

Data in the arts – 18/11/2024

Table of contents

Introduction 1

The programme 2

Reflections on Artistic Research..... 2

Scientific Integrity..... 3

Data Management and the Arts 3

What are 'Data' in the Arts? 4

Workshops..... 5

Annex: full text of the keynote lecture by Jeroen Boomgaard 6

Introduction

On 18 November 2024, a good number of researchers, data stewards, repository managers, grant specialists and other interested parties gathered for the Data in the Arts study day. It was an interesting and lively meeting in which many different aspects of and experiences with (artistic) research in the arts were discussed and shared.

This report gives an impression of the day, with summaries of the presentations and workshops and reflections from speakers and participants. A day where we as researchers in the arts made a serious start on the topic of 'Data in the Arts'. The need for good data management as a crucial element of (serious and good) artistic research is increasingly recognised, but we are still at the beginning. How is it possible, keynote speaker Jeroen Boomgaard wondered, that after 20 years of PhD in the arts, there is still no common system where results of artistic research can be stored? How can we make the outcomes and underlying data accessible from all the wonderful artistic research being done? Data management is not about control, it's also about care.

On the basis of presentations and workshop sessions, participants engaged in this discussion. Some 50 people attended, including Professional Doctorate candidates (PDs), PhD students, professors and other researchers from the arts, policy staff, data stewards, library staff from art colleges, and other interested parties.

The event 'Data in the Arts' was organized by AHK, ArtEZ and HKU in collaboration with the DCC-PO: the national knowledge centre for research support in practice-based research. In cooperation with Universities of Applied Sciences, DCC-PO facilitate tools and trainings for data management.



The programme

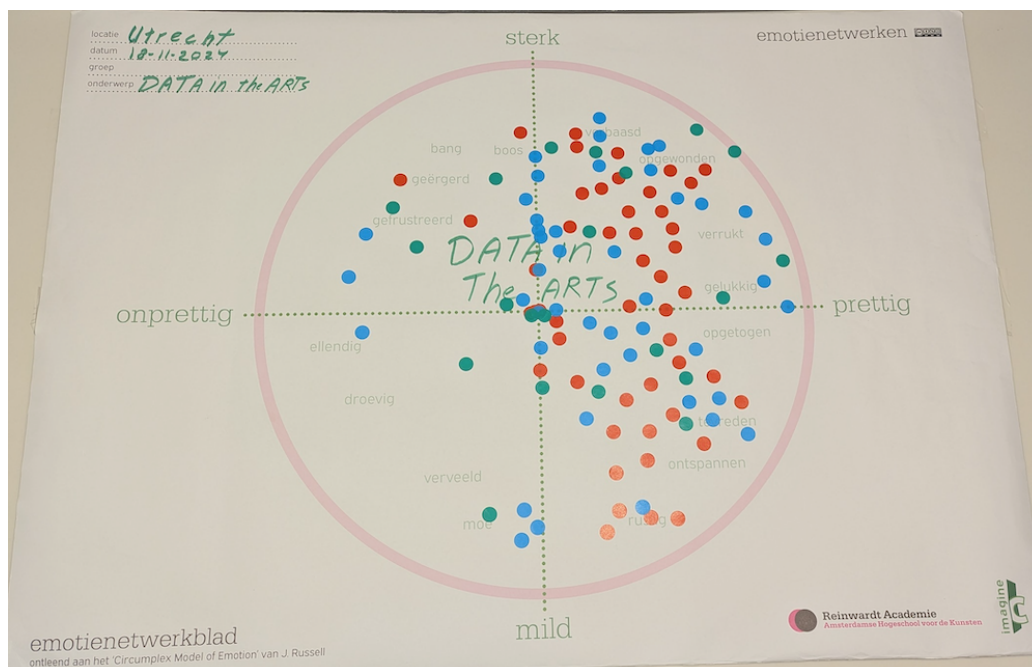
The morning programme consisted of:

- An opening by former lecturer Jeroen Boomgaard with an introduction on the central theme of Data in Artistic Research;
- A talk by Peter Sonderen, president CWI-KUO, on data management and research integrity;
- 'Data Management and the Arts', a talk by Sarah Coombs: an introduction to data management and arts research;
- 'Thematic DCC - Social Sciences & Humanities', a talk by Nicole Emmeneger: what is the TDCC-SSH, and what can it mean for arts research?
- There were also contributions from three PDs, who explained how they deal with data management based on their research. These were Stefan Schafer, Reinaart Vanhoe, Chinouk Filique de Miranda.

The afternoon programme consisted of two rounds of four workshops:

- Making arts data FAIRly accessible, by Peter Sonderen and Alies Baan (ArtEZ)
- Re-using data in research and education, by Susan van Esch and Pauline Spaas (HKU)
- Rethinking Data: Crafting Research Stories Through Data, by Cornelieke van Voskuijlen and Kelly de Wildt (AHK)
- Data and Consent in Artistic Research, by Philippine Hoegen and Judith Leest (HKU)

During the day participants could write down comments and observations on a 'clothesline'. To keep an eye on the temperature, participants could indicate throughout the day how they felt about the topic of data within the arts and add their feelings to an emotional mapping board. The day ended with a plenary closing where the results and proceeds of the day were briefly surveyed.



Reflections on Artistic Research

Jeroen Boomgaard, former professor at the University of Amsterdam and the Rietveld Academy
In the ever-evolving landscape of artistic research, the importance of managing and preserving research outcomes cannot be overstated. In his keynote Jeroen Boomgaard, former professor at

the University of Amsterdam and the Rietveld Academy, highlighted this need:

"For artistic research to be recognized as serious and credible, it must establish a robust system of data management. Without this, its outcomes cannot be effectively controlled or serve as a steppingstone for further exploration. However, artistic research encounters unique challenges that complicate the integration of existing data systems."

Boomgaard identifies several key challenges that make data management in artistic research particularly complex:

1. The type of data artistic researchers use.

Academic disciplines typically rely on specific research methods and data sets. Artists, however, navigate across multiple disciplines, encountering diverse research methods and data systems for which they often lack formal training.

2. Existing data systems are unsuitable for research questions posed by artists.

The exploratory nature of artistic research often leads to the combination of different fields and the formulation of research questions in ways that can be described as idiosyncratic. Unfortunately, existing data collections are frequently inaccessible or incompatible with this approach.

3. Outcomes of artistic research do not fit into existing data collection systems.

The results of artistic research often take forms—tactile, sensorial, or affective—that lose essential qualities when stored digitally. Traditional documentation methods are inadequate, and current systems lack the capability to effectively store and preserve these unique results.

Boomgaard's reflections prompt us to consider how we might develop data management systems that respect the unique characteristics of artistic research while enabling it to contribute meaningfully to broader fields of knowledge. This is a challenge that calls for creative thinking and collaboration across disciplines.

Scientific Integrity

Peter Sonderen, chairman CWI-KUO

In his introduction as chairman of the Committee on Scientific Integrity of the monosectoral art colleges ([CWI-KUO](#)), Peter Sonderen addressed the importance of Code of Conduct on Scientific Integrity. This code, endorsed by all universities and universities of applied sciences in the Netherlands, is also guiding for good artistic research. Part of the code is data management: data must be stored sustainably and securely, and must be in line with FAIR principles. The infrastructure of data management should be provided by the institute. In conclusion: data is the result of giving, it's not about measurement.

Data Management and the Arts

Sarah Coombs, Content Coordinator DCC-PO

In her keynote Sarah Coombs explored the unique nature and management of research data in the arts. She defined research data as diverse factual records—observations, recordings, or measurements—used to validate findings. Coombs emphasized that in the arts, the boundaries between primary data (e.g., raw sketches or recordings), secondary data (e.g., processed or analyzed materials), and research outputs (e.g., completed artworks) often blur.

This overlap arises from the creative and interdisciplinary nature of artistic research, where the process itself can become part of the final result.

With humor, Coombs described the challenge of organizing such data as managing “squirrels at a rave.” She highlighted the importance of Research Data Management (RDM), advocating for early planning, clear documentation, and strategies to ensure security, quality, and reusability. Her advice on creating Data Management Plans (DMPs) addressed ethical, legal, and logistical needs.

Coombs stressed that effective RDM enhances research efficiency, transparency, and integrity while preserving data for future reuse. Her keynote encouraged researchers to adopt tailored approaches to data management that reflect the complexity of creative practices.

What are ‘Data’ in the Arts?

Mapping Data in Artistic Research

This panel discussion, moderated by Jeroen Boomgaard, featured Professional Doctorate candidates Stefan Schäfer (AHK), Reinaart Vanhoe (Willem de Kooning Academy), and Chinouk Filique de Miranda (ArteZ). Before the discussion began, each candidate introduced their respective research, providing valuable context for the dialogue.

The session explored how artistic research generates unique forms of data, distinct from traditional academic or scientific data. Panelists examined what defines artistic data, how it diverges from conventional research paradigms, and the challenges of managing and interpreting it. Their insights emphasized the creative and contextual dimensions that set artistic data apart.

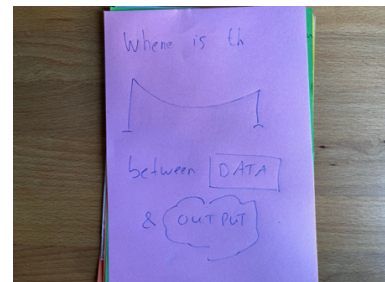
These introductions and discussions offered attendees a deeper understanding of the relationship between art, research, and data, inspiring fresh perspectives on how knowledge is generated and framed within the arts.



Workshops

Workshop 'Making arts data FAIRly accessible'

The Making arts data FAIRly accessible workshop (moderated by Peter Sonderren) kicked off with a presentation by Alies Baan on what FAIR means for data in artistic research. There were also presentations by Casper Schipper and Martine Teirlinck. Casper is from the Research Catalogue (RC). He showed through a few examples how artistic research can be published in RC, including interim results or datasets. Martine talked about the possibilities of SURF Sharekit. Sharekit is a repository for permanently archiving research publications, but from where they can also be shared with a simple push of a button on platforms such as Publinova and the HBO Kennisbank (and possibly your own website). The conversations that ensued from the presentations were fascinating and showed that there are still many knowledge gaps to be filled when it comes to FAIR data management and the tools we use to do so.

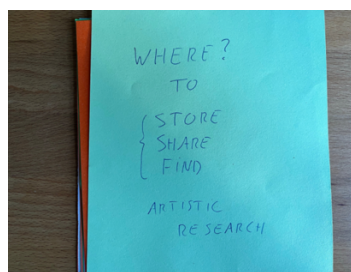


Workshop 'Re-using Data in research and education'

The workshop on Re-using Data in research and education from HKU educators Susan van Esch and Pauline Spaas started with the creative process itself. Participants used colours, scissors and paper or clay to shape the question: how do you feel about 'data in the arts' and its reuse? This prompted fascinating conversations about how we view collection, sharing and perhaps (commissioning) reuse of data.

Some of the comments:

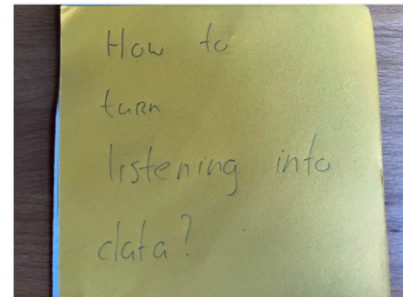
- A better term for data is 'sources',
- Certain data may mean nothing in one context but be very useful in another,
- In disciplines outside the arts, storing and sharing non-written sources has often already been thought about, for instance in architecture (scale models) or psychology (description of experiences)
- Resistance to data sharing may arise from our white Western 19th century view of art. A culture change is needed.



Workshop 'Rethinking Data: Crafting Research Stories through data'

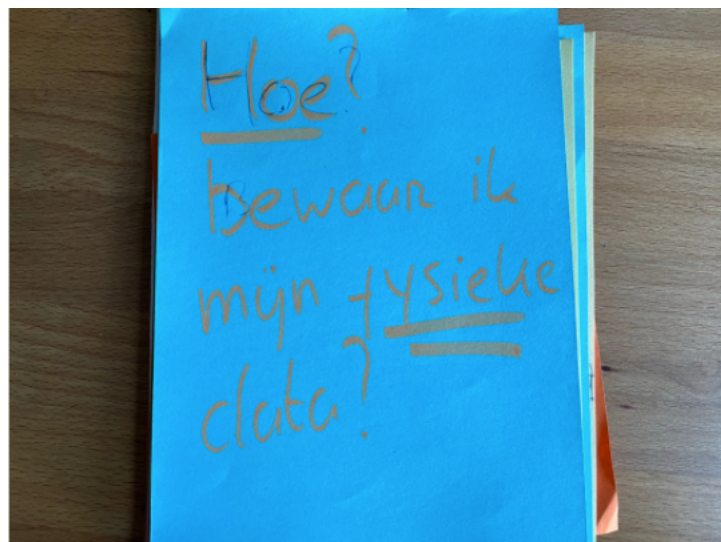
During the workshop 'Rethinking Data: Crafting Research Stories through data' we discussed 'data', Open Science and the FAIR principles in the context of artistic research: how does 'data' in artistic research look like and what possibilities do RDM and Open Science offer for

conducting research in the arts? Kelly also presented a flowchart showing that RDM and communication activities are well aligned.'



Workshop 'Data and Consent in Artistic Research'

In the workshop Data and Consent in Artistic Research, PD-researcher Philippine Hoegen and research supporter Judith Leest shared their struggle between standard norms about consent and artistic research practice. We discussed opportunities like consent as a part of the research process, forming a PACT (which fits with the suggestion of joint consent in a collective process, while working on radical inclusivity), the importance of opt-out and beware of peer pressure and various forms of consent. The Ethical Committee for Research turned out to be a critical friend in mutual learning and finding alternative possibilities for consent in this collaborative research work with people with chronic illness and homeless people.



Annex: full text of the keynote lecture by Jeroen Boomgaard

It is no secret that artistic research works with all kinds of data. You as researchers know that better than anyone else and during this day we will see examples that show how manifold they can be.

Just one example to start off with.

Last week I was at a conference in Stockholm to discuss some European Horizon projects involving artists. In one collaboration between a Swedish research institute and the royal academy in the Hague the main focus was on the sound of the environment. In one of the work packages the researchers had taken up the case study of a mining town in northern Sweden in

which the environment was dominated by the continuous sound of explosions from the mining industry, but also, and that is the unexpected element, by the sound of a bell tower that had been moved.

Because of the exploitation of the land by the mines the center of the town had integrally been moved, buildings put on wheels and transported, but the consequence was that people suddenly experienced the sound of the bell tower much closer or more in the distance than before.

The recordings of these sounds are part of the data of this project. But also the interviews with inhabitants about how they feel about these sounds, how they incorporate them in their daily lives or fail to do so. In short how they cope with them. A second layer of data. The ambition of the project however is to turn the sounds into sound interventions that will be played back to the inhabitants in the form of podcasts but also in the form of public space sound scapes. Third layer of data.

Much of today will be about the necessity of data management: how it forms a crucial condition of research, how it helps distribution and dissemination, how it can make artistic research more serious. We will hear about that and discuss it.

But the diversity of data, the immense scope of possible data, the quirky data artists are looking for and working with, also has consequences for the meta data: how to find them and how to store them.

To start with the finding: academic disciplines are not called disciplines by accident: they discipline you in becoming part of their terrain: you are only allowed in if you understand and follow certain rules, use terminology understandable and shared by other members of the discipline, and disseminate within the accepted channels of the discipline. And of course this framework is not made out of steel: it changes under impulses by the members of the discipline, the boundaries of the terrain keep shifting. But essentially the discipline is the forest where you are supposed to pick your mushrooms, while the neighboring forest belongs to others. Trespassing is not allowed. Anyone working in interdisciplinary projects has experienced these boundaries, and how difficult it is to cross them: again, it is not by accident that so many discussions in and about artistic research try to deal with the notion of translation.

Artistic research however is transgressive by nature: it lends, steals, uses, misuses, explores and exploits data from all kinds of disciplines. This lack of boundaries is the reason some – most- of us still hesitate to call it a discipline. This lack of boundaries creates a lot of space to roam, but it comes with a problem: To be part of a discipline means that you know how and where to find your data. Any curriculum in an academic discipline starts with this: how and where to find your data, how to enter the field, enroll in the discourse, be recognizable and ‘findable’ as part of this discipline.

Artistic research not only lacks this – I am sure most of us have the experience that students or researchers starting with their research ask you ‘what should I read’ or ‘where should I look’- but, once it knows where to look, is confronted with systems, metadata systems that answer questions they did not ask and deliver data they were not looking for. In other words: a different kind of questions, different research methods need different data systems.

Artists and designers are aware of this and some are building these new systems. You have probably already heard of or been in contact with the Archival Consciousness project by Mariana Lanari and Remco van Bladel. In it, I quote from their website, they ‘are developing a shared and community oriented Knowledge Graph that acts as an interaction layer on top of the

existing databases of libraries and archives to facilitate discovery, browsing, and navigation’.

But finding is only the start of the problems: dealing with them comes next. Although we all agree on the fact that you have to process your data in the right way, account for the way you found them and what you did with them, account for the way you worked for instance with people, account for their consent, account for the way you share or don’t share your results, all this accounting that forms your passport to serious research, is in and of itself disciplining your research, limiting its scope and trajectories. So while we agree that carefully handling your data, processing them in the right way is essential, we should not beforehand consent on what is right and what is wrong: that should be open for discussion – and I hope that this discussion will take place today.

The third point we have to deal with is storing data. Anyone of you applying for funding from NWO/SIA or international funding organizations has had to answer the question about the storing of your data. And you all have struggled with answering that and in the end just crossed it off with a little prayer to the gods of research funding and trusting university systems to deal with this.

Approaching this question from another side: how many examples of artistic research do you know that build on other artistic research projects? How many do you know that even refer to other artistic research projects, that seem to be aware of other artistic research projects, that explain that they are continuing a line of research and not laboriously re-inventing a wheel? How many projects do you know that even refer to other artworks for that matter?

This lack of referencing may be a result of traditional stubbornness, old-fashioned ambition to be original, but it may also be the consequence of the fact that the outcomes of artistic research projects are very hard to find. Yes, they are on websites of the artists or research groups, but how do you find those? And if you manage to find them, what do you find there? Reports, illustrations, registrations of concerts, video’s of performances?

A couple of weeks ago the University of the Arts in Helsinki organized a training session for its PhD supervisors about data management: we are not the only ones struggling with this. A lot of points were raised that will be raised today: how important it is from the perspective of research integrity, how important it is to create a community that can use existing outcomes. But the final question of the session was not answered: that question was: how is it possible that after more than 20 years of PhD’s in the arts there still is not a system in place where artistic research outcomes can be stored? Our situation is not that different and we have to deal with this problem: the artistic research catalogue is not enough: we need a system that is able to handle the outcomes of all kinds of artistic research, in all its multiple forms.

So we find ourselves in the strange situation that all our data, personal as well as official are stored in a cloud where they float around, under the control of parties unknown, while we are not able to store the data we want to share in a format we can decide on ourselves.

I would like to end this introduction with another small example:

Between 2020 and 2022 I was in charge of a smart cultures project called Contemporary Commoning., a collaboration between Rietveld, UvA and some other partners. One of the things we had to check in the application was datamanagement, but lucky for us, UvA had a system in place for this. The main deliverables were 2 peer reviewed articles and a couple of artistic research interventions. In the end the artistic outcomes were delivered, the peer reviewed articles were not up to today. Reports were uploaded tot the NWO site, not the artistic

interventions of course. During the project we discovered that at least 2 other universities were conducting research in and on the same neighborhood and we decided that we should give back the results of our research to the inhabitants because that is usually left out and as a form of cultural democratic datamanagement. So we produced a booklet that we put in the letterboxes of all the inhabitants.

Is there a point to this story? Yes: up to this day I have no clue what if anything was uploaded into the UvA datamanagement system and what, if anything can be found about our project.

Is that our own fault? Is a researcher themselves responsible for taking care of data management. We will, I hope, hear more about that today, but I am inclined to say yes: we are responsible. But the responsibility is not ours alone, it is also up to the organizations that lead, fund and control us. They too have to make sure data are handled correctly, stored in a way that all the strange data that result from artistic research can be found as foundations for further research. If only to show that these results are important. It is not only about control it is also about care.

And with this notion of control and care I would like to give the word to Peter Sonderen to tell us something about the committee for research integrity.