

OUTCOME INDICATORS FOR THE CULTURAL SECTOR

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1. Introduction

This paper seeks to identify indicators of socio-cultural outcomes that can be used by organizations operating in the cultural sector and by «impact» funders interested in financing them¹.

I shall mean «the cultural sector» to border with, but exclude, sport on one hand and education on the other. I shall put the emphasis on the cultural «core» (heritage, visual arts, performing arts: KEA, 2006). This definition anchors to a possibly outmoded concept of «culture 1.0» (Sacco, 2013), but it clearly delimits cultural activities that social impact investors may want to consider for financing². Culture is one field of the social economy; therefore, sometimes cultural activities are legitimately judged with the metrics of other specialties. For instance, favoring disadvantaged people's social integration by involving them in cultural activities may be «art» along the way (and it may be evaluated as such in some cases³), but its purpose is social and it should be assessed using outcome metrics designed for that end. Sometimes culture is similar to sport, or education, and attending outcomes could be used. But then, not all culture is similar to social work, sport, or education, and in that case its outcomes should be judged on specific metrics.

This paper thus explores the boundary between cultural and social outcomes, discussing how to measure them. I start with «high theory»; I then link philosophical indications to outcome maps, in the next section; thirdly I describe Italian best and average practice of measuring and reporting cultural outcomes, and finally I conclude and put forth some proposals.

2. High theory

Social impact evaluation usually goes along with a «theory of change» (how exactly the candidate activity is supposed to ameliorate social

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