

Understanding the Observatory:

A Neighbouring Data Analysis

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Executive Summary

The first **Neighbouring Data** report, **Opening the Observatory**, outlined our interim findings about the generation, connection and use of qualitative data in place-based decision-making. The report focused on the challenge of storing and analysing qualitative data, specifically through existing models of data observatories. Understanding the Observatory expands the analysis of observatory portals: we sampled twenty data observatories to better understand their purpose, architecture and presentation (Owen et al., 2023: 9).

This report seeks to describe what the observatories looked like, how they displayed their data, and how this data was maintained.

We mapped these observatories against five criteria:

- Audience
- Visualisation
- Narration
- Use
- Maintenance

The analysis reveals that a wide range of platforms, with varying purposes, understand themselves as data observatories. The sample represents a range of different emphases on data, presentation, and the cultural and political networks that underpin the observatories.



Context



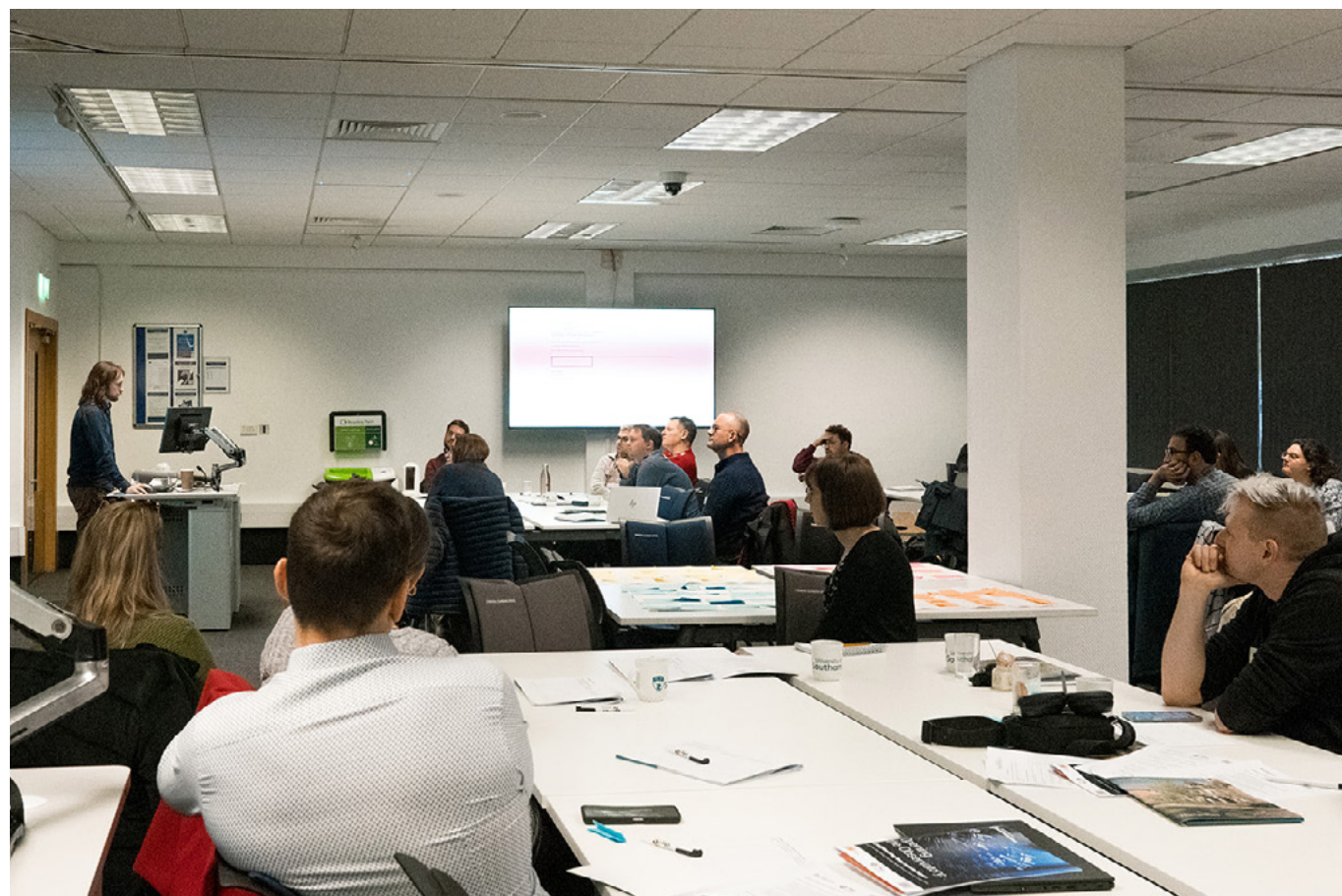
“The idea of a place-based observatory is not new.”

Observatories exist in many incarnations, and there is little consensus on their scope, purpose and capacity. Several recent reports have sought to highlight the potential of observatories, particularly in understanding place and its cultural and social infrastructures.

The **Better Data on the Cultural Economy** report recommends ‘build[ing] a cultural sector data platform [because] data about the cultural sector is fragmented, often inaccessible and incomplete, making it difficult to assess its value’ (MyCake, 2021: 9). To address a lack of robust information on social infrastructure in places, the Bennett Institute’s **Townscapes** report advocates for a ‘digital data repository, bringing together key datasets relating to community facilities and their levels of use’ (Kelsey and Kenny, 2021: 7). To establish more compelling narratives about the social impact of cultural activity, the **Making Data Work** report proposes a ‘Cultural Sector Data Observatory to bring together, research and analyse mixed-methods data sources’ (Walmsley et al., 2022: 5).

These reports indicate the fragmented context in which the debate on data observatories has taken place. The idea of a place-based observatory is not new. Its history in the UK can be traced to the early 2000s when New Labour increased the emphasis on regional government, giving rise to the **Regional Cultural Consortia** (Jayne, 2005). These advisory bodies championed efficient regional cultural investment, and each consortium was responsible for making sure ‘that culture plays a full part in contributing to the quality of life and the increasing prosperity of the region, and that key cultural priorities would lead to the improved delivery of services’ (Dhupa, 2002).





This emphasis on cultural investment required bringing coherence and consistency to large quantities of regional data and prompted a wave of place-specific observatories, including the **East Midlands Cultural Observatory** and the **Northwest Culture Observatory**. Although projects such as these, which constituted the Regional Cultural Consortia, were largely disbanded in 2009, the idea of a place-based data observatory persisted.

Many subsequent initiatives sought to galvanise regional identity, sharing information and curating a sense of place by developing business opportunities and investment. At the city level, these observatories share a range of data sources to which local authorities have access. For many, the aim is to empower local communities rather than obtain external investment. **Birmingham City Observatory** and **Southampton Data Observatory** share themed data on health, economy, population and safety to encourage informed, collaborative action.

Other observatories have remits both narrower and wider than these place-based observatories. The supranational agency **Eurofound**, for example, hosts reports and survey data across three thematic observatories that focus on living and working conditions in the European Union (EU). The platform hosts resources for EU institutions and policymakers, including data explorers and downloadable datasets that cover issues on managing and anticipating cultural change, as well as activities promoting social cohesion and convergence.

Other models are similarly rich in aspiration but focus on narrower forms of collectively sourced data. The UK **Archaeology Data Service** supports open access archaeological and heritage data and functions as its own capacious, searchable database, containing 1.4 million metadata records, 70,000 reports, and 50,000 articles that are generated by its user community. In a different context, **Newcastle University's Urban Observatory** provides real-time data gathered through sensors. It contains more than 50 different types of data that includes information on solar radiation, wind direction, sound, and humidity, providing a digital view of cities and alerting users to the potential impacts of climate change.

Yet, as this variety suggests, rigorous protocols for data use across these different contexts, especially for qualitative data, have yet to be reached. Data observatories are culturally specific: gathering, representing and narrating data at scale is a deeply political act, both practically and symbolically. These observatories are also necessarily precarious and fragile. They rely on technical infrastructures and political assumptions that must constantly adapt to different demands and temporalities. As our sampling reveals, the political impetus behind the portal is as important as its technical and administrative support, and without constant attention, the data observatory becomes redundant at best.

Observatory Analysis

This section outlines how the critical literature on data observatories addresses three main subject areas: environment, technology, and place. The extant work suggests how the needs and protocols of observatories must be practically and theoretically developed to generate a useful framework for qualitative data.

Environmental approaches to observatory infrastructures foreground **citizen science, geographical scalability, and reusable data**. These observatories draw on citizen science-led initiatives and participatory sensing to monitor issues such as traffic, flooding, drought and environmental governance (Cieslik et al., 2013; Helgeson et al., 2022; Liu, 2014). The literature highlights the role of the observatory in managing scientific data and connecting it at different geographical scales. (Ajates et al., 2020: 13). 'Second generation' data observatories collect granular data because 'local knowledge is often absent' in earlier iterations of the observatory (Karpouzoglou et al., 2016: 43). Allowing provision for reusable data is critical because it begins to address how qualitative data observatories might respond to pressures on time, resources, and capacity.

Second, the technology literature on observatories identifies the practices of **updatable architecture, digital methodologies, and combined analysis** that underpin these data platforms. Several key architectural features distinguish data observatories from archives and repositories (Ribé and Laniado, 2013; Tiropanis, 2022). Observatories host data that is live in some capacity: using replicable methodological frameworks to collect data and providing links to data that is externally sourced and consistently updated. Social media web scraping has begun to reshape this architecture and while its low fidelity presents problems, it provides opportunities to include different forms of evolving qualitative datasets.

Third, the place literature on observatories demonstrates the wide-ranging functions that these systems can provide: **real-time monitoring, agile responsiveness, and dataset consistency**. In place-based research, observatories show their value for tracking urban mobility (Keseru et al., 2019), measuring and comparing national health outcomes (Röttingen et al., 2013), and mapping economic and creative clusters (Crawley and Pickernell, 2012). These observatories can adapt to include heterogeneous and unanticipated data needs: the Newcastle Urban Observatory, for example, acquired new functions and responsibilities during the COVID pandemic (James et al., 2020). The contingent nature of place-based decision-making highlights the role of observatories: these systems must have the flexibility to accommodate immediate need, unexpected policy shifts, and local specificities, as well as the rigour to provide consistent analysis.

Tee Guidotti's research draws together many of the data observatory principles, practices and functions discussed in this section, subsuming them into this definition:

The observatory model is a strategy to convert episodic research opportunities into clusters of observed events that can support hypothesis generation and policy studies (Guidotti 2022: 835).

Guidotti highlights the versatility but also the problem of defining the data observatory, which is alternately described as a model, a strategy, and a set of key attributes. This slippage shows how our understanding of observatories is always determined by the context in which they appear, and it is this principle of structural flexibility that determines the next stages of our research.

This analysis of the infrastructure requirements that might enable qualitative data to support place-based decision-making has identified nine key observatory features:

- **Citizen Science**
- **Geographical Scalability**
- **Reusable Data**
- **Updatable Architecture**
- **Digital Methodologies**
- **Combined Analysis**
- **Real-Time Monitoring**
- **Agile Responsiveness**
- **Dataset Consistency**

These are instructive starting points for developing a framework for a qualitative data observatory. Yet positioning observatories as the infrastructure that will enable qualitative data to inform policymaking requires further scrutiny. Our forthcoming article, "Towards A Qualitative Data Observatory: Generation, Connection, Use", outlines the principles for this qualitative data observatory framework, and our final report, "Transforming the Observatory", will explore the possibilities of qualitative, data-driven storytelling through the Neighbourhood Insight Engine.

Observatory Survey

Data Observatory Portals: Audit and Analysis

Audit: This was a purposive sample of twenty existing data portals. These were identified through a review of existing work (nine keyword searches across 900 articles, using targeted and broader keyword strands, such as ‘Data Repository’, ‘Web Observatory’, ‘Qualitative Data Observatory’) and consulting experts in data and place-based research.

Analysis: To systematically explore the connection between existing observations and insights in academic literature and the wider variety of data observatories, the project undertook a qualitative content analysis. This work enabled a structured analysis that addressed the affordances of the platforms and considered their aims, uses and users. We mapped these observatories against five criteria—audience, visualisation, narration, use, and maintenance—based on these questions:

Audience: Who is qualitative data for? Who should be able to access this data?

Visualisation: How can qualitative data be represented and visualised?

Narration: What should accompany this data? What story is the data telling?

Use: How should users interact with this data? What is their experience of using it?

Maintenance: How can the representation of this data be updated and maintained?

Urban Observatory	
Search methodology	Consultation
Publisher(s)	Newcastle University
Team	Project Director: Phil James Programme Manager: Jennine Jonczyk
Partner organisations	→ Founding members of the UKCRIC (UK Collaboratorium for Research in Infrastructure & Cities).
Audience(s)	Developers, Businesses, Communities, Researchers
Date	2017–
Description of contents	UK’s first ‘urban observatory’ provides real-time data. 50+ data types gathered through sensors, e.g. solar radiation, wind direction, sound and humidity, to provide a digital view of interactions in cities and the potential impact of climate change.
Sources and methods	Real-time data obtained through sensors and sensor feeds; live data, refreshing second by second.
Evaluation: Audience	The data is for relatively literate data users. Some data literacy is required to navigate the sensor and theme toggles and the graph-radar systems. The data is freely accessible and its “Urban Observatory” title places its high on search engine results. Its focus is on the Newcastle-upon-Tyne region.
Evaluation: Visualisation	The data is represented by sensor icons (denoting themes such as air quality and traffic) that correspond with numbers (which form clusters) on a regional map. It is visualised using a map of the UK, which the user can zoom in on and pan across. Clicking on data points produces relevant charts and graphs.
Evaluation: Narration	The data is telling a story about several themes pertaining to the region, but these themes are not explicitly articulated within additional text and the contextual information is limited.
Evaluation: Use	Users interact with this data by selecting sensors on the left-hand side of the page, identifying themes in different locations, and clicking data points which provides up-to-date information through charts and graphs. Experience of using this data is potentially difficult: there is not a clear instruction for navigating the portal.

Urban Observatory

Evaluation: Maintenance The data is updated on a live basis: second-by-second. It is maintained and sustained by active sensors. The portal allows for csv. downloads of data points. The website contains an archive of raw and aggregated data, as well as metadata records.

Find out more: newcastle.urbanobservatory.ac.uk

European Observatory of Working Life (EurWORK)

Search methodology	Consultation
Publisher(s)	Eurofound
Team	Executive Director: Ivailo Kalfin Head of Unit: Barbara Gerstenberger
Partner organisations	→ Eurofound is an autonomous agency of the European Union (EU); it belongs within the constellation of EU bodies; it is a member of the EU Agencies Network.
Audience(s)	EU institutions, governments and social partners are the highest priority target groups.
Date	2014–
Description of contents	Gathers all Eurofound’s resources on working conditions and sustainable work, and industrial relations and social dialogue.
Sources and methods	The Network of Eurofound Correspondents, covering all 27 EU Member States (plus Norway), assess current national situations, prepare case studies and reports, analyse findings and inform Eurofound’s pan-European comparative analysis.
Evaluation: Audience	The data is for informed, self-directed data users. The data is clear and accessible: for users interested in topical and country updates, representativeness studies, European industrial relations, EurWORK publications, working life country profiles, case studies, and data on wages, working time and collective disputes.
Evaluation: Visualisation	The data is represented through links to publications and article pages. Summaries of data are visualised through columns of latest and relevant articles. Users can search through the data using topic titles, countries and years of publication. The database has a contents overview, a set of sources and a suggestion citation and contact (cau@eurofound.europa.eu).
Evaluation: Narration	The data is accompanied by case studies, but these were last updated in 2010. The database of wages, working time and collective disputes covers both the systems that are currently in place (such as legislation or collective bargaining agreements) and some outcomes (such as the level of collectively agreed pay or working time). Short, qualitative descriptions have been added to the data to facilitate a better understanding.
Evaluation: Use	Users interact with this data by browsing latest publications and articles or searching for specific topics. Experience of using this data is relatively straightforward: users search for topics of interest and are directed to relevant articles. There is a data explorer, a downloadable dataset in Excel format, and a codebook available in PDF.
Evaluation: Maintenance	The data is updated by two regular surveys on working life issues. The data is maintained and sustained by reporting from Eurofound’s network of European correspondents. The most recent publication was uploaded on 19 July 2023.

Find out more: www.eurofound.europa.eu/observatories/eurwork

European Monitoring Centre on Change (EMCC)	
Search methodology	Consultation
Publisher(s)	Eurofound
Team	Executive Director: Ivailo Kalfin Head of Unit: Tadas Leončikas
Partner organisations	→ Eurofound is an autonomous agency of the European Union (EU); it belongs within the constellation of EU bodies; it is a member of the EU Agencies Network.
Audience(s)	EU institutions, governments and social partners are the highest priority target groups.
Date	2001–
Description of contents	Information resource established to promote an understanding of changes in the world of work, employment and restructuring.
Sources and methods	The Network of Eurofound Correspondents, covering all 27 EU Member States (plus Norway), assess current national situations, prepare case studies and reports, analyse findings and inform Eurofound's pan-European comparative analysis.
Evaluation: Audience	The data is for informed, self-directed data users. The data is clear and accessible: for users interested in the European Restructuring Monitor, the European Jobs Monitor, labour market research, case studies, and the Future of Manufacturing in Europe (FOME).
Evaluation: Visualisation	The data is represented through links to publications and article pages. Summaries of data are visualised through columns of latest and relevant articles. You can search through the data using topic titles, countries and years of publication.
Evaluation: Narration	The data is accompanied by case studies, but these were last updated in 2015. The European Jobs Monitor has sections with latest findings and key messages that provide useful overviews of the datasets. Labour market research is grouped thematically and includes work on COVID-19 and skills and training. The study The Future of Manufacturing in Europe (report published April 2019) explores the future adoption of some key game-changing technologies and how this adoption can be promoted.
Evaluation: Use	Users interact with this data by browsing latest publications and articles or searching for specific topics. Experience of using this data is relatively straightforward: users search for topics of interest and are directed to relevant articles. There is a data explorer and an archive of previous publications.
Evaluation: Maintenance	The data is updated by news and analysis on company restructuring and relevant policy initiatives through the European Restructuring Monitor. The data is maintained and sustained by reporting from Eurofound's network of European correspondents. The most recent publication was uploaded on 20 October 2022.

 Find out more:
<https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/observatories/emcc>

European Observatory on Quality of Life (EurLIFE)	
Search methodology	Consultation
Publisher(s)	Eurofound
Team	Executive Director: Ivailo Kalfin Head of Unit: Massimiliano Mascherini
Partner organisations	→ Eurofound is an autonomous agency of the European Union (EU); it belongs within the constellation of EU bodies; it is a member of the EU Agencies Network.
Audience(s)	EU institutions, governments and social partners are the highest priority target groups.
Date	2017–
Description of contents	Results of survey data analysis as well as qualitative research in the field of quality of life and public services are made accessible through the EurLIFE observatory.
Sources and methods	The Network of Eurofound Correspondents, covering all 27 EU Member States (plus Norway), assess current national situations, prepare case studies and reports, analyse findings and inform Eurofound's pan-European comparative analysis.
Evaluation: Audience	The data is for informed, self-directed data users. The data is clear and accessible: for users interested in living conditions and quality of life, promoting social cohesion and convergence, and public services.
Evaluation: Visualisation	The data is represented through links to publications and article pages. Summaries of data are visualised through columns of latest and relevant articles. Users can search through the data using topic titles, countries and years of publication.
Evaluation: Narration	The data is accompanied by a section that states that the programming period 2021–2024 focuses on: Living conditions and quality of life; Social cohesion and upward convergence; Quality of society; and Public services. The data is telling a story about the impact that quality of society has on well-being. It examines access to and quality of public services against the reality of an ageing and more diverse society, budget constraints and technological change.
Evaluation: Use	Users interact with this data by browsing latest publications and articles or searching for specific topics. Experience of using this data is relatively straightforward: users search for topics of interest and are directed to relevant articles. There is a data explorer and an archive of previous publications.
Evaluation: Maintenance	The data is updated by a regularly repeated European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS), which provides a comprehensive portrait of living conditions and quality of life in European countries and is a major resource for EurLIFE. The data is maintained and sustained by reporting from Eurofound's network of European correspondents.

 Find out more:
www.eurofound.europa.eu/observatories/eurlife

Cultural Policy Observatory Ireland

Search methodology	Consultation
Publisher(s)	British Council Ireland and University College Dublin
Team	Kerry McCall Magan: Country Director Dr. Victoria Durrer: Ad Astra Research Fellow in Cultural Policy
Partner organisations	→ The network set up was seed funded by the Irish Research Council under the ‘New Foundations’ scheme, 2014.
Audience(s)	Academic researchers from across the island, cultural producers, practitioners and policy makers.
Date	2015–
Description of contents	This network states the value of cultural policy research in Ireland by connecting, profiling and encouraging individuals carrying out research relating to the various ways in which arts and culture interact with the social, economic and political realms.
Sources and methods	A collective venture using JISC Mail which identifies work and activities exploring the value, impact and functions of arts and cultural policies on the island of Ireland.
Evaluation: Audience	The data is for academic researchers and practitioners interested in cultural policy. The Jisc mail site is simple to negotiate, mainly consisting of calls for papers.
Evaluation: Visualisation	The data is represented through a list of latest messages and monthly round-ups.
Evaluation: Narration	The data is accompanied by a short paragraph about the purpose of the observatory: “growing, connecting and profiling academic research relating to cultural policy across the island of Ireland.”
Evaluation: Use	Users interact with this data by clicking on links that contain information about relevant calls for papers, groupings and job adverts across academic institutions. Experience of using this data is clear and straightforward; users can click on the most recent Call for Papers and browse the archive for previous conference topics and themes.
Evaluation: Maintenance	The data is mainly updated by the co-founders, although the portal is open-access and anyone can contribute information about upcoming events. The data is maintained and sustained monthly, with the most recent round-up posted in July 2023.

Find out more:
culturalpolicyireland.org

Observatoire des politiques culturelles in Grenoble

Search methodology	Consultation
Publisher(s)	René Rizzardo and Jean-Pierre Saez
Team	Frederique Cassegrain, Secretary Elise Colin-Madan, Head of cooperations
Partner organisations	→ Nantes University: on the cultural strategy of the University in its metropolitan ecosystem → The Ministry of Culture (DGMC Book Service), the DRAC Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, the Pacte Laboratory and the Turbine: creating an advocacy guide for libraries → The DEPS (Division de l’Enseignement Privé): on the production of an annual barometer on the budgets and cultural choices of local authorities → The Metropolis of Greater Nancy: around its metropolitan cultural project, for cooperation inspired by cultural rights → The RESET network, at the initiative of Arty Farty: on a survey on the issue of independence in the cultural and artistic field → The DRAC, the local authorities, the cultural agencies of the Auvergne Rhône-Alpes Region
Audience(s)	As part of its missions to observe and support cultural policies, the OPC conducts activities in cooperation with external partners: State and local authority services, professional networks, research laboratories.
Date	2021–
Description of contents	The OPC is a national body dedicated to cultural policies. It conducts surveys, publishes analyses, trains in cultural professions, organizes public meetings and leads territorial cooperation. The OPC is organized into three divisions: Trainings, Cooperation, Media.
Sources and methods	The OPC mobilizes knowledge and methods: human and social sciences, shared analysis, facilitation of groups, design of public action, facilitation of seminars and conferences.
Evaluation: Audience	The data is for researchers and practitioners interested in culture and society, public action and art worlds. The website enables easy access and individual use.
Evaluation: Visualisation	The data is represented through a grid of links to articles, including interviews, analysis and reporting. These feature text documents and audio files. It is visualised using images, summaries and icons that correspond to the type of article.
Evaluation: Narration	The data is organised into files that gather together thematically-linked content, including youth and culture, ecological transitions, media labs, the history of cultural policy, and the politics of cities. The portal is very elegantly formatted and easy to follow.
Evaluation: Use	Users interact with this data by browsing the latest publications, perusing by theme, or clicking on articles via the “most popular” tab on the homepage. Experience of using this data is intuitive, logical and invites exploration.
Evaluation: Maintenance	The data is updated by the website owners uploading new content on an almost weekly basis. The data is maintained and sustained by publishing new surveys and commissioning analyses from contributors.

Find out more:
www.observatoire-culture.net

European Audiovisual Observatory in Strasbourg	
Search methodology	Consultation
Publisher(s)	Council of Europe
Team	Executive Director: Dr Susanne Nikoltchev Head of Department: Gilles Fontaine Head of Department: Dr Maja Cappello
Partner organisations	→ 40 member states plus the European Union → EMR - Institute of European Media Law → IViR - Institute for Information Law
Audience(s)	EFARN network: the Heads of Research and Statistics from national and European film agencies. LUMIERE network: national film agencies, distributors’ organisations or market research firms. LUMIERE VOD network: a network of information providers like VOD portals and services. MAVISE network: collaboration with the European Platform of Regulatory Authorities (EPRA) and its network of audiovisual regulatory authorities. IRIS network: legal correspondents throughout Europe supply short reporting on the latest legal developments in Europe concerning the audiovisual sector. IRIS editorial board: representatives from our legal network who assist in deciding on the Observatory’s output of legal information and publications.
Date	1992–
Description of contents	Replies to a distinct lack of information and transparency concerning this industry. To the present day, it continues to provide a comparative European overview of the audiovisual industry in 40 different countries as well as detailed analysis of national and even regional industries. The Observatory has two departments whose Experts and Analysts gather and process information. The Department for Market Information produces statistical and economic analysis of the trends in the European cinema, television, video and internet sectors. It also produces intelligence on the means of financing of these various sectors. The Department for Legal Information analyses key legal issues linked to the audiovisual sector and reports on major legal developments and ground breaking cases which affect media legislation in Europe.
Sources and methods	Specialises in network management. For each sector of the audiovisual industries, there is a network of national and pan-national contacts and information providers who supply raw data and analysis. These can be individual correspondents or national institutions or, in some cases, professional consultancies which supply information. Thanks to its statute, the European Audiovisual Observatory enjoys very privileged access to and relationships with other public bodies working in the audiovisual field in Europe.



European Audiovisual Observatory in Strasbourg	
Evaluation: Audience	The data is for media professionals across the audiovisual sector. Users have free access to the relevant databases for legal information, markets, admissions, services, jurisdictions, and film directories.
Evaluation: Visualisation	The data is represented through a latest news blog and individual databases with search functions. The website is visualised using featured online services, publications and a social media feed. It is written in an open, conversation style and translated into English.
Evaluation: Narration	The data is accompanied by paid-for online access to the tables & graphs of the Observatory’s Yearbook, which shows key trends, pan-European tables, and country profiles.
Evaluation: Use	Users interact with this data by browsing specific databases relevant to their industry. Experience of using this data is relatively straightforward, although there are barriers to access because of some costs and the sector-specificity of the data.
Evaluation: Maintenance	The data is updated by the website owners uploading new publications and news items. The data appears to be maintained and sustained by on a monthly basis. The most recent publication is dated 6th July 2023.


Find out more:
www.obs.coe.int/en/web/observatoire

City Culture Institute's Cultural Observatory in Gdańsk

Search methodology	Consultation
Publisher(s)	Dispersed - the observatory includes a series of cultural projects run by the City Culture Institute.
Team	City Culture Institute (Instytut Kultury Miejskiej) Instytut Kultury Miejskiej (City Culture Institute) is a municipal cultural institution in Gdańsk (Poland). It enhances the role of culture in city life and stimulates active participation in city culture.
Partner organisations	→ Part of Culture Action Europe (https://cultureactioneurope.org/)
Audience(s)	City planners, social theorists, arts curators but also the general public. The aim of the City Culture Institute actions is 'to strengthen and link cultural networks with different areas of residents' life. We act through the co-working with experts within a frame of Cultural Observatory of City Culture Institute and through direct activities targeted to inhabitants'.
Date	2012–
Description of contents	The Observatory of Culture in Gdańsk has been operating since 2012 by its organizer, the City Culture Institute and emerged as way of consolidating work after failed City of Culture bid. The Observatory 'carries out research projects on culture and aims to mediate between the world of cultural theory and practice'.
Sources and methods	Promoting place-shaping events and practices rather repository for data.
Evaluation: Audience	The data is aimed at those living in and engaging with Gdańsk. It is primarily a place-making institute and seeks to organise, advertise and also reflect upon cultural events in Gdansk.
Evaluation: Visualisation	The data is represented mainly through reports. Not intended for an international user as only the headlines and marketing information are translated into different languages. E.g., English.
Evaluation: Narration	The data is telling shaped toward a place-making story that celebrates Gdańsk as a cosmopolitan city with a rich cultural life..
Evaluation: Use	The data is being used to drive interest in the creative industries and cultural sector in Gdańsk.
Evaluation: Maintenance	Limited information on who updates data and how.

↗ Find out more:
ikm.gda.pl


Observatorio Cultural

Search methodology	Consultation
Publisher(s)	Ministry of Culture, Arts and Heritage.
Team	State level Ministry of Culture, Arts and Heritage
Partner organisations	→ Aligns with Government structure and co-ordinated by the Ministry
Audience(s)	Stated mandate sets out intended national readership.
Date	Not made apparent.
Description of contents	Varied, including a periodical, annual reports on cultural statistics, a national register of cultural and heritage assets, asset mappings, research on culture, expert interviews.
Sources and methods	It includes cultural statistics; annual cultural reports; policy documents; relevant cultural research information rather than raw data.
Evaluation: Audience	The data is for the entire population and arts organisations. But it also encourages interactive citizen-culture approaches (i.e. there's a 'Contest Make your thesis in culture' competition in which students can have their studies included in national observatory).
Evaluation: Visualisation	The data is represented through qualitative studies and through asset mappings. It also includes a published periodical indicating a wide readership beyond arts and cultural sector.
Evaluation: Narration	The data cross-references other government level data. It is telling a story about the transparency of culture in Chile and foregrounds participatory democracy. It includes a section on gender and culture.
Evaluation: Use	User interaction is mainly about having access to data and reports. There is some interaction, e.g. there is a place-making competition.
Evaluation: Maintenance	It is created and maintained at the level of the Ministry and but is comprehensively maintained.

↗ Find out more:
observatorio.cultura.gob.cl



Mapping the UK’s creative industries	
Search methodology	Consultation
Publisher(s)	Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre (PEC)
Team	Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre (PEC)
Partner organisations	→ Core PEC consortium of Newcastle University → Work Advance → University of Sussex → University of Sheffield.
Audience(s)	Cultural policymakers.
Date	2018–
Description of contents	The PEC’s remit includes: Producing ‘State of the Nations’ reports; commissions and conduct research to address evidence gaps; Developing briefings and submissions to respond to priority policy issues; Embedding knowledge exchange via strategic policy engagement across government; Convening networks including Research Fellows, Global Creative Economy Council and Industry Championsfocus is on published research and quantitative data around cultural and creative industries.
Sources and methods	Most of the content on the PEC is published reports; but also includes mappings of cultural and creative industries.
Evaluation: Audience	The data is for policymakers.
Evaluation: Visualisation	Visual representations of data include high and low density of creative cluster maps.
Evaluation: Narration	The narrative for the PEC is about evidence-led decision making in the creative industries.
Evaluation: Use	Limited guidance on user interaction.
Evaluation: Maintenance	The data is updated by the PEC and functions as a repository for their published research.


Find out more:
www.arcgis.com/apps/View/index.html?appid=007e1de4a01a46b196ad2ccaed20eb3b&extent=-20.3307,49.5899,17.1766,59.5069

Observatoire des médiations culturelles (OMEC)	
Search methodology	Consultation
Publisher(s)	Academic team within the Groupe de recherche sur la médiation culturelle (GRMC)
Team	Based in Quebec, with members trained in sociology, political science, communications, social work, education, anthropology, philosophy, art history, and art practice. Offers a multisector and interdisciplinary approach.
Partner organisations	→ Culture pour tous → Exeko → the City of Vaudreuil-Dorion → Cellule régionale d’innovation en médiation culturelle du Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean → The team also has a working relationship with the City of Montreal and Artenso.
Audience(s)	Academics and cultural policy researchers.
Date	2006–
Description of contents	News; research; resources research includes projects and publications; resources include: articles, podcasts, guides, diagrams, comics, reports.
Sources and methods	The site includes documents, texts, videos, art exhibitions, photographs.
Evaluation: Audience	The data is for academics and those critically engaged in the arts and cultural scene. The content is very theoretical.
Evaluation: Visualisation	The question of what is data is foregrounded by an attention to different kinds of data forms: the resources include a comic, different kinds of websites, a memory archive, as well as reports.
Evaluation: Narration	This is research project website and is exploring how critically self-aware and engaged French Quebecois is in its own cultural investments.
Evaluation: Use	A very dynamic, graphic-based, and engaging site.
Evaluation: Maintenance	The data is updated by the research group and is updated regularly.


Find out more:
omec.inrs.ca/a-propos/#page-axes

Creative Informatics	
Search methodology	Consultation
Publisher(s)	Team is part of creative industries clusters programme
Team	Team of 26 - academics, practitioners, mix of tech and creative
Partner organisations	→ The University of Edinburgh → Edinburgh Napier University → Codebase and Creative Edinburgh
Audience(s)	This is the website for an ambitious research and development programme based in Edinburgh, which aims to ‘bring the city’s world-class creative industries and tech sector together, providing funding and development opportunities that enable creative individuals and organisations to explore how data can be used to drive ground-breaking new products, businesses and experiences.’
Date	2018–
Description of contents	A well-developed website for a large research project that is funded by AHRC. It includes challenge projects, resident entrepreneurs, and connected innovators.
Sources and methods	The website is primarily project rather than data-led.
Evaluation: Audience	The data is for accountability in relation to funding, and promotes and showcases work across Edinburgh.
Evaluation: Visualisation	The data that it contains is mainly reports from projects that it has funded, such as that Edinburgh ‘You’ll have had your city’ place-making project.
Evaluation: Narration	The data is telling a story about creative tech innovation in Edinburgh across these different sectors.
Evaluation: Use	The main point of interaction is through funding calls and then submitting reports, but it does contain a news section detailing what is happening.
Evaluation: Maintenance	The data is updated by the large team (26 people) working on this project.


Find out more:
creativeinformatics.org/research/detecting-dark-matter-data

Archaeology Data Service	
Search methodology	Consultation
Publisher(s)	University of York
Team	Large team based at the University of York.
Partner organisations	→ NERC → AHRC → Historic England
Audience(s)	The leading accredited digital repository for archaeology and heritage data generated by UK-based fieldwork and research. Founded in 1996, the core activity of the ADS is the long-term digital preservation of the data.
Date	1996–
Description of contents	A service provider with guidance on how to manage and keep archaeological and heritage data open access and provides a database of metadata records, reports and articles.
Sources and methods	Effectively crowd-sourced archaeological data along with researcher and policy papers. Professional practitioners upload it directly to the site, which provides clear guidance.
Evaluation: Audience	The data is for the UK. It keeps all the data in one place, so it is searchable and safely held.
Evaluation: Visualisation	The database comprises fields of records enabling easy search.
Evaluation: Narration	The data is telling a story about a well-managed national collection of data and provides clear guidance to enable organisations and bodies to add to.
Evaluation: Use	Users interact with this data by either searching or depositing. Both very clear. The portal itself isn’t driven by inclusive or intuitive design principles but is functional and effective.
Evaluation: Maintenance	The data is updated by archaeology and heritage practitioners, especially those who receive funding.


Find out more:
archaeologydataservice.ac.uk



Environmental Virtual Observatory

Search methodology	Consultation
Publisher(s)	Cabot Institute for the Environment
Team	B. Emmett, R. Gurney, A McDonald, G. Blair, W. Buytaert, Jim E Freer, P. Haygarth, Penny J Johnes, G. Rees, D. Tetzlaff, Afgan E, L Ball, K Beven, Bicak M, Bloomfield J, Peter Brewer, Delve J, Yehia Elkhatib, D Field, Gemmell
Partner organisations	This observatory does not seem to exist. The link is to an article of a pilot funded by NERC (also referred to on YouGov website) but the connections from that are unstable and not with proper domains and so it seems not to have been developed beyond the theoretical arguments made in 2014.
Audience(s)	n/a
Date	n/a
Description of contents	n/a
Sources and methods	n/a
Evaluation: Audience	n/a
Evaluation: Visualisation	n/a
Evaluation: Narration	n/a
Evaluation: Use	n/a
Evaluation: Maintenance	n/a

Find out more: research-information.bris.ac.uk/en/publications/environmental-virtual-observatory-final-report

Francophone Africa: beyond archives

Search methodology	Consultation
Publisher(s)	A research project run out of University of Chester.
Team	Claire Griffiths
Partner organisations	→ None visible
Audience(s)	Students and teachers interested in the histories and cultures of the richly multilingual regions of West Africa that share French as an international language of communication.
Date	Not made apparent.
Description of contents	Digital tools (linguistic tool developed at the University of Hull); audiovisual histories (a YouTube channel); historical research on Savineau, a 1930s political activist, writer and dissident.
Sources and methods	A mix of uploaded archive material and a curated collection of works relating to Savineau.
Evaluation: Audience	The data is for researchers and teachers, but it also wants to be accessible for development professionals. Not very navigable or interactive.
Evaluation: Visualisation	The data is mainly presented as reports, images, and archives. This is more of a website that details the key findings of a research project.
Evaluation: Narration	The data is telling a story about gender, colonialism and literacy and language use on sub-Saharan Africa.
Evaluation: Use	Users interact with this data by using it in their own research. There is an indication that users can contact the project if they are interested in the raw data but there aren't details around what that means.
Evaluation: Maintenance	The data is updated by academics working on the research project.

Find out more: www.francophoneafricaarchive.org/research/gender-and-literacy

Future Observatory	
Search methodology	Consultation
Publisher(s)	Future Observatory is coordinated by the Design Museum in partnership with the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), which is part of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI).
Team	Design Musuem
Partner organisations	→ AHRC
Audience(s)	This is a research hub for the projects led out of the Design Museum/ AHRC Future fundings project rather than a portal or an observatory. It functions as an observatory because it coordinates and showcases a wide range of national projects.
Date	2021–
Description of contents	Details about funding opportunities, published research and networks.
Sources and methods	It is a site for the AHRC/ Design Museum’s Future Observatory investment rather than a portal and doesn’t include data.
Evaluation: Audience	The site is primarily for those seeking details on future funding opportunities.
Evaluation: Visualisation	Information research strands and funded programmes.
Evaluation: Narration	The overall narrative is to provide a cohesion to the UKRI Future Observatory funding programme.
Evaluation: Use	Includes research reports from funded programmes.
Evaluation: Maintenance	This is centrally maintained by the Design Museum, in collaboration with UKRI.

 **Find out more:** futureobservatory.org/blog/design-the-green-transition


Tees Valley Data Observatory	
Search methodology	Survey
Publisher(s)	Tees Combined Valley Local Authority
Team	Tees Combined Valley Local Authority
Partner organisations	→ None visible
Audience(s)	Likely for internal use as it includes direct line phone number of council workers to call for assistance.
Date	Not made apparent.
Description of contents	This is an interactive layered map that contains information on demographics, deprivation, education, skills, health, housing, income and earnings, employment, transport. All can be drilled down to ward level.
Sources and methods	Data based on local authority and ONS data: downloaded data takes you to excel spreadsheets. Can be accessed at local authority, ward or ITL levels.
Evaluation: Audience	Not clearly articulated here: but I think for internal use as includes direct line phone number of council worker to call for assistance.
Evaluation: Visualisation	The data is provided through very granular layered maps.
Evaluation: Narration	Because this site is for professional rather than public use, the narration and about us interface is absent.
Evaluation: Use	Not apparent.
Evaluation: Maintenance	Maintained by Tees Combined Valley local authority.

 **Find out more:** teesvalley-ca.gov.uk/InstantAtlas/Tees_Valley_Data_Insights/atlas.html

Southampton Data Observatory	
Search methodology	Survey
Publisher(s)	Southampton City Council
Team	Southampton City Council Data Team
Partner organisations	→ Soton, Hants, IoW NHS Clinical Commissioning Group and SVS
Audience(s)	This is aimed at providing the general public with data about the city.
Date	Not made apparent.
Description of contents	Wide range of data sources, including data on population, health, economy, community safety, place, children and young people.
Sources and methods	Primarily bringing together a range of LA data: census, dashboards, ward data and a range of analytical reports. Quite comprehensive and accessible.
Evaluation: Audience	The data is for the general public as well as decision makers.
Evaluation: Visualisation	The data is represented through a range of different visualisation methods tucked into each section - graphs, charts, informatics and also results of survey.
Evaluation: Narration	The data is telling a story about the transparency and comprehensiveness of information about the city.
Evaluation: Use	Users interact with this data by drilling down into its complexity. It is very rich and very varied. There is a ‘have your say’ section but it isn’t foregrounded and isn’t clear where the information is sent.
Evaluation: Maintenance	The data is updated by the City Council.

 **Find out more:** data.southampton.gov.uk

Midlands Engine	
Search methodology	Consultation
Publisher(s)	Midlands Engine
Team	Formed by a group of committed parliamentarians, the Midlands Engine APPG plays a key role in promoting investment in the Midlands and supporting levelling up.
Partner organisations	→ Regional partners: this observatory is for advocacy as well as information sharing.
Audience(s)	The Midlands Engine Observatory is an ‘alliance of leading academic researchers and economic and industry experts, working together to deliver the regionally focused research and analysis our partners need to inform decision making and policy creation, for every part of the Midlands.’
Date	Not made apparent.
Description of contents	The front page is about place-shaping for the Midlands and promoting its assets for internal investors. It includes reports, research, policy documents and a layered data map that provides insight into largely financial and economic data about regeneration in the area (information on travel investments, green growth assets, start ups, r&D investments).
Sources and methods	A really disparate range of data sources and methods: economic reports, industrial insights, updates, stories about place.
Evaluation: Audience	The data is for everyone, very broad audience of businesses and policy makers and local authorities.
Evaluation: Visualisation	The data is represented through a combination of narrative reports and visualisations.
Evaluation: Narration	The data is telling a place-shaping story about the Midlands as an area, especially for external investors.
Evaluation: Use	There is little raw data on the actual site: it is presented as a factsheet rather than a resource that one can extract or explore data. Does a very good job of promoting the region.
Evaluation: Maintenance	Not clear.

 **Find out more:** midlandsengine.org/observatory

The Budapest Observatory

Search methodology	Consultation
Publisher(s)	Published under creative commons
Team	Peter Inkei, a former minister for culture, seems to have led development. Was funded by UNESCO initially
Partner organisations	The Budapest Observatory was a member of CIRCLE (Cultural Information and Research Centres Liaison in Europe, now defunct), Encatc, the European Network of Cultural Administration Training Centres, and of Culture Action Europe (formerly EFAH, the European Forum for the Arts and Heritage).
Audience(s)	This portal was (is) at the service of those who are interested in how cultural life - cultural activities and products - are being financed and administered in east-central European countries.
Date	1999– 2018
Description of contents	The Observatory seeks to ‘observe (present, interpret, compare and analyse) facts and processes. We are looking for what is common and what is different in the countries between the Baltic and the Adriatic Seas.’
Sources and methods	It is mainly academic research reports on ‘cultural policy issues such as access to culture, cultural habits, inclusion, creativity and innovation, creative and cultural industries etc. are incomplete without due regard to community cultural centres. There is a need for evidence based advocacy in this regard.’
Evaluation: Audience	The data is for everyone.
Evaluation: Visualisation	The data is represented through text. The site is explicit in stating that information is unadorned because of the cost of using and downloading images.
Evaluation: Narration	The data is telling a story about the emergence and disappearance of the role of the observatory in Budapest. This is a story about a crisis in Europe.
Evaluation: Use	The data is partial and sent as a series of communications rather than standardised reports.
Evaluation: Maintenance	The fraught political situation in the country is only alluded to. It has led to a sense of fragmentation to which the publishers are trying to draw attention.

Find out more:
www.budobs.org

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Find out more:

andtowns.co.uk/project/neighbouring-data