# *Caravan Next*
# A Social Community Theatre Project

## Methodology, Evaluation and Analysis

Prepared by
Social Community Theatre Centre
University of Turin



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# The Audience, Professions and Places of Culture

*Series curated by Francesco De Biase, Aldo Garbarini,*
*Loredana Perissinotto, Orlando Saggion*

The interplay between professions, audience and places where cultural events and products take place and are 'consumed' appears to become more and more significant as we try and analyze the state and evolution of cultural supply/demand dynamics in depth. The aim is to define the forms and ways in which to plan and schedule initiatives and events, and, more generally, to develop public and private cultural policies.

Analyzing these relationships can surely help us understand the dynamics that exist today at the cultural production level (from live performance to cultural heritage, from television to the role of the web, from the structure of cultural funding to the reorganization of spaces), but also help us hypothesize the possible future development trends.

The places, audience and professions of culture are, in fact, constantly changing: political, social and economic phenomena and events sometimes affect all three spheres, sometimes only one of them.

Suffice it to think, for example, of the birth and development of certain professional figures, originating from ongoing transformations in certain socio-economic fields, who have developed new methodologies, spaces and work tools that are in turn creating, and responding to, new ways of enjoying and consuming culture.

Everything takes place in a context of interaction, where every single element can both give birth to new situations, and be the effect/result of the changes taking place.

In this sense, the series is intended as a tool for reflection on the processes and changes that are taking place in the cultural world. It is not a sector-specific, specialized series centered on individual features; it is rather based on themes and insights that can represent the connections and problems mentioned above.

In essence, these in-depth studies can foster the development of a multidisciplinary methodological vision and, once woven together by the 'red thread' that connects them within the series, provide an overall picture of the processes, methodologies and perspectives of the sector.

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**Project Partners**
The partnership responsible for the final implementation of project activities
is made up of 13 organisations from 11 European countries.

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## 2. Methodological Questions about Evaluation: a Literature Survey

*Rita Maria Fabris*

In the field of Performance Studies, a preliminary bibliographic research on the evaluation of the social and cultural impact of performing arts and, more specifically, of Social Community Theatre has identified a limited number of systematic studies, while the research in the field of Cultural Economics and Audience Studies[3] was more consistent, as indicated by the *Final Report. Study on Audience Development - How to place audiences at the centre of cultural organizations*, promoted by the European Commission - Directorate-General For Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, created by Fondazione Fitzcarraldo, Culture Action Europe, ECCOM Progetti s.r.l., Intercult[4].

In order to contextualize this relatively new research field within Italian theatre studies, a historical and geographical premise is necessary which, without claiming to be exhaustive, will touch upon various disciplinary fields. The matter of the social value of culture, and performing arts in particular, has similarly arisen in the Western world, in the wake of the economic crisis of the New Millennium and of the decrease in available public resources: «*As it represents a sub-sector of public policy-making, the public cultural sector has partaken of such developments and has had to share with other realms of the welfare state pressures to convincingly*

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3. The methodology of the research also took into account the tools of biomedical sciences: first of all, two research topics, in the form of questions, were identified ('Have the performing arts been the subject of evaluation within Audience Development projects?' and 'What is the state of the art – in the international English-language literature – with regard to the evaluation processes of the social, cultural and wellbeing impact of Social Community Theatre experiences?'). Afterwards, a number of keywords were chosen (Audience Development Evaluation, Culture Evaluation, Performing Arts Evaluation, Applied Theatre Evaluation, Community Theatre Evaluation, Participatory Theatre Evaluation). Then on-line catalogues, both local-national and global-international, were consulted (www.sbn.it and www.worldcat.org) alongside with the sites of two European research projects (*Study on audience development - How to place audiences at the centre of cultural organisations*: ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/news/20170421-new-study-audience-development_it; *The Aesthetics of Applied Theatre*: geisteswissenschaften.fu-berlin.de/en/v/applied-theatre/index) and international databases from different disciplines (Social Science and Humanities: ERIC - Education Resource Information Center, Education source, Elsevier Science Direct, Sage Journals, Taylors & Francis online. Medical Science: PubMed, PsychInfo). Finally, the following material was found to match the research questions: instruction manuals (4), case studies (26), doctoral theses (5), systematic reviews (8), monographs (16).

4. engageaudiences.eu.

*demonstrate its "usefulness" to the greater cause*»[5]. Thus, especially in the UK, the idea that culture may foster social inclusion only gained momentum after the great disillusionment with its ability to generate wealth and after the consequent cuts to culture funding by New Labour governments[6].

The ever-growing need to evaluate, on the one hand, the social impact of culture and cultural participation in general and, on the other, to measure the specific impact of community-based arts and performing arts, has nevertheless generated a crisis in the theatre sector in Northern Ireland, due to the massive administrative demands for evaluation by the government, which are not in line with the practitioners' reflection on the meaning of Community Theatre project evaluation and with the growth of artistic organisations[7]. Matthew Jennings and Andrea Baldwin argue that, if organizations are called to meet purely governmental criteria, they will be less focused on the artistic practice and on the participants' needs. As a possible consequence, «*practitioners' and participants' experiences and backgrounds have been either ignored or reduced to quantitative indicators for the fulfillment of socio-political objectives*»[8]. In particular, the evaluation system experimented in Belfast, among other places, by François Matarasso – a reference point for the cultural policy of Labour governments – was put into question. In practice, Matarasso gathered evidence of the social impacts deriving from the involvement of different audiences in the arts on a large scale. Such a study is important because it provides a methodological framework for the evaluation of social impact, experiments with different qualitative techniques and establishes a comprehensive list of indicators (personal development, social cohesion, community empowerment and self-determination, local collective imagination and identity, imagination and projection, health and wellbeing)[9]. In Belfast, however, this system was applied to the community and voluntary sector, which is less resourceful than the private and public sectors when it comes to dealing with this type of evaluative research. «*Community and voluntary arts organisations have therefore been placed in a situation of having to justify their activities to government funding bodies, at the same time as attracting the support of community participants who may have different priorities and concerns to these*

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5. Belfiore and Bennet 2006, p. 5.
6. Bollo et alii 2017, p. 75.
7. Jennings and Baldwin 2010.
8. *Ibidem*, p. 73.
9. Matarasso 1997.

*bodies*»[10]. What is most interesting, in this case, are not the specific criticisms against the system, but the recommendations made to the research project, which does not take into consideration the community of actors involved in the evaluation process:

> *maximising the learning from routine project evaluation, through greater attention to dialogic and reflective processes, a stronger emphasis on long-term impact assessment, and systematic meta-evaluation of the outcomes of related projects over time, would potentially benefit all stakeholders including policy-makers, funding bodies, tertiary institutions, community arts organisations, project facilitators and participants, and the community at large*[11].

Faced with a considerable amount of criticism, Matarasso himself came to the conclusion that a much more complex theory must be developed in order to understand how people 'receive', create and interpret their involvement in the arts. He felt that the word 'impact' is misleading in this process and confirmed the need for a different conceptual model, researching not just statistical probabilities but also 'how' and 'why' arts and culture have an impact on people[12].

More recently, Alessandro Bollo presented a historical picture of the evaluation of the impact in the cultural sector of museums, in particular, confirming that in the analyses published over the last fifteen years, the definition of social impact has been a way to shift the focus from the economic value of culture towards a wider understanding of how art and culture can be beneficial to communities. Lastly, he noted that the last decade has been characterised by a search for more holistic approaches, combining the use of quantitative and qualitative methods with hard and soft indicators[13].

Michele Trimarchi also went in the same direction by observing that the Audience Studies are excessively focused on the socio-demographic profile of the so-called 'consumers of culture', defined on the basis of four values: gender, age, educational qualifications and income. In this way, however, the profile identified delineates a fruition that identifies the person rather than his behaviour, and ignores the emotional and cognitive impact of his/her cultural experience. Furthermore, the difference between presence and participation is neglected[14], as well as the chain

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10. Jennings and Baldwin 2010, p. 75.
11. *Ibidem*, p. 87.
12. Matarasso 2010.
13. Bollo 2013.
14. Trimarchi 2014, pp. 141-142.

of experiences upstream and downstream of the survey, and there are no broader references to cultural mediators, artists, practitioners or other professionals who make culture accessible to a wider range of audiences.

Among the main objectives of *Caravan Next* are Audience Development and Audience Engagement. In order to develop the tools for the evaluation of the cultural and social impact (in terms of cultural participation and social inclusion) of the project, we started from the general definition that Bollo took from the Arts Council of England, which can be found in English tenders as early as 2006: «*The term audience development describes activity which is undertaken specifically to meet the needs of existing and potential audiences, visitors and participants and to help arts organisations to develop ongoing relationships with audiences. It can include aspects of marketing, commissioning, programming, involvement in decision-making, education, customer care and distribution*»[15].

In addition, AD differs from marketing because, while the first is concerned with increasing the range of audiences, the second is aimed at increasing the number of participants[16]. Historically, the Arts Council's idea of audience that is behind this definition is particularly significant: «*We include all physical and digital attendees, visitors, readers, listeners, viewers, participants, learners and people who* purchase *works of art*»[17]. This perspective of an audience who purchases works of art is inevitably distant from the scope of the *Caravan Next* project. As a matter of fact, *Caravan Next* has formulated a different idea of audience which is closer to the concept of beneficiary, or simply of citizen, who experiences an artistic process rather than a product, in a dialogue with the definition of Audience Development according to the Creative Europe programme:

> *Audience development is a strategic and interactive process of making the arts widely accessible by cultural organisations. It aims at engaging individuals and communities in fully experiencing, enjoying, participating in and valuing the arts. Its focus is on a two-way exchange. […] It was generally*

15. Bollo 2014, p. 169 and Arts Council of England, *Grants for the Arts - Audience development and marketing*, 2011. In 2018 the concept was shortened as follows: «*"Audience development" is an activity that helps develop relationships with new and existing audiences. It can include aspects of marketing, commissioning, programming, involvement in decision-making, education, customer care, and distribution*», Arts Council National Lottery Project Grants, *Project Grants: Audience development and marketing*, 2018.
16. Bollo 2014, p. 169.
17. Arts Council of England, *Audience development and marketing, and Grants for the Arts*, 2016.

*considered to be a more holistic term than, for example, concepts such as 'cultural education', 'arts marketing' or 'cultural inclusion'. 'Access to culture' is a more rights based concept, while cultural education implies the implication of schools and linkage with educational curricula. Arts marketing and cultural inclusion are both more mono-dimensional focusing on either economic or social aspects*[18].

Thus, a more urgent challenge is that of making artistic processes accessible to the non-audiences of today, if it is true that «*almost 60 per cent of the public across Europe never attend live performances or visit cultural heritage sites, and in most countries, well below 20 per cent of the population actively engage in artistic activities. Surveys also suggest that there is still a strong correlation between cultural participation and higher education levels*»[19].

Thus, the evaluative research of *Caravan Next* takes shape within a work perspective that raises the question: «*who are the people who take part in this work and on what basis, and under what expectations are they present?*»[20], taking into consideration the participating citizens, the practitioners and the professionals of the cultural organisations involved in the project throughout Europe, with a methodological complexity that runs through the entire project planning process, from its artistic conception to its realisation, from evaluative design to the collection of materials and the analysis and dissemination of the results[21].

If evaluation can be defined as a process that tends to attribute value to its object[22], then who should define this value? Ben Walmsley reminds us that, historically, English neo-liberal policies have favoured the privatisation of the cultural industry, focusing on its economic value rather than on its social inclusion aspect. The subsequent definition of 'creative industry', promoted by New Labour supporters, further stimulated the economic and individualistic-competitive component of art to the detriment of collective and social values, thereby starting the process that led the sector to lose its value in making meaning for its audiences. The commercialization of the arts, with its instrumental approach to evaluation, has undermined the understanding of intrinsic cultural value[23],

18. European Commission, *European Audiences: 2020 and beyond (16-17 October 2012). Conference conclusion*, p. 3.
19. Eurostat pocketbooks, *Cultural statistics*, 2011, p. 7.
20. Freebody et alii 2018, p. 9.
21. See the contributions by Rossi Ghiglione, Part One, chapter II, paraghraph 3 *Social Community Theatre Intervention: Strategy and Guidelines*.
22. De Piccoli and Greganti 2008, p. 33.
23. Walmsley 2013, p. 1.

which is why the author «*critiques the application of commercial strategic management and marketing tools, theory and principles to arts and cultural organizations and proposes alternative approaches to assist these organizations in creating, identifying and evaluating value on their own terms and in line with their artistic missions and objectives, and goes as far as to promote a business model regarded as a series of relationships participating in the creation of value*»[24], in which «*all organizations need to be able to create, identify and evaluate their value*»[25]. Aside from the specific qualitative research that Walmsley conducts in order to analyse the value of the experience of the theatrical audience alone, which we will examine later on, our main interest here lies in the historical-critical framework and in the series of reflections that appear to be pertinent to the large-scale partnership put in place by *Caravan Next* and its need to create, identify and assess its own cultural value. It is a complex process which, over the course of a four-year collaboration, has allowed an exchange of knowledge, skills and competences that have been the specific object of the evaluation phase, «*reclaiming the language of cultural value and the methods of artistic evaluation from the neo-liberal management academics and political policy-makers who have usurped them for far too long*»[26].

In order to discuss how *Caravan Next*'s evaluative research was designed, a series of practical guides and studies have been used as important references. These are examined here for the theoretical and operational stimuli they offer, starting with *Partnerships for Learning: a guide to evaluating arts education projects* curated by Felicity Woolf for the Arts Council after a pilot experiment with 18 English organisations, and disseminated nationwide together with a training programme[27]. The title already shows the fundamental ideas leading to a definition of the evaluation process that, in its essence, we support: «*Evaluation is a powerful tool for learning. It is a structured way of thinking about what happens during your project, and why. It can be simple or complex, depending […] on what you want to find out, […] involves making judgements, based on evidence, about the value and quality of a project, […] is open and clear and involves all partners, including the people taking part, […] helps with decision-making during a project and for future projects*»[28].

24. Rayport and Sviokla 1995.
25. Walmsley 2013, p. 4.
26. *Ibidem*, p. 13.
27. Woolf 2004, p. 5.
28. *Ibidem*, p. 7.

In *Caravan Next*, the choice to conduct the evaluation phase internally, through the UNITO team which already possessed evaluation research experience[29], with an external statistical supervision, was guided by the methodological objective of developing within the partnership «*ownership, which is more likely to lead to reflection and changes in practice*»[30], so that the evaluation process would not be merely an appendix, but evolve «*from within the structures of the project and the needs and ambitions of all the participants*»[31]. On a European level, it was not possible to fully comply with this last indication, although there were different moments of discussion with the professionals from each partner who were in charge of the evaluation in the 13 states, aimed at reflecting on the meaning and objectives of the evaluation, as we will see in the example of ZID Theater.

The objectives of the evaluation, which we will borrow from Woolf, are: «*to improve practice during the project and for future projects; to show what happened as a result of a project*». Moreover, it is important for the partners and participants to «*feel the evaluation is for their benefit, and not just for funders*»; it should also be evident how «*arts projects are a good way of learning and how everyone benefited from the project*»[32].

Jonathan Goodacre also moves in the same direction by considering the evaluation principles of art education projects as transferable to many cultural practices, and identifying three possible objects of evaluation: the processes, which are measured in terms of efficiency and involve the professionals engaged in the project; the «*outcomes for audience and participants*» which describe the effectiveness of the project; finally, the «*wider and longer term impacts (e.g. on society or the economy)*» which affect people, territories or other elements not directly related to the project[33]. The evaluation should therefore be an essential part of the whole project and also remain essential during the following period, providing for both quantitative and qualitative research so as to be able to «*measure how people might be changed by an arts experience*»[34].

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29. See *supra* and the contribution by Rossi Ghiglione, Part One, chapter II *Social Community Theatre Methodology*.

30. Woolf 2004, p. 51. These are the other advantages of internal evaluation indicated by Woolf: «*The partnership can both control the process and suit it to their needs. Partners can avoid going too far with critical comments*». Whereas the disadvantages could be the following: «*May lack credibility with outsiders. The evaluation may be narrower, without an external perspective. More likely to skirt round difficult issues or weaknesses*».

31. Thompson 2000, p. 102.

32. Woolf 2004, p. 7.

33. Goodacre 2016.

34. *Ibidem*, p. 223. Questions such as these can be useful to evaluate the experience of both participants and professionals: «*Where did they start from? Had they done anything like this before? Did it make a difference in the longer term?*». *Ibidem*, p. 222.

In order to expand the theoretical framework of evaluation, it is essential to mention what emerges from social studies, which are particularly significant for the reflection on evaluators and methodological choices. Rossi, Freeman and Lipsey define evaluation as the set of efforts made by all actors in the system to place value on a process or onto people[35]: «*evaluators use social research methods to study, appraise and help improve social programmes in all their aspects, including the diagnosis of the issues they address, their conceptual structure and design, their implementation and management, their outcomes and their efficiency*»[36].

When we consider evaluation as a research, we want to emphasize the way through which it is achieved, i.e. through a rigorous methodology of collection and processing of the information that supports the attribution of a value. According to Alberto Vergani, who regards evaluative research as a creative and reflective practice in the educational field, it can be defined as 'competent' when it has a method and techniques, or 'expert', when it is also familiar with the object or process to be evaluated – in *Caravan Next*, the UNITO team falls into this second definition. Since the second half of the 1980s, qualitative social research has prevailed over quantitative research, with the following characteristics: intentionality, as it is necessary to proceed in a reflective way; teleology, as the aim of the research is to recognise the value, however conditioned, of the evaluand and to provide elements of support to the decision-making and governance processes; a normative orientation based on founding theories, technical-methodological rules and practical conducts; contextualisation, as the evaluation refers to a situation that is 'embedded', inserted in a context, a physical, social, cultural, symbolic place, i.e. a set of data, social facts, resources, events and subjects that can either support or oppose action. Moreover, «*evaluative research is a targeted activity that is carried out to influence policies, to contribute to the design and implementation of interventions, and to improve the management of social programmes*». It is, in other words, a political activity, and thus a local, contingent, contextual practice[37].

According to Claudio Bezzi, evaluation is a process and a system that redefines planning as it takes place and identifies five stages of work: the objectives of the evaluation, the objectives and needs of the evaluand, the decision-making context and resources, the definition and implementation of both research approach and evaluation techniques, and finally the use

35. Rossi et alii 1999, p. 4.
36. *Ibidem*, p. 2.
37. Vergani 2005, pp. 71-73.

and dissemination of the outcomes[38]. Mario Castoldi regards evaluation as an interpretative process of attributing meaning to the observed reality, a meaning that is constructed during the evaluation process to lead to a knowledge that is produced rather than given. It is, in fact, a moment of reflection on the formative action aimed at understanding situations, at attributing meaning and significance to both the reality with which it comes into contact and its main purpose: fostering learning in the system of the actors involved[39]. «*Evaluation provides […] the system of relevant actors with […] important opportunities to learn and improve their own professional practices*»[40]. By evaluating, one puts to the test evaluation itself and its interactive, dialogical, participatory and empathetic approach.

After examining economic and cultural studies, let us come to theatre studies and outline a representative overview of the problems and methodological questions opened up by the urgency of evaluating theatrical processes, with particular reference to Applied Theatre, leaving in the background the evaluation of theatrical products, even though both can be considered as theatrical experiences that generate, possibly to different extents, changes in the behaviour of individuals, groups and communities.

Let us take as a starting point Philip Taylor's words, which define «*the applied theatre label a useful umbrella term […] for finding links and connections for all of us committed to the power of theatre in making a difference in a human life span*»[41]. The field of Applied Theatre would then include methodologies such as Theatre in Education (TIE), Popular Theatre, Theatre of the Oppressed (TO), Theatre for Health Education (THE), Theatre for Development (TfD), Prison Theatre, Community-based Theatre, Museum Theatre, Reminiscence Theatre[42], which can be summarised under the general label of Education, Social and Community Theatre[43].

In 2006, the English publication *Research in Drama Education. The journal of Applied Theatre and Performance* published an issue entirely dedicated to the theme 'Impact Assessment and Applied Drama', a review

38. Bezzi 2001, p. 183.
39. Vergani 2005, p. 73.
40. *Ibidem*, p. 74.
41. Taylor 2003, p. 93.
42. Prendergast and Saxton 2009, pp. 3-6. The case studies identified by the authors do not coincide with other previous ones. (Etherton and Prentki 2006 suggest alternatively: Theatre/Drama in Education (TIE), Applied Theatre, Community Theatre/Drama, Interventionist Theatre and Theatre for Development (TfD). This is because the use of labels is dynamic and affected by the different contexts of application. See Pontremoli 2004, p. 106.
43. Pontremoli 2015.

of case studies of interventions carried out in non-European contexts, with methodologies that can be summarised by the label Theatre for Development (TfD), developed by NGOs in collaboration with English universities. In their editorial, Etherton and Prentki criticise those projects that focus on the objectives of development or inclusion of fragile people (primarily children, according to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948), without taking into account their possible oppressors, the context or what will happen in subsequent years. In fact, if it is true that there exist appropriate measurements for the delivery of basic human needs, «*where the interventions fall within the focus of rights and culture, as is the case with the process of applied theatre, the assessment and measurement of impact is much less clear-cut*»[44]. The authors emphasize that there is a strong risk that short-term evaluations may find their highest common denominator in quantitative data (usually the number of participants), and then content themselves with adding qualitative data on how someone's understanding of certain issues has been altered by the process. «*This type of methodology is caught up entirely in the moment of the process and any notion of assessing the impact upon an individual, group or community in terms of permanent changes in behaviour and attitude is absent*»[45]. However, the urgency of using this data to obtain additional funds is detrimental to any critical aspects that could help the development of Applied Theatre practices, leaving open the fundamental question of a long-term impact evaluation.

According to Monica Prendergast and Juliana Saxton, each type of Applied Theatre would need a different evaluation system; however, «*a key question for any applied theatre company is* How do we balance privacy and protection with the need to prove worth?». In addition, the authors point out that social efficacy is more relevant to the assessment of the process or of the Applied Theatre intervention than it is to economic efficiency or technological effectiveness, and that «*assessment strategies in applied theatre should be context-driven and centrally concerned with giving voice to the participants: actors and spectators alike*», advocating a qualitative approach, rather than a quantitative one, with regard to participants, aesthetics, ethics/safety, theatre workers and the assessment of learning[46].

Jennings and Baldwin also reiterate the importance of using 'reflective practitioners' during the evaluation, and of measuring the impact of Applied Theatre projects with communities in a longitudinal way, i.e.

44. Etherton and Prentki 2006, p. 141.
45. *Ibidem*, p. 145.
46. Prendergast and Saxton 2009, pp. 24-26.

not only *ex-ante*, *in itinere* and *ex-post* but also during the subsequent period. In particular, this process of community development – after the incomplete system proposed by Matarasso – could be completed if only «*greater involvement of the higher education sector in partnership with government and non-government agencies could yield significant benefits in terms of optimizing learning from applied theatre project evaluations*»[47].

Thus, a socially transversal partnership would be desirable in order to control the complexity of evaluation-related study phenomena, which includes the evaluation of *Caravan Next*'s European events. In recent years, a substantial bibliography has been published on large-scale theatrical evaluation methodologies, mainly related to Australian projects. One of the most representative studies in this regard[48], is the one conducted by Sandra Gattenhof, who uses an auto-ethnographic methodology to propose evaluation models for the Australian arts and culture, coagulating the various professions she has experienced – from specialist in drama/arts in schools and communities to academic, to president of Drama Australia President and Director of Arts Education and Industry Partnerships. The evaluation work she was asked to outline aims to help Australian art and cultural organisations thrive. The three proposals «*were shaped through a multi-modal method that included quantitative and qualitative data, including still and moving image, and were approved through the ethical clearance process required by the Australian University sector*»[49]. The first objective of establishing a dialogue with art organisations, their employees and key stakeholders, also includes the community of reference of the author-researcher and aims to establish a common practice within the organisation, to encourage professionals/practitioners to reflect on the evaluation process which is

47. Jennings and Baldwin 2010.
48. See O' Connor and Anderson 2015, who developed a research methodology called Applied Theatre as Research (ATAR) between Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and Hong Kong, aiming to detect small life changes. In fact, «*in applied theatre evaluation […] what is required is deep analysis (often over time) of how the process has made "small changes" in the lives and the communities of the participants […]. The fruits of this kind of research will also assist us to develop theoretical position that can be applied across International programmatic and institutional boundaries. This kind of praxis, born of the connection between theory, research and practice provides the opportunity for growth and development on our sometimes under-theorized field. Our ongoing sustainability depends on our ability to, through innovative, appropriate and flexible research and evaluation, create theory-related practice that builds credibility with funders, bureaucrats, governments and critically with those engaged in applied theatre programmes*». *Ibidem*, p. 46.
49. Gattenhof 2017, p. 3.

a starting point for discussion. This research also criticises any over-reliance on post-event survey data and explores a creative approach of the evaluator which is neither external nor internal, but performative, capable of collecting «*soft data about community experience and aesthetic engagement*», as figures are not enough to represent «*an art engagement by an individual and the community in which it is situated*»[50].

A specific volume by Freebody, Balfour, Finneran, Anderson is dedicated to the transformations of the Applied Theatre label in a community direction, focusing «*on the social application of the arts in a range of contexts including schools, prisons, residential aged care and community settings*», but above all, identifying more and more clearly the objectives of change for participants, professionals and the project itself: in the first case, it is a question of fostering «*awareness raising or developing; capacity building or strengthening; and transforming or empowering processes in the participants; in the second case, a matter of modifying the practitioner's own epistemology or personal approach to this work [...] according to three categories: building social knowledge, stimulating social action; and supporting social change. Finally, with regard to the project, the practical focus of change in participants embedded in the project [...] can be one or a combination of the following three domains: skills and opportunities; community and belonging and citizenship and identity*»[51].

If we delve into the details of those case studies that develop a specifically theatrical evaluation methodology, we find two examples that broaden the perspective of Audience Studies on traditional performing arts, such as Alan Brown's speech at the 2008 Arts Marketing Association conference which presents a complex quantitative research on the 'intrinsic impact' of Dance, Music, Stage Play, Multidisciplinary and Musical Theatre performance, where significant indicators are used (social bonding, context, relevance, anticipation, captivation, intellectual stimulation, emotional impact, spiritual value, aesthetic growth) which are useful to provide artistic organizations with operational guidelines, such as: «*focus on pre-performance context-building and engagement strategies, re-evaluate the audience experience, messaging effectively to create anticipation, more involved relationships with artists, regular assessment of intrinsic impacts (customize the questionnaire beyond satisfaction measurement), paradigm shift: curate impacts through artists*»[52]. Thanks to this kind of research, Brown became the main consultant to the Arts

50. *Ibidem*, p. 4.
51. Freebody et alii 2018, p. 96.
52. Brown 2008.

Council for the evaluation of the individual impact and creative capacity of organisations, within the framework of his well-known consultancy firm WolfBrown, operating in the United Kingdom, the United States and Australia[53].

On the qualitative research front, Walmsley analyses the public's perception of the value of the theatrical experience at the West Yorkshire Playhouse in Leeds, England, and the Australian Melbourne Theatre Company, with the idea that the «*measurement of the audience experience requires feedback that is qualitative and thorough, and that encourages sustained reflection*». By means of 34 semi-structured open-ended interviews, followed by «*participant observation of performances and post-show discussions*» the research found common drivers for participation such as captivation, emotional impact, wellbeing – which are not a novelty in the literature – but also edutainment (the need to be tested from an intellectual, emotional, artistic and ethical point of view), escapism (the desire to escape from real life), the social rite of going to the theatre as well as live experience[54]. In short, this research shows how the public draws from the experience of theatre a synthetic perception of intrinsic and instrumental benefits, coming to the conclusion that «*people seek out communities of practice not for personal gain but because it gives meaning to their lives and contributes to their own self-realisation*»[55].

In Italy, studies by Enzo Grossi, Pier Luigi Sacco and others deal with the concept of 'intrinsic impact' of cultural participation in general, through qualitative and quantitative research that applies «*the Psychological General Well-Being Index - PGWBI, a tool that has been validated through 30 years of research, as an index of measurement*». The exploratory study of the relationship between cultural access and the subjective perception of wellbeing is part of Happiness Studies, which are taking the cultural dimension more and more into account, starting from the assertion that «*higher levels of education and acculturation allow individuals to make better informed and self-conscious choices, which have a positive impact in terms of self-determination and health-serving habits and practices*». Moreover, as «*cultural access clearly improves chances of survival in longitudinal samples*», there seems to be an ever-

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53. Carnwath and Brown 2014.
54. Walmsley 2013, pp. 8-9. The interviews took place in 2010 and the initial questions were of the following nature: «*Why do you go to the theatre? What was your first memorable experience of theatre and how did it affect you? What kind of plays tend to affect you most and how do they affect you? What's the best play you have ever seen and why? How important would you say theatre is to your life? How different would your life be without theatre?*».
55. *Ibidem*, p. 11.

increasing need for scientific evidence to guide public health policies in taking advantage of the human and social development potential of culture[56].

The research was conducted on a medium-large sample from the Italian population (n=1500, aged 15 or higher), which is statistically relevant with respect to the universal sample of 49.2 million people, according to National Survey. Through a methodological choice which is also sociological in nature, the municipalities where the interviews will be carried out were identified, the relative electoral districts representing diversified areas (central, suburban, outskirts/and isolated houses) were extracted, and the persons to be contacted were drawn from the electoral lists of said areas. An algorithm then measured the number of selected persons by gender, age and municipality of residence in relation to the national universal sample. Afterwards, the focus was placed on collecting

> *information covering socio-demographic and health-related data that are widely recognized as relevant determinants of wellbeing: geography (North, Centre, South quadrants of the country), environment (urban, semi urban, rural environment), gender, age, schooling (no school, primary, secondary, high school, college), civil status (single, married, widow, divorced/ separated), monthly income level (<1.000 Euros, 1.000-1.500 Euros, 1.500-2.500 Euros, >2.500 Euros, no data) presence/absence of diseases from a given list*[57].

By means of interviews, the intensity of the access to specific cultural activities (Jazz music concerts, Classical music concerts, Opera/ ballet, Theatre, Museums, Rock concerts, Disco dance, Paintings exhibitions, Social activity, Watching sport, Sport practice, Book reading, Poetry reading, Cinema) was then measured, but the qualitative data were reformulated in quantitative terms. The most relevant research conclusions for the evaluative approach of *Caravan Next* indicated an 'alternative' cultural direction: in fact, «*Sport practice is not properly speaking a "cultural" variable, but it is nevertheless interesting to notice how it works as a joint predictor of PGWB with other, properly cultural access experiences such as reading, cinema and theatre. […] It is not incidental that there are activities, such as dance, for instance, that could be equally well fitting into both categories of cultural access and sport practice*». Moreover, the sport practice shares with the other cultural activities «*the key characteristics of the development of personal capabilities and*

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56. Grossi et alii 2011, p. 389.
57. *Ibidem*, pp. 392-393.

*competences, i.e., a pro-active, learning oriented use of one's own time and energy*»[58]. This is why the access to culture – whereas culture is understood «*in the eudaimonic, capability-based sense, and thus inclusive of sport practice*» – and therefore capacity building in general, should receive more attention in the literature in comparison to categories such as «*age, education, gender, or employment*»[59].

The subsequent study by Tavano Blessi, Grossi, Sacco and others went into the specific process of evaluating the individual subjective wellbeing through the same tool as the PGWBI, here applied to demonstrate that «*cultural participation tends to be oriented preferentially toward relatively sociable activities, thereby contributing to the production of relational goods and social capital*»[60]. This research was similar to the previous one, but with the addition of interviews to a representative sample of researchers (n=150) from the fields of cultural sociology, cultural economics and socio-economics. The latter were asked to choose which 10 cultural activities were preferable among the 14 already experimented, this time «*in terms of their perceived sociability orientation, making it clear that 'sociability orientation' meant the effectiveness of a given culture-related activity in enabling people to interact and establish relations with others on a non-instrumental basis*». With respect to subjective wellbeing, the preferences of the Italian population sample seem to indicate a recognisable order: at the top of the list we can find sports practice, museums attendance and novels reading, «*typical components of a weekday pattern of access*», followed by sports attendance, cinema and painting exhibitions attendance, «*more weekend-oriented leisure activities*»; and finally opera, ballet and classical music concerts, in other words «*the activities with a more significant highbrow character*». As for the sample of researchers, the results indicate that «*pro-social activity and sport practice are clearly and unsurprisingly top ranking, whereas reading novels gets a relatively unexpected third place*», which in any case leads us to reflect on how literary tastes themselves are perceived as an interpersonal communication resource[61].

A constantly growing field of research, thanks to the application of tools tested in clinical practice, such as the PGWBI, is the impact evaluation of arts on wellbeing promoted by Medical Humanities. Applied Theatre defined it as Theatre in Health Education (THE) and in this field, there has been systematic research on impact evaluation. Norma Daykin and others

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58. *Ibidem*, p. 402.
59. *Ibidem*, p. 404.
60. Tavano Blessi et alii 2014.
61. *Ibidem*, p. 40.

started an original and reflective line of investigation into the impact of «*music, performance, drama and dance on community settings and non-curricular mainstream education*»[62]. Performing arts became a field of study in relation to the public health of teenagers, because they can give an answer to several crucial issues, such as drug abuse, obesity, sexual and mental health and social inclusion. The methodologies of the systematic review of relevant bibliography «*initially developed in health services research for the synthesis of quantitative studies […] are increasingly being developed in the social sciences and for qualitative research*». However, it is important to remember that, on the one hand, systematic research risk forcing the artistic interventions to adhere to inadequate models of quantitative evaluation; on the other hand, there are qualitative research works which do not ignore the context of application and describe it adequately. Furthermore, «*the method of systematic review allows the reader to track the research process in order to establish whether the review team's decisions are justified in terms of the evidence and the criteria applied*»[63]. There is a reference to the medical, humanistic and social science databases consulted, the years of interest (1994-2004), the criteria of inclusion in the systematic review (characteristics of the population, types of intervention, methods of research and evaluation adopted) and the search words. Unlike quantitative research, all the contributions were included «*that reported results of pre and post-testing following a performing arts intervention, regardless of whether these included the use of controls or randomization procedures*», as the quantitative research considered all the interventions «*that reported the use of recognized procedures of data collection such as interviews, focus groups and observation*»[64]. The results led to select, from 3.670 initial evidences, 9 quantitative and 6 qualitative articles, all referred to the type of drama, even though they were based on different epistemological premises. Nevertheless, four common areas were identified concerning «*peer interaction, social skills and empowerment; knowledge, attitude and risk in relation to HIV/AIDS; sexual health; and alcohol, tobacco and illegal drug use*»[65]. The type of drama is represented in its multiple dimensions, from the theatrical experience of teenagers (also with their parents) to the vision of a professional production; the evaluation includes pre and post-testing, but also control groups within schools. The limits observed in the selected articles regard conducting Random Control Trials in quantitative studies, which is not always possible, and illustrate the research procedures in qualitative studies.

62. Daykin et alii 2008.
63. *Ibidem*, p. 253.
64. *Ibidem*, pp. 254-255.
65. *Ibidem*, pp. 255-256.

In conclusion, this study suggests a new methodology of reflective research capable of expanding the studies on evaluation in performing arts with mixed criteria, determined by the context, but always made strictly explicit[66].

Using the same criteria, Bungay and Vella-Burrows continued Daykin's research, by conducting a rapid review of the reference works for the years 2004-2011 regarding the children and young people.

To complete the overview on evaluative studies connected to theatre in the medical area, it is worth remembering the case analysis of the evaluation of health promotion through theatrical programmes, in the South-African context of the fight against AIDS through an original «*Randomized Community Intervention Trial*»[67], as well as of the introduction of ethnographic theatre in a mixed methodology of evaluation of the «*Leadership Program's HERstory […] a school-based, universal, preventative intervention designed to promote healthy youth development among adolescent girls by increasing their connections to pro-social peers and to school and community while developing social-emotional skills that serve as protective factors*»[68]. An emblematic example of the impact of theatre on the quality of life of people affected by dementia is the study by van Dijk et alii (2012), which tries to assess whether a theatrical methodology is more effective than non-theatrical ones and whether professionals or artists can have the same impact on patients. Borraccino and Nicotera (2011) focused on the role of social theatre in the training of nurses, while Osman et alii (2018) conducted a bibliographic review on the artistic interventions involving body activities in the training of doctors and health professionals to ascertain whether they were based on appropriate evaluation methods. The study by Fancourt and Poon (2016) tries to prove the validity of the method of «*Arts Observational Scale (ArtsObS) for the evaluation of performing arts activities in health care settings*». Finally, the doctoral thesis of Hartke (2016) designs, implements and subjects to evaluation a psychological programme for students of performing arts in U.S. high schools, called Performing Arts Mental and Emotional Skills (PAMES) Program.

To complete the bibliographic review, a brief overview is included on case studies regarding evaluation in drama therapy and applied theatre, in its most significant types of intervention. In the first case, besides the classic study by Meldrum (1994), an interesting bibliometric analysis explores the fields of application of drama therapy in health care, while theatre is more present in the area of education. In Italy, the current

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66. The result of the following studies is the volume by Daykin and Joss 2016.
67. Harvey et alii 2000.
68. MacFarlane 2013.

research project PRIN *Per-formare il sociale* was preceded by the study by Palestini and Nicoli 2015, promoted by the Regione Emilia-Romagna, on the regional project 'Theatre and mental health'.

As regards applied theatre, the evaluation in the educational field seems to be one of the most long-standing branches of research. Historically, theatre was introduced in schools through *animazione teatrale* (theatre animation) in the 1960s in Italy, France and the United Kingdom[69]. The first analyses suggested quantitative methods, such as the pilot study by Saldaña (1989), and concerned, especially in Italy, Teatro Ragazzi (ETI 1991). Subsequent studies focused on specific topics, such as Bigelow (1996) examined «*the relationship between participation in the performing arts within school curricula and levels of communication apprehension*», Fleming et alii (2004) concentrated on «*the impact of drama on pupils' language, mathematics, and attitude*», or creative methodologies of evaluation were investigated (Pearce 2003). Taylor (2006) interestingly argued that «*we cannot separate assessment and evaluation from the learning experience*», connecting evaluation with school learning objectives, such as the Common Core Standards for K-12 education, used in the US schools and asking himself «*How do assessment models shape teaching in the arts? How much guidance should standards provide for arts educators? Who benefits from national and local assessment standards in the arts? What contributions have standards made to the teaching of the creative arts?*»[70]. The following study by Fiaschini not only tries to reconstruct the history of the relationship between theatre and school from the 1960s in Italy, but also to emphasise «*the underestimated potential of theatre practices in building communicative bridges between schools and the outside world, in the life of the community, thus fostering creative processes of social identity and renewal*»[71]. In the field of qualitative research, Lai-Shan and Ridley (2015) introduced the 'capability approach' in the evaluation of drama-based pedagogy in the high schools of Hong Kong, while Innocenti Malini (2017) explored the evaluation of theatre projects in early childcare. Finally, the doctoral thesis by Edwards (2018) «*assess[es] the level to which performing arts instruction (PAI) courses developed college-level students' soft skills*».

Another form of theatre which has frequently been investigated in the studies on impact evaluation is Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) as, for example, in the volume by Cohen-Cruz (2012) or in the study by Erel et

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69. Redington 1983; Bernanoche 2015.
70. Taylor 2006, p. 114.
71. Fiaschini 2014B.

alii (2017), which attempts to understand whether the TO experiences with migrant mothers in London could «*create spaces for the participants to enact social and personal conflicts*»; the doctoral thesis by Siriani (2018) carries out a qualitative evaluation of the impact of TO on school context of preadolescents dealing with experiences of community violence in the South Bronx in New York.

Further studies on the impact of long-term projects of community theatre focus on non-English speaking countries, such as Southern Brazil (Nogueira 2006), Turin (De Piccoli and Greganti 2008) and Northern Portugal (Silva 2018), while as concerns the evaluation of long-term projects of community dance, it is worth mentioning the representative English study by Houston (2005).

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