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Status Quo and Future Challenges for the Research Infrastructure in the Field of Culture

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Abstract

The term "culture" is notorious for the multitude of its meanings. This expertise strictly focuses on culture in terms of the arts. We adopt a sociological as well as an economic perspective. Research questions are subdivided into three spheres of action: artistic production and its organization; the distribution and valuation of culture; and the consumption and reception of culture. The data requirements and the availability of adequate data vary substantively, depending on artistic branches (music, performing arts, etc.) and specific research questions.

In order to make the empirical investigation of culture a flourishing field, we recommend the following improvements of the data infrastructure: firstly, comprehensive surveys of artists on the one hand and cultural consumption on the other hand should be carried out with the support of public funding; secondly, a national cultural statistic should be established, illuminating the size, impact and evolution of the cultural sector in comparative perspective; thirdly, the public availability of organization-level data as well as communal surveys on cultural production and consumption issues should be improved; fourthly, the transparency of existing data sources and their accessibility should be improved by archiving them centrally, e.g. at the ZA.

Keywords: culture, arts, artists, production, distribution, consumption, reception, cultural sector, cultural industries.

1. Definition of culture

The term “culture” is notorious for the multitude of its definitions. In our expertise we strictly focus on culture in terms of the arts. Issues that are sometimes included under the superordinate concept of culture, like religion, ideologies, values, norms, and patterns of everyday life, are not considered in this paper. Including these topics would necessarily lead to a superficial treatment of each because of the numerous and heterogeneous data sources in these areas. However, even the concept of “arts” has to be differentiated. Generally speaking, the arts include objects and services of primarily aesthetic expression. These are, firstly, differentiated according to the implied aesthetic criteria. In public as well as scientific discourse high culture, popular culture, folk culture and youth culture are typically distinguished even if these terms are difficult to mark off in their boundaries (Gans 1974; Schulze 1992; Hügel 2003). While folk, popular and youth culture are often normatively devalued, all of these aesthetic forms have to be included in empirical research from a value-free scientific point of view because conceptions of beauty are socially constructed and historically variable. Secondly, the arts have to be differentiated into core branches like music, performing arts, literature, visual arts and film. Since these areas exhibit varying forms of social organization (Deutscher Bundestag 2007: chap. 3), most research questions have to be applied separately to these fields. These internal differentiations of the arts lead to a multiplication of the data sources necessary for empirical research.

2. Theoretical developments and research questions

In the last major German publication in the sociology of the arts Gerhards (1997, 7) concluded that this field is not at all established in German sociology. The situation has remained nearly unchanged. German sociology has not participated in the international boom of the sociology of the arts and culture.[1] Most sociologists in the field prefer qualitative methods – if they do empirical research at all. To be sure, qualitative research and case studies are important complements of the standardized data that we focus on here. We do not further discuss this strand of research because it almost always involves primary data collection. Due

1 In the most important journal of empirical research in the arts (Poetics) we find only one article from Germany and one from Austria in the issues from 2003 to 2007. In comparison, economists from Germany and Austria are present with nine articles in the major journal of cultural economics (Journal of Cultural Economics).

to this basic research orientation and because of other reasons to be described in section 3 adequate data enabling scholars to tackle central research questions are scarce.

Contemporary sociology of arts and culture is not about the interpretation of artistic content. Although this orientation can still be found in the literature sometimes, the main focus is – in accordance with Max Weber – on the description, understanding and explanation of social action related to goods and services of primarily aesthetic expression. Research questions are usually subdivided into three different spheres of action: firstly, artistic production and its organization; secondly, the distribution and valuation of culture; and thirdly, the consumption and reception of culture (Becker 1982; Blau 1988; Gerhards 1997; Schneider 1993; Zolberg 1990). Apart from sociology, the field of cultural economics has developed recently. Therefore, we include research questions and data requirements of economists of the arts and culture in our report (Blaug 2001; Caves 2000; Frey 2000; Ginsburgh and Throsby 2006; Throsby 1994).[2]

2.1 Artists and production of culture

The sociology and economics of artistic production deal with four broad research questions. They are, firstly, concerned with the socialization, recruitment and training of artists and the social inequalities connected with artistic career paths varying in terms of social class background, general and artistic education, gender and ethnicity as well as in earnings and social security (Menger 1999; Caves 2000: chap. 4; Janssen 2001; Haak 2008). Secondly, inter- and intra-individual variations in living and working conditions are supposed to have an impact on artistic output, creativity and aesthetic development. Both questions necessitate longitudinal data linking artists' labour market positions and integration in artistic networks with their aesthetic expression and tracking stability and change over their life-courses (Thurn 1983; Simonton 1997; Bourdieu 1999). Thirdly, scholars are interested in the institutional organization of artistic production, its conditions and consequences. They try to explain why organizational forms of artistic production vary enormously between cultural branches and between countries and they try to assess the impact of these variations on artistic outcomes: bureaucratic organization vs. short-term projects, public vs. private funding, types of contracts between artists and support personnel, organizational structures dealing with market uncertainty (Peterson 1976; Caves 2000; Dowd 2004; Deutscher Bundestag 2007: chap. 3; Gebesmair 2008: chap. 4). Finally, the production of culture may be considered from a macro

2 Although being very important for the explanation of phenomena related to the arts and culture, we do not discuss psychological research because it is mainly based on experimental data.

perspective. The importance of culture for the economy has become an important issue for research and official statistics as several German states and cities have published reports of the cultural sector ("Kulturwirtschaftsberichte"). Currently, a lively political debate centres on the establishment of a unified statistic of the cultural sector in Germany and Europe (Statistisches Bundesamt 2004; Deutscher Bundestag 2007: chap. 5; Eurostat 2007: part II).

2.2 Distribution and valuation of culture

Producing a good or providing a service does not make it art. The status of art is based on the authentication of a good or service as art by accepted authorities like critics, curators, gallery owners and ministries of culture. Therefore, the development of aesthetic criteria to evaluate art and the canonization of artists and art forms is a central research area (Bevers 2005; Baumann 2007). However, cultural authorities do not only consecrate goods or services as art; they recommend and interpret art works for the lay public and are thereby actively engaged in the creation of markets for art and in price formation on these markets (Shrum 1997; Caves 2000: chap. 12; Beckert and Rössel 2004; King 2007). Social scientists depend on data about cultural authorities and critical evaluations, which are essential for artists' reputations, as well as on market data, like prices for art works and box office results, which reflect their commercial successes.

Other actors and organizations, like gallery owners, museums, concert halls and radio stations, are decisive for the supply and distribution of cultural goods and services. They perform gatekeeping functions in artistic fields, create artistic repertoires and thereby advance or hamper artistic careers (Greenfeld 1988; Mark 1998; Giuffre 1999). Again we find a vast array of different organizational forms in the distribution and valuation of culture. Explaining why certain forms emerge and which consequences they imply are central topics for both sociology and economics (Frey 2000; Kirchberg 2005). Data on cost and finance structures of institutions are of further importance from an economic perspective as they enable researchers to evaluate the efficiency of the provision of culture, e.g. theatres in the profit- vs. non-profit sector.

2.3 Consumption and reception of culture

Questions of the consumption and reception of culture have generated the bulk of empirical studies in sociology. A lot of research has been devoted to inequalities of social class, gender, ethnicity, age and generation in cultural consumption, especially with regard to the use of publicly funded cultural institutions (Dollase et al. 1986; Klein 1990; Rössel et al. 2005;

Kirchberg 2005; Bourdieu et al. 2006). However, much of this research is of a rather descriptive kind and the data usually collected do not allow scholars to test rival hypotheses and reveal explanatory mechanisms. For example, there is a long-standing, still open debate whether the well-known educational effects on high-culture consumption are based on information-processing or status-seeking mechanisms (Ganzeboom 1982; Otte forthcoming). In order to fill these research gaps scholars are dependent on adequate survey data containing theoretically derived indicators. In particular, longitudinal data on the individual level are of prime importance for the analysis of the biographical formation of aesthetic preferences (Hartmann 1999; Katz-Gerro et al. 2007). In this respect, findings in the sociology of culture are of a more general interest as the origin of preferences constitutes a central question in the behavioural sciences. Closely related is research on the symbolic boundaries people draw in order to express their likes and dislikes for different aesthetic forms and genres (Lamont and Molnár 2002). A major international debate circles around the thesis of so-called "omnivorous" tastes implying a reorganization of traditional taste hierarchies: The educated classes in Western societies are said to have stopped using high culture as the main aesthetic format of distinction vis-à-vis the lower classes, but instead to have broadened their taste repertoire with popular genres and to display wide-ranging competences as new status-markers (Peterson 2005). High quality time series data are needed to study such preference and consumption patterns over time, comparative data to find out about international variation.

3. Data bases and access

In comparison with other research areas, the data infrastructure in the field of culture is not well-institutionalized. In academia, a research program based on comprehensive, recurrent nation-wide surveys – let alone panel studies – on cultural production and consumption has not been established. In official statistics, the cultural domain falls under the sovereignty of the federal states and communes. A standardized, unified cultural statistic on the national level is nonexistent. The conclusion of the 2001 expert report for the KVI still holds: Reporting on cultural issues is rather unsystematic (Weishaupt and Fickermann 2001, 50).

This does not mean that there is a scarcity of data on culture. Rather, as has been noted by the KVI (2001, 16) for other fields, the current situation resembles a fragmented mosaic of various data lacking comparability, being frequently intransparent or inaccessible and thus inhibiting cumulative research efforts. We will shed light on this situation along the three

main spheres of research distinguished in the last section. We consider both aggregate- and individual-level data from various sources.[3] Although we would wish to emphasize the much greater analytic potential of individual-level data for most research questions, aggregate-level data are valuable especially for some applied and policy-relevant questions.

3.1 Artists and production of culture

Artists' socialization processes and careers are of interest from a double perspective: the formation of aesthetic expression over the life-course as well as social selection and material inequality within the cultural field. Both questions can be addressed most systematically in a comprehensive survey of artists comprising retrospective career questions resembling those in the German Life-History Study (Mayer 2008). Assessing individual artists' development of aesthetic expression and productivity can be further improved by linking respondent data to documentary sources on art works for a subset of cases. While, to our knowledge, such data sets are nonexistent, the situation is somewhat better for questions of social inequality. In order to study patterns of intergenerational social mobility and reproduction among artists, cumulative ALLBUS- and SOEP-data may, in principal, be used (Jonsson et al. 2007). However, the number of respondents is very small; artistic branches cannot be differentiated. The Mikrozensus has the great advantage of large numbers, but is lacking sufficient biographical information. Still, it has been used to investigate the effects of various socio-demographic variables on artists' employment relationships and earnings (Haak 2008).

In this context, the limitations become apparent that data from official statistics have for an adequate description of artists' earnings and material living conditions.[4] The main data sources are the Mikrozensus (Statistisches Bundesamt), IAB-Beschäftigtenstichprobe (Bundesagentur für Arbeit), statistic of the Künstlersozialkasse and Umsatzsteuerstatistik (Statistisches Bundesamt). They differ substantially in their coverage of the artist population: The Mikrozensus counts as gainfully employed everyone who works at least one hour per week in his or her main occupation – and thus includes persons regarded as not employed by the Beschäftigtenstichprobe. The latter captures employees subject to social insurance contributions who work at least 15 hours per week and earn at least € 400 per month. Because it does not cover, among others, the self-employed, it may be combined with statistics of the

3 Aggregate data are data that have been aggregated from smaller units of analysis and cannot be easily disaggregated again. Individual-level data, in our case, refer to both persons and organizations.

4 Haak (2008: chap. 3) gives a detailed discussion of the problems the Mikrozensus and the IAB-Beschäftigtenstichprobe have. Apart from problems due to the incomplete coverage of the artist population and the aggregation of occupational subcategories, inconsistencies of educational variables, censored income variables, the lacking differentiation of income sources and multiple job holdings are considered problematic.

Künstlersozialkasse, a social insurance institution open (on a voluntary basis) for self-employed artists earning at least € 3,900 annual artistic income. The Umsatzsteuerstatistik includes businesses with more than € 17,500 annual turnover and thus excludes self-employed "starving" artists. The data bases also differ in their classifications of cultural occupations: The Mikrozensus defines occupational affiliation according to respondents' self-assessments, the Beschäftigtensstichprobe according to employers' reports and the Umsatzsteuerstatistik according to tax inspectors' assignments. The Beschäftigten- and Umsatzsteuerstatistik can be broken down to low occupational levels, but they do not contain much individual-level information necessary for modelling explanatory variables in statistical analyses. The Mikrozensus as a household survey may be preferable in this respect, but it does not offer a fine grouping of occupations. None of these data sources properly comes to grips with the multiple job holdings and the mixture of dependent and self-employment typical for the artist population (Haak 2008).

Because of these coverage, classification and measurement problems estimates of the number of artists, their education and earnings highly differ depending on the data used (see examples in Haak 2008: chap. 4; Deutscher Bundestag 2007, 289ff.).[5] Against this background an explicitly designed survey on the living conditions of artists would be highly desirable. More than thirty years after the pioneering work of Fohrbeck and Wiesand – "Autoren-" and "Künstlerreport" (1972, 1975) – primary data should be collected on a large representative sample of artists and other persons close to the creative core of the cultural sector.[6] Nevertheless, official statistics will be important for continuous social reporting and construction of time series. Therefore, an integration and standardization of current statistics is needed.

A similar conclusion holds for the effects of the cultural sector on the economy, usually measured in turnover and employment figures. Problems of definition, classification and comparability abound in the establishment of the currently popular "Kulturwirtschaftsberichte" (Weckerle et al. 2003; Statistisches Bundesamt 2004; Deutscher Bundestag 2007: chap. 5). The target population, here, extends far beyond those occupations

5 The boundary problem of who is an artist is difficult to solve because the arts are not as professionalized as other occupations (Karttunen 1998). A minimum proportion of income earned or of hours worked can serve as criteria. In addition, the subjective self-categorization as an artist, educational credentials and institutional affiliations have some plausibility. Finally, artistic status is professionally or publicly ascribed and undergoes historical change. Current examples of boundary cases – sometimes legal cases about inclusion in the Künstlersozialkasse – comprise assistant directors, disc-jockeys, web designers and curators. A classic, prevailing controversy is related to the boundary between arts and crafts (Becker 1982: chap. 9).

6 In connection with the activities of the enquete "Culture in Germany" a large-scale online and mail survey addressing self-employed artists was launched by a culturally committed consultant, Christian Scheibler. In various aspects, e.g. sampling procedure and questionnaire construction, it did not follow standards of scientific research, however (see for documentation and analysis Kressin 2008). This example highlights the urgency of a methodologically sound "status-of-the-artist" survey in Germany. Otherwise, we see the danger that the artist population, known to be particularly sensitive in providing personal information, may lose trust in future survey efforts.

that would count as "cultural" according to our definition. Usually, all self-employed and dependently employed people in the production and distribution of goods and services in the visual and performing arts, publishing, press, radio, television, music, film, architecture and design, cultural education and maintenance of cultural heritage are subsumed under the label "cultural industries", sometimes broadened by those in advertisement and the software and games industries under "creative industries".[7] There is disagreement, however, along the following dimensions (Deutscher Bundestag 2007, 340ff.): Is cultural employment in the public sector to be counted among the cultural industries? Are non-profit, voluntary and lay cultural activities to be included (e.g. choirs, music clubs, theatre groups) – and how can they be captured reliably? Are both a narrow and a broad definition necessary, and if so, which cultural branches belong to the core of the cultural sector? Are whole branches to be incorporated or just the creative parts of them (e.g. writers, but not printers)? A consensus on these questions is needed to guarantee the comparability of future reports on the cultural industries in different countries, federal states and cities.

The Statistisches Bundesamt (2004; see for an initial effort Statistisches Bundesamt 1994) has suggested a conception for a nationally unified culture statistic and illustrated the potential of standardized indicators in a recent publication (Statistische Ämter des Bundes und der Länder 2008).[8] First cultural statistics have also been presented at the European level (Eurostat 2007): They are based, among others, on the EU Labour Force Survey, Structural Business Statistics Survey, EU Household Budget Survey, Harmonized European Time Use Study and the Eurobarometer, but provide a rather incomplete and tentative picture on the way to comprehensive European cultural statistics. From a scientific point of view, cultural statistics and reports on the economy of culture show important macro indicators allowing researchers to make spatial-temporal comparisons and to identify broad trends. The more aggregated the data are, however, the less potential they have for revealing social processes at the micro-level within the cultural sector.

3.2 Distribution and valuation of culture

Research on the distribution and valuation of culture necessitates organizational and archival data. In order to learn more about the types of cultural products and services which are

7 Söndermann (2005) combines data from the Mikrozensus, Beschäftigten- and Umsatzsteuerstatistik to make estimates of employment in the cultural industries, differentiated by branches, employment status (employees subject to social insurance contributions, precariously employed persons, self-employed professionals and proprietors with employees), regional distribution and development from 1999 to 2004.

8 The expertise of the Statistisches Bundesamt (2004, 208-311) for the enquete "Culture in Germany" contains an extensive account of the official data sources currently available for a federal culture statistic.

distributed, longitudinal data on artistic repertoires of institutions and companies are needed, e.g. repertoires of theatres and orchestras, inventories and exhibitions of museums, circulation and sales figures of books and records. In the case of public sector institutions, especially theatres, operas and orchestras, such information is accessible via archival documentation of single institutions and increasingly via internet websites and can be used to generate data sets (Mark 1998; Gerhards 2008). The situation becomes worse, the smaller the organizations are (e.g. free theatres) and the more profit-oriented they are (e.g. musicals, record companies).

For such purposes publications of professional associations are important sources: e.g. the Institut für Museumsforschung, Deutscher Bühnenverein, Börsenverein des Deutschen Buchhandels, Spitzenorganisation der Filmwirtschaft, Bundesverband der Phonographischen Wirtschaft, Bundesvereinigung soziokultureller Zentren and Deutscher Sängerbund. Data reported in their annual reports are based on (a) routine surveys of samples of cultural institutions or of their member organizations, (b) questionnaires on special topics and (c) the Umsatzsteuerstatistik. Official statistics often rely on these figures in their yearbooks. Additionally, collecting societies (GEMA, GVL, VG Wort) hold data on musical and literary publications.

A central shortcoming of these data sources is due to high aggregation levels and information scarcity. Reports usually aggregate figures of single organizations on turnover, ticket prices and sales, utilized seat capacity, persons employed and other indicators without differentiating sufficiently between organizational forms and sizes. For scientific purposes, disaggregate data on the organizational level are most desirable because they allow researchers to classify organizations according to the question at hand. Besides, information about concrete repertoires is frequently missing. If concrete products are mentioned, they are often confined to successes, e.g. the top 50 movies of the year. However, similar annual "flop" lists (in combination with production costs) would be of equal importance because they constitute negative cases for comparative analyses. For economic analyses more data on organizational cost and finance structures are of high relevance. Most detailed information can be found in the "Theater- und Werkstatistiken" compiled by the Deutscher Bühnenverein (2008a; 2008b). Down to the organizational level, it provides data on repertoire, performances, seat capacity, visitors, personnel, revenue and cost structures, and prices. This detailed data provision could serve as a model for the "Museumsstatistik" (Institut für Museumsforschung 2007). A further improvement would be electronic access to these organizational-level data because, otherwise, data preparation for statistical analyses is very cumbersome.

A second problem has to do with organizational coverage, sampling and response bias. The coverage of cultural institutions and organizations is often intransparent or – as in the case of the "Theaterstatistik" – biased towards large, professional, publicly funded or member organizations. Precise methodological information on the target population of organizations, sampling issues and data collection methods of the participating organizations are necessary to assess the quality and information content of the data.[9] A potential problem of unclear incidence might result from organizational interests of professional associations and their influence on questionnaire content, question design, organizational population covered and statistical reporting. The availability of data from professional associations varies between cultural branches: There is relatively rich information for theatres, museums, the phonographic and film industries, some information for publishing and poor information for socio-culture and the primary market for visual arts (Statistisches Bundesamt 2004, 312-423).

Data on valuation processes in the arts are most usefully collected through content analyses of documentary sources, e.g. reviews in journals, newspapers and art history books as well as coverage and accounts of artistic products in school books (e.g. Bevers 2005). Scientific access to these sources exists via the Deutsche Bibliothek, other libraries and archives of journals and newspapers. It seems important to broaden the coverage of libraries and archives to smaller art periodicals.

3.3 Consumption and reception of culture

As mentioned above, most empirical studies in the sociology of culture focus on consumption and reception issues and utilize survey data. Modules on culture in our sense appear in various surveys and are largely accessible via the Zentralarchiv für empirische Sozialforschung (ZA), Köln: general social surveys like the Wohlfahrtssurvey 1993 and Allbus 1998, youth surveys like the Shell-Jugendstudie, comparative surveys like the Eurobarometer 67.1/2007 as well as studies on media consumption like "Massenkommunikation I-VI" and surveys on reading conducted by the Stiftung Lesen in 1992, 2000 and 2008 (not available at the ZA). These studies usually ask respondents about the frequency of consumption of a set of artistic goods and services. However, they do not go into details of the specific contents being consumed and the ways they are consumed, they sometimes employ multidimensional categories like "theatres and concerts" and they contain little information on the biographical formation and

9 The expertise of the Statistisches Bundesamt (2004, 312-423) describes non-official data sources extensively. Among the statistics of professional associations, the Museumsstatistik is exemplary in its methodological documentation and its efforts to achieve a high response rate. Taking into account that methods of annual visitor counts vary enormously between museums – from cash registers to pure estimates –, however, reliability problems even in quite simple indicators become apparent.

social network embeddedness of consumption and reception practices. Thus, available data are not suitable to test rival hypotheses about the origin and development of aesthetic preferences and to reconstruct modes of cultural education and the ways symbolic boundaries are drawn. What has as yet not been established by academic research in Germany is a comprehensive, recurrent survey on cultural consumption and reception of the general population.[10]

The survey that comes closest to an institutionalized reporting on cultural tastes and activities of the population is the "Kulturbarometer" having been conducted eight times since 1991 by the Zentrum für Kulturforschung (ZfKf), Bonn – the same institute that was responsible for the "Autoren-" and "Künstlerreport". Although the published results of these surveys are sometimes accompanied by extensive and informative tables, the data are currently not accessible for secondary analyses. Because the ZfKf is built on project-specific funding, a continuous cultural reporting is currently not ensured.[11]

Since the 1990s survey research on local-level cultural participation has flourished in cities and municipalities, usually accomplished by local statistics agencies or, sometimes, by academic or commercial research institutes on behalf of local authorities. Because these research activities are scattered all over the country, because results are not made accessible to a wider public and because data are not stored in some central archive, the data infrastructure is very intransparent. There are efforts by the Verband Deutscher Städtestatistiker (VDSt) to coordinate and standardize surveys in order to achieve better comparability of local results via programs such as KOSIS ("Kommunales Statistisches Infrastruktursystem") and UrbanAudit and by recommendations for questionnaire construction (Deutscher Städtetag 1994). Besides, a data base for research reports and questionnaires of communal surveys ("komm.DEMOS") is located at the Deutsches Institut für Urbanistik (DIFU), Berlin (Bretschneider and Schumacher 1996). This data base currently comprises about 2,000 standardized study descriptions, 400 of which are culture-related. It is accessible free of charge primarily for communes having provided financial contributions ("Zuwenderstädte"), but not for the scientific community. Komm.DEMOS does not archive survey data itself nor does any other central archive for communal surveys exist.[12] We expect communal survey data to vary in

10 The situation is, as far as we know, not much better in other countries. In the U.S., the replicative survey SPPA ("Survey on the public participation in the Arts") was conducted in 1982, 1992 and 2002 enabling scholars to make temporal comparisons (DiMaggio/Mukhtar 2004). However, it was an add-on to other surveys and impaired by methodological problems (Peterson 2005). Quite extensive surveys on culture are carried out in the Netherlands but we do not know about a recurrent social reporting on this topic.

11 As a response to our request for opening its data bases for scientific secondary analyses, the director of the ZfKf, Andreas Johannes Wiesand, signalised a general willingness to make primarily older data available to the ZA. However, some of them – e.g. data of the "Künstlerreport" – do frequently not exist in electronically readable form. Resources are needed to convert them.

12 Susanne Plagemann, responsible for documentation issues at the DIFU, gave us rich information about komm.DEMOS. It is accessible liable to pay costs via the IRB Stuttgart (www.irb.fraunhofer.de/datenbanken.jsp). The study descriptions contain information on the primary researcher who might be asked for the release of survey data for secondary analyses. Whenever local statistical agencies

quality, depending on issues of survey administration and methodological rigour. Individual-level data of well-organized surveys are of great scientific value as they are more context-sensitive than nationwide surveys: They entail information on a broad range of the locally available cultural infrastructure enabling researchers to map the participation of different population groups in a local social space of various scenes (Otte 2004: chap. 11).

Related to these communal "Bürgerumfragen" are audience and visitor surveys borne by cultural institutions like museums and theatres. Here we expect even greater variation in data quality. A careful methodological assessment should be made before using data for reanalyses. This survey approach is insightful because the composition of the audiences consuming concrete aesthetic products and services can be studied on the basis of actual (not reported) behaviour. Such data enrich aggregate visitor statistics that are reported by cultural institutions and professional associations. Informative spatial-temporal comparisons are enabled by combining various audience samples (Dollase et al. 1986; Klein 1990; Rössel et al. 2005). Unfortunately, documentation of such studies is even scarcer and access to data sets more problematic.

Finally, we would like to mention three more sources of individual-level survey data which could be usefully employed for scientific analyses. First, official statistics as the Einkommens- und Verbrauchsstichprobe (EVS), Laufende Wirtschaftsrechnungen (LWR) and the time-budget study of the Statistisches Bundesamt do not sufficiently differentiate cultural consumption activities and expenditures internally and tend to merge "culture" and "leisure" categories. These categorizations could be improved. Second, the media research departments of the öffentlich-rechtliche Rundfunkanstalten, ARD and ZDF, carry out nation-wide studies (e.g. "ARD/ZDF-Onlinestudie", "ARD-E-Musik-Studie", surveys employing the "MedienNutzerTypologie") and even more studies confined to single transmission areas on various aspects of media consumption and musical preferences. Only a few of these data have been made accessible for scientific reanalyses. Especially older data could be placed at the ZA's disposal like those of the Leser- and Media-Analyse recently have been (Hagenah et al. 2006).[13] Third, cultural preferences and activities are frequently part of market research surveys. Some have been given to the ZA (e.g. "Outfit 1-4", "Typologie der Wünsche"), but many more could be made available.

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collected the data, chances are great that the data are still existent. Only in exceptional cases, they were given to the ZA. Rudolf Schulmeyer, chairman of the VDSt, promised to put our request about the trans-communal data infrastructure on the agenda of the next executive board meeting.

13 We contacted Dr. Ekkehardt Oehmichen, director of media research at the Hessischer Rundfunk, who promised to address this topic at the next meeting of ARD media researchers.

4. Recommendations

Taking into account the research needs in the sociology and economics of culture, the status quo of the data infrastructure as well as current debates in official statistics and cultural policy we conclude with the following recommendations.

1. A double-task of prime importance that has to be accomplished by scholars in academia is the theory-driven development of two comprehensive, large-scale "baseline" surveys. The first one has to stand in the "social-status-of-artist" and "Künstlerreport" tradition, but should also contain detailed life-course information enabling analyses of artists' careers. The second one has to be a representative population survey on cultural consumption and reception comprising current preferences and behaviour as well as retrospective biographical and social network information. These surveys call for public funding (e.g. by the DFG). They can serve as baselines for the construction of more elaborate panel studies on culture as well as replications in an internationally (European) comparative context.
2. We support the enquete "Kultur in Deutschland" in its recommendation of the construction of a nationally unified, standardised cultural statistic, mainly based on aggregate data, borne by the Statistisches Bundesamt and compatible with efforts at the EU level. It should allow researchers to distinguish at least between the core of the cultural sector and a wider notion of the cultural industries (KEA European Affairs et al. 2006), between the public, private and non-profit sectors as well as between different cultural branches. For adequate scientific research differentiated data on low aggregation levels are needed.
3. Organizational-level data, especially those collected for the "Theater-" and "Museumsstatistik", should be made available in a computer-readable format in order to facilitate statistical analyses.
4. The large pool of communal citizen surveys on cultural topics and of organisational audience surveys should be documented and made accessible in a central archive. Three options seem to be practicable. First, the DIFU data base "komm.DEMOS" should be financially supported in order to enable scientific access free of charge. We recommend this step even if the data base is not expanded to cover survey data sets. Further funding would enable archival storage and administration of such data at the DIFU. Second, the ZA with its approved data infrastructure would be an alternative archival location. Third, a Forschungsdatenzentrum for data of communal statistical agencies could be established at the Statistisches Bundesamt. In all cases alike, studies

should be carefully selected and documented according to scientific requirements of data quality.

5. Access to data on culture collected by statutory bodies (media research of the öffentlich-rechtliche Rundfunkanstalten), by the Zentrum für Kulturforschung (e.g. “Kulturbarometer”, “Künstlerreport”), and by market research institutes should be improved. These data are promising for building up time-series and analyzing trends in cultural preferences and behaviour. The ZA would be suited best as an archive for these data. Conversion of data from the 1970s into electronically readable files would also be worthwhile funding if data quality is satisfying and studies are important for historical-comparative work.

Neither in Germany nor abroad is the field of culture well-institutionalized in its current research infrastructure. The field is of growing importance, though, in the social and economic sciences as well as in society and economy in general. Improving data access and supporting large-scale surveys would assist scholars in Germany greatly in their effort to reach a leading position at the international frontiers of research in this thriving field.

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