes in relation to these aims. Local implementations of the programme have much more specific goals, individual to each project operator and greatly varying depending on the institution.

The evaluation criteria defined as applicable to all local projects funded by the programme are:

- Accuracy - the degree to which the project addresses the needs of the recipients and creates local networks
- Adequacy - the way in which the local projects have adjusted their offer to the competencies of the direct recipients following the regranting process
- Effectiveness - the degree to which the key competences of project recipients are strengthened through their participation in the programme

The key concept in the operationalisation of cultural value and demonstrating effectiveness within this initiative, similarly to CCP, is that of social competencies developed among young people through their participation in BMK-funded projects. The competencies considered as relevant for this initiative were: creativity, teamwork, communication, media literacy, and trust. Participant satisfaction was also used as a key metric of success. These choices demonstrate the application of the social value of culture as the underpinning philosophy.

### 3.4.3 Capturing Value

Within the Mazovia Voivodeship the techniques used to capture the changes in cultural value were questionnaires, interviews, and desk research.

The average age of participants of BMK projects within Mazovia was even younger than that of the CCP, therefore the majority of questionnaire respondents were aged between 10-15. The questionnaire was adapted to engage its audience by using



emoticons to simplify the measurement of attitudes toward the project prior to commencement and satisfaction following participation.

The development of social competencies was also captured through the use of a survey in two parts: self-assessment of skills acquired as result of participation in the project and the benefits to the individual self-perception. The correlation between the responses to these two questions was also analysed, demonstrating a willingness from the evaluating body to uncover the links that lead to the creation of cultural value. These correlations were also linked to the changes in attitude towards the projects before and after participation in them. For example, the participants who indicated cooperation to be the main skill were also more likely to indicate exercising their agency as their favourite aspect, and displayed a bigger positive change in attitudes towards the projects over their duration.

In order to draw meaningful conclusions from the evaluations of a wide variety of projects, the results were viewed on an aggregate level and then segmented into groups based on their characteristics. For example, the unifying characteristic of a group of three projects was the idea of collaborative creation. Analysing the responses of participants in such groups enables the evaluators to identify the direct links between the type of cultural participation and the competencies it develops.

#### 3.4.4 Limiting Factors

While the demographics of Poland are much less diverse than that of England, the evaluation did not take into account the socio-economic characteristics of the participants which could influence their experience of the projects. The analysis of correlations could become more meaningful if this dimension was considered by capturing the instrumental value of culture in alleviating social problems.

#### 3.5 Summary

Through the analysis of evaluation methodologies, I have found that my initial assumption that culture continues to be viewed primarily in a utilitarian way was partially disproved. Where evaluation guidelines exist, they demonstrate consideration of measures beyond the economic; however, a lack of centralised evaluation guidelines specific to culture limits policy-makers to the use of independently located sources – whether that be case studies or academic research. This puts a strain on project timeliness and resources from the outset. Nevertheless, where institutions are able to dedicate the time to establishing a

detailed methodology, they create innovative, targeted approaches as exemplified by the BMK evaluation guidelines for local project implementation.

For example, the use of emoticons to gauge the attitudes of young project participants takes into consideration how to make the process of evaluation engaging for the target audience. Additionally, the use of emoticons as a range of evaluation responses registers the emotional perception of the project by the young participants, but also can serve as a more accurate medium for children to capture their overall experience, due to their familiarity with technology and the feelings they associate with these images. For a young audience, standardised or open answers could have limited their engagement with the questionnaire, if they were unsure how to best express their thoughts or attitudes toward their experiences.

Ilona Łłowiecka-Tańska is also part of developing innovative techniques to capture the social value created through the processes of enjoyment and learning, in a museum context. In her experience, evaluation efforts in Poland are intimately tied to and motivated by the mission and vision of each institution. This rings true also for the NCC, whose overarching mission is cultural education, and development and professionalisation of the cultural sector. We see this mission reflected in the evaluation methodology which aims to give professionals in the field of culture the tools to capture the impact of their work.

The practical implementation of evaluation guidelines at the definition stage of cultural policy programmes reflects that on some level, funding organisations are engaging with complex evaluation techniques. However, the testimonials of the interviewees involved in this study indicate that this engagement does not translate to projects operating at a local level. While standardising evaluation approaches on a micro-scale is important in order to enable a macro-analysis of programme impacts, there are challenges. Agnieszka Bąk explained that while evaluations at a local level are beneficial to the extent that local programme operators have direct knowledge of the needs of the communities they are serving, there is an imbalance of quality among evaluation efforts, due to the variety of experience in the research field. This limitation was also reflected within the CCP evaluation report, where the inequality of evaluations among the various local project operators impacted the quality of the data.

Furthermore, the need for clear outcomes and evidence of gained value as a means of monitoring progress can lead to contradicting project requirements. Public funders and participant organisations express the interest in contributing to a

greater cultural impact on their participants, but also capture clear and measurable outcomes. Both of the programmes I analysed displayed an understanding of the social and intrinsic values of culture, and utilised appropriate techniques for the capture of such values. Counterintuitively to my initial hypothesis, the approach of these evaluations was exploratory in nature, leading to novel understanding of the links between inputs and outcomes, but overlooking the legitimisation purpose of evaluation. Agnieszka Bąk highlighted that numerical data is still preferred by consumers of impact studies as it is easy to understand at first glance and clear conclusions as to the performance of an initiative can be drawn. Additionally, my discussion with a British Local Authority official informed me that although there is currently a push for integrated evaluation and monitoring efforts into public policy initiatives, the current economic environment value-for-money remains a key factor in legitimising policy investment over contributions to social cohesion and competencies.

Increased evaluation requirements also have a downside. In the experience of the NCC, specifically in relation to the first iteration of the BMK programme, the requirement of evaluation without sufficient guidance on how to perform it resulted in superficial exercises that did not have any value in terms of obtaining knowledge of how and why a project functions. I also observed this tendency within Arts Council England, which encourages evaluation of projects but provides only basic resources on how to conduct them. This sets the tone for beneficiaries of ACE to regard evaluation to merely form a requirement of the funding institution, minimising the potential of evaluation as a value-generating activity.

Regarding the creation of cultural value through evaluation, it has been demonstrated that the engagement of project participants in self-reflective evaluation techniques builds upon the competencies gained throughout cultural policy projects. This effect, noted by the CCP evaluation report (Thomson, Louisa, et al., 2017), was supported by the interviewed Local Authority official. They recounted that a similar programme ran locally within their London Borough by the charity Open City, encouraging disadvantaged youth to engage with architecture and urban landscapes through the use of photography. The Local Authority official noted that the participants' process of reflecting upon their experience of the project allowed them to engage with the project and consider the project's impact on them, beyond their initial experience with it. The evaluation process cemented the social competencies gained during this experience, and led to an increased interest of participants in pursuing careers within the fields of Architecture, Art and Design.

### **3.6 Limitations**

The main limitation of my research was the lack of published evaluation results and accompanying methodologies. An explanation for this phenomenon offered by Ilona Łowiecka-Tańska was that smaller cultural organisations and project operators fear the questioning of their legitimacy in the event that they have to publish weak or unsuccessful results. However, as demonstrated by the search for case studies, this trend is evident on all levels of cultural policy institutions. Where performance is measured, it is commonly exemplified through brief figures and is not guided by clear evaluation methods. This limits the amount of methodologies available for analysis both within this project and as a means of dissemination of knowledge in the cultural policy realm, constricting the scope of my conclusions to the case studies encountered.

## **4 CONCLUSION**

Based on the encountered evaluation methodology guidelines and analysis of case studies, I have found that current evaluation methodologies do take into account a complex idea of cultural value beyond the utilitarian approach, challenging my initial hypothesis.

I have found that there is a requirement for both intrinsic and instrumental cultural value measurement, and the approach of cultural policy-makers to evaluation needs to find a balance between the two, in order to increase the value generated by the evaluation process. An approach that leans toward the instrumental cultural value risks prioritising meeting centralised objectives over the needs of the beneficiaries of policies. On the other hand, evaluations that fixate solely on the intrinsic values are in danger of lacking the necessary data to justify continued investment. This is because, due to the current economic climate, public spending monitoring processes and financial management are becoming the most important indicators in both private and public cultural initiatives, often overtaking other checks and balances to assess if a project was impactful to the recipients or to society as whole.

The case study analysis revealed that, where project objectives were operationalised by formulating a Theory of Change, they succeeded in providing a good basis for the choice of appropriate measurement techniques of cultural value within public policy programmes. Organisations that have the available time and resources to be able to

implement this step in detail succeed in demonstrating novel links and causality relationships between their actions and outcomes.

Another key finding was that there is a scarcity of centralised guidance for cultural policy evaluation, which has caused difficulties in the planning stages of public policy programmes, and in understanding how to effectively evaluate the subsequent results. However, this has facilitated innovative approaches, such as in the case of the National Centre for Culture.

Through the search for evaluation methodologies and the analysis of case studies, I have confirmed the importance of the publication of results, alongside information about the methodologies utilised. The NCC reports are a great example of how changes can be made over a period of time, based on previously disclosed information and conclusions- all cultural organisations and policy makers should be encouraged to review previous projects and evaluation methods in this way, in order to demonstrate constant improvement, and to show that they are remaining up to date with external factors that affect the evaluations, such as pandemic, war, or increased cost of living.

I have also found that there is a big disconnect between cultural evaluation theory, guidelines and practical implementation, also demonstrated by the scarcity of publicly available evaluation methodologies. It is evident that the need to define sophisticated methods to assess the impact of cultural projects stems partially from the lost learning opportunities of the past, the financial challenges that today's world faces, and the widening of the concepts of Arts and Culture themselves to include a variety of modern life activities.

The inability to translate evaluation methods and guidelines into standardised tools for project implementation processes has resulted in a disparity between academia and the actions of cultural policy actors. The subjectivity of what constitutes Art and Culture also proves to be an issue, as one of the main challenges of cultural evaluation is to capture the impact of a project while considering the personal, social, and cultural experience of the participant.

My recommendation for further study of the role of evaluation in capturing cultural value is to formally request evaluation methodology and results from projects without publicly accessible outcomes, and to assess the reasons for the lack of publication. Recommendations should be developed in order to facilitate a shared learning environment for cultural policy-makers across Europe and beyond. I would

also suggest an exploration of the reasons for the lack of integration of evaluations by funding organisations into their operations, in the form of methodical evaluation requirements, opportunities, and threats to project completion.

Another topic to be explored in more depth is how the evaluation process is being delivered by local actors and how the evaluation strategies are being communicated to those teams. And finally, is there evidence to suggest that the project planning teams have the knowledge required to design and deliver an evaluation process that adheres to some evaluation guidelines?

Further research into these areas can improve our understanding of the relationships between public policy and cultural value and facilitate effective measurement on an institutional and local scale.

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