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## Could unofficial data sources offer a complementary lens to monitoring cultural and creative initiatives in cities?

Topic 2 – Learning more from what we already know

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### Introduction

Cultural and creative industries have shown surprising resilience to the recent economic crisis and are expected to grow further due to their role as forerunners in digital innovation. Many organizations and governments monitor cultural and creative industries. Yet, a common and transparent evidence-base to understand and monitor cultural and creative initiatives is lacking. The Joint Research Centre (JRC) is working on the development of a monitoring tool, the Cultural and Creative Cities Monitor (C3 Monitor), which aims to fill in this gap. The C3 Monitor is based primarily on official data sources. At the same time, integrating non-official data sources in the tool is under evaluation because of those sources potential to increase the statistical coherence of some of the key dimensions of the monitor.

### Methods / Problem statement

Recent years have seen a turbulent growth of monitoring tools of all types (dashboards, scoreboards, composite indicators) and their use in research and policy discourse. “Numbers, ratings and rankings catch people’s attention and make information easy to process”, says Judith Kelley of Duke University, who studies the impact of global indicators on policy. Rankings spread like wildfire on the web: some have been cited online more than a million times. Thus, it comes with no surprise that over the last years a wealth of indices measuring various aspects of culture and creativity have been developed. By now, more than 40 indicator frameworks addressing culture- and creativity-related issues have been published. However, despite a plethora of indices devoted to monitoring cultural and creative activities, there exists no indicator framework that is accepted and used across the globe.

### Results / Proposed solution

The Cultural and Creative Cities Monitor (C3 Monitor) provides an evaluation tool that aims at monitoring cultural and creative initiatives at city level in Europe and with respect to international global cities. The objective is to assess the impact of specific culture-oriented initiatives on cities’ economic and social development, count taken of different legitimate normative viewpoints of the role of culture in society. The city level analysis reflects the increasingly urbanized character of Europe and is further supported by the fact that most of the creative initiatives take place within urban areas. The C3 monitor consists of 50 individual indicators measuring aspects such as creative employment, cultural venues, human capital, academic appeal, social cohesion and living conditions, all of which are identified as ingredients for a city’s favorable climate for culture and creativity to thrive. Data are primarily drawn from official statistics (e.g. Eurostat Urban Audit). However, non-official data sources are being explored as they could increase the statistical coherence of some key dimensions in the monitor, where the statistical associations between the indicators are not particularly strong.

## Conclusions

The C3 monitor is built on a pluralistic approach where several different models of creativity are identified and hence cities are not exposed to a unique 'Gold standard' of creativity. The C3 monitor development is guided by the overarching belief that creativity is an open field where different approaches can be experimented rather than being all ranked on the same narrow set of Indicators. Avoiding the “Gold standard” trap in the case of monitoring culture and creativity, is expected to be beneficial both in terms of pro-active involvement of local administrators and communities and as a way to create momentum around culture. Finally, the development of new instruments like the Cultural and Creative Cities Monitor will hopefully ensure that smart specialisation in Europe keeps evolving, leading to even better results in the future.