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Worlding databases: A decolonising approach to the structuring and representation of data about global arts

Hidalgo Urbaneja, Maribel

m.hidalgourbaneja@arts.ac.uk
University of the Arts London, United Kingdom

Velios, Athanasios

a.velios@arts.ac.uk
University of the Arts London, United Kingdom

Goodwin, Paul

paul.goodwin@arts.ac.uk
University of the Arts London, United Kingdom

Worlding Public Cultures: The Arts and Social Innovation is an international multi-partner project that proposes *worlding* (Heidegger, 2002 [1950]; Spivak, 1985; Hunt, 2014; Cheah, 2016) as an activating concept and analytical tool. The concept goes beyond current top-down models of "inclusion," "diversity" and other representations of the "global". *Worlding* grounds the global within local worlds and allows entangled histories to emerge, opening pathways to decolonise "universal" Western narratives and epistemologies. Practices that generate new forms of knowledge in the digital sphere or challenge existing ones are seen as a *worlding* exercise by decolonial digital humanities (Risam, 2018).

One of the main outputs of the *Worlding Public Cultures* project is a dedicated website, <https://www.worldingcultures.org/>, that will constitute a hub for exchange of information about decolonising activities led by museums, universities, and other cultural and activist organisations. A key element on that website is the publicly accessible database that will share a structured set of curated data about how "global" narratives are being told and shared by exhibitions, academic courses, public events, and activist initiatives around the world. The database can be queried by place, time span, actors, and topics. A team of researchers from different backgrounds based in multiple geographical locations (London, UK; Amsterdam, Netherlands; Heidelberg, Germany; Montreal and Ottawa, Canada) collects data about localised events and activities. The database will provide museum professionals, scholars, teachers and students, and cultural activists with information that can help them when planning and organising activities or projects about global arts and culture.

Gathering and curating data about the "global" increases the visibility of non-canonical and non-western arts and cultures but *worlding* requires an effort that goes beyond representation. Developing a database in the context of the *Worlding Public Cultures* project implies the use of *worlding* as a concept and tool to rethink and critique the epistemological foundations of databases, ontologies, and structured vocabularies. The database structure is mapped on the CIDOC Conceptual Reference Model and database entries often include terminology from structured vocabularies and authority files such as the Getty Vocabularies and the Virtual International Authority File (VIAF). The adoption of well-established and "universally" recognised ontologies and vocabularies is considered good

practice for data integration and exchange, yet, it reinforces existing power dynamics and knowledge biases. Moreover, the collected data that will populate the database has been modelled on existing standards and canons.

This paper will shed light on the research questions that guide the ongoing process of developing the Worlding Public Cultures database and collection of the data that will populate it. Key areas of discussion encompass: the theoretical interrogation of the strategies, and actions frameworks that have given shape to databases, ontologies, and structured vocabularies; the engagement with professional communities responsible for the formulation of the data ontology used in the project; the ethical and critical aspects taken into consideration when reproducing data collected from multiple sources; and the design of a graphical interface within typical web applications that exposes the cultural and epistemological biases implicit in the CIDOC CRM, Getty Vocabularies, and VIAF to users that interact with the database.

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Modelling the relationship between morphosyntactic features and discourse relations in a multimodal corpus of primary school science diagrams

Hiippala, Tuomo

tuomo.hiippala@helsinki.fi
University of Helsinki, Finland

Haverinen, Jonas

jonas.haverinen@helsinki.fi
University of Helsinki, Finland

In 1998, Watanabe and Nagao published a pioneering article on the relationship between written language and pictorial representations in diagrams (Watanabe and Nagao 1998). By manually analysing 31 diagrams from Japanese books of flora that describe the shape, features and environment of plants, Watanabe and Nagao showed that morphosyntactic features of textual elements could be mapped to specific discourse relations that held between the text and pictorial representation of a plant. They also formulated a set of rules to support the computational processing of diagrammatic representations, which could be used to infer what kinds of relations hold between textual and pictorial elements.

From a contemporary standpoint, the diagrams studied by Watanabe and Nagao (1998) can be approached from the perspective of multimodality theory, which studies how human communication relies on intentional combinations of multiple “modes” of expression (Bateman et al. 2017). From a multimodal perspective, individual diagrams may be treated as instances of the diagrammatic semiotic mode, which integrates natural language and diverse visual expressive resources into a common discourse organisation (Hiippala and Bateman 2021). Against this backdrop, the rules formulated by Watanabe and Nagao (1998) can be treated as descriptions of their multimodal discourse