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Global Cultural Networks: The Value and Impact of British Council International Showcasing - evaluation report



An evaluation on 'Global Cultural Networks: The Value and Impact of British Council International Showcasing' has been carried out by BOP Consulting. Among the findings are recommendations to provide greater clarity about which aspects of UK values are being shared, promoted and exchanged and to provide longer planning and run-in time to showcasing projects to enable 'matching' of needs and offers between UK and international partners.

The research also considered how other cultural relations organisations approach their arts showcasing, how they deliver arts showcasing and what has been the impact from their arts showcasing work as compared to the British Council's approach.

An [article in Arts Professional](#) summed up other elements of the report:

The British Council should be clearer about what it is trying to achieve through its international showcasing work to avoid an excessively commercial focus, a review commissioned by the organisation says.

The [evaluation by BOP Consulting](#) warns “the aims of cultural relations work are more complex than those of a tourism marketing campaign” and that conflating the two could limit the impact of the British Council's work. It recommends the council make its ambitions for ‘soft power’ – defined as the use of positive attraction and persuasion to achieve foreign policy objectives – “more explicit at all levels of engagement”.

The research included surveying and interviewing individuals and organisations who had contributed to showcasing work, as well as British Council staff. Participants felt that the organisation's current balance of artistic and diplomatic objectives was “generally appropriate”, but there were warnings not to disrupt this.

One cautioned that “artists should not feel like salespeople” for Britain. Another said: “There's a real danger around [perceptions of] Empire 2.0 as a consequence of Brexit. They [the British Council] need to be very careful that UK PLC is not running the show, otherwise what UK culture is considered as becomes very reductive, and the subtlety of soft power gets lost.”

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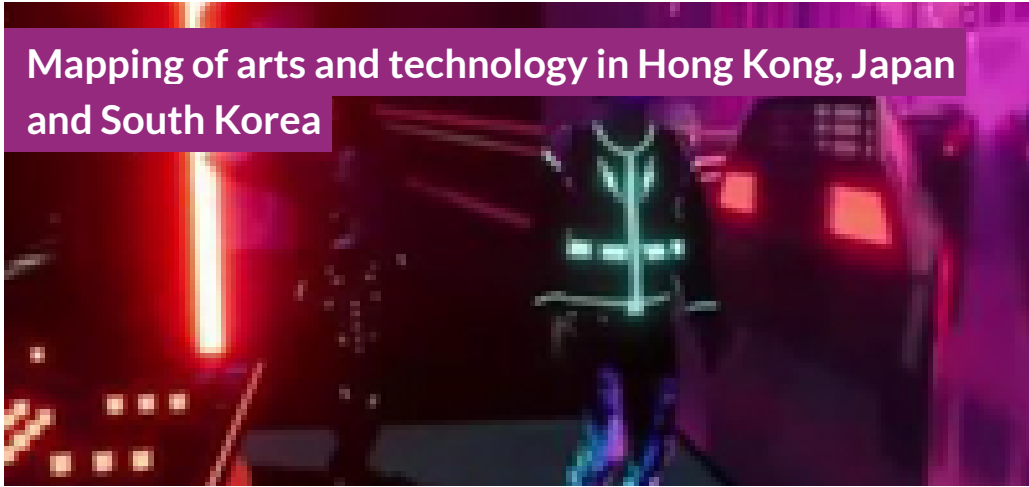


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