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**Description of data assembled for Elsewhere project**

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There is no single online global platform that contains information about all cultural events in all geographic regions, countries, languages, and all cultural fields. (While Facebook is perhaps the biggest such platform, its API does not allow downloading data on the scale we need). Organizations and individuals announce events on many different platforms that vary in scale, format, and coverage (covering only one cultural field vs. many). They include social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, VK, Livejournal, and others, groups in messaging apps such as WhatsApp and WeChat, channels in Telegram, mailing lists for particular fields; and online forums. Some online platforms such as Meetup facilitate organization of the events that are described by the organizers. One limitation of all these platforms is that they only include events that took place after each platform was founded - Facebook in 2004, Twitter in 2006, etc. To have data for a longer time period, we have to use other sources that vary greatly in scale and coverage.

For our study, we selected a combination of online platforms and other sources that exemplify this variety. Two are mailing lists that cover professional events in particular fields - art world and art education (e-flux and art&education). The first reaches 100,000 subscribers and the second reaches 80,000 subscribers. Our third source is Meetup platform used to organize numerous meetings on thousands of topics in most world countries. The fourth source is a listing of TED local events (TEDx). TED is a series of prestigious annual conferences taking place since 1990. People in any city can organize a local TED events. All these events are listed on TED website. Our fifth source exemplifies online platforms that represent creative professionals and their work. In our study, this is Behance, the largest platform for designers, photographers, illustrators and creatives in dozens of other creative fields. People create their accounts on Behance and upload their selective projects. Companies can advertise their positions on Behance and hire people based on their portfolios. Besides professionals, lots of students in creative fields also have their portfolios on Behance.

Although the platforms described above were originally created in US and use English as the primary language, they have been adopted in dozens of countries, as we will see below. In order to understand how patterns on these platforms may compare with the patterns in a single country, we also collected data from three Russian sources that use Russian Language: Timeplad, Theory and Practice, and Russian Ministry of Culture. Timepad (2008-) is a popular platforms for announcing events and selling tickets, similar in functionality to U.S. platform Eventbright. Theory and Practice (2006-) describes itself as “a site about contemporary knowledge and education”; it is used to announce “seminars, lectures and other forms of intellectual leasuire, online courses and video lectures.” (Thus, it perfectly exemplifies the trend of education becoming a popular leisure activity we talked about above.) In Russia, Ministry of Culture funds theaters, museums, and other types of cultural organizations, and its the biggest culture funder similar to many other countries such as France. They publish listing of all events they funded, and we added it to our other sources.

Sources of data about cultural events can be divided into two types. The first type is a platform where organizations and people announce their events - but they can also announce these events on other global or local platforms. Therefore, we can’t assume that these platforms represent all events in a particular category, because other platforms maybe more popular for cultural events announcements in various countries, such as Timepad in Russia. The examples of such sources in our study are e-flux and art & education mailing lists.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Meetup andTEDx represent the second type. They are exclusive platforms for organizing certain events - Meetup meetings and TEDx conferences, regardless of the country. But here things are also not so simple. Organizations and individuals can also organize events on similar topics with a similar structure outside of these platforms and they formats. For example, not all gatherings on a certain topic such as healthy lifestyle are organized via Meetup. The group meetings can be organized via many different mechanisms. Similarly, not all TED style events have to be identified with original TED conferences; people can organize events with similar structure without referring to TED. The same goes for Behance portfolios. In addition to this platform, creative professionals show their work on Dribbble, Artstation, Coroflot, Tumblr, Instagram, YouTube, Vimeo, etc. and also on their own websites. While having a Behance portfolio was almost a must for creatives in many countries during a certain period, it certainly does not represent all creative professionals worldwide. Various social media and portfolio platforms are often very popular for a few years for some age and professional groups, and other new platforms only popular for some periods, and later some people may move to a new platform.

We obtained the data for our study from our sources using a few mechanisms. The list of art biennales was compiled manually using a number of different listings. We downloaded data on all TEDx events from TED site listing. For e-flux and art-education, we downloaded data from their online archives. For Meetup, we used its API and also obtained all available data. Thus, assuming that these listings and archives are accurate, we obtained complete data from these platforms, as opposed to using sampling.

The only data source we did sample was Behance. Most Behance accounts do not identify creators’s home cities and countries. To make analysis of Behance comparable with all other data sources, we decided to only include information on accounts that do list their geographic location. The data that fits this criterion was downloaded using Behance API.

Six of our sources contain a name of a city for each listed event as part of the data, so we this information directly to our dataset. We also added countries names and geographic location for each cities. The two sources (e-flux and Arts & Education) did not have this metadata, so we extracted city names from their events text descriptions.

The number of events we have for each platform may be smaller than the total numbers that were posted because of various technical reasons. APIs of platforms such Meetup may not provide all historical data; email lists such as e-flux may not archive all its listings. Therefore, there is always a possibility that data we obtained from each platform does not adequately represent all its listings. This is is a general limitation of working with large web datasets not specific to our project – but we want to mention this here explicitly.

Our final dataset contains 4,535,547 cultural events in 21,793 different cities in 200 countries. The earliest events are listed in 2003 and the latest in the first part of 2019 (which is when we were downloading all the data.). The dataset details are shown in table 1.

As a source for information about growth and diffusion of contemporary culture worldwide, every platform has its own limitations. It is crucial to recognize and acknowledge these limitations. For example, the organizers of cultural events may choose not to announce these events publicly on any platform. This giant universe of culture hidden from digital platforms will not be visible in our study. Some platforms require establishing a paid account or they can charge a fee for each announcement (e.g., e-flux) which can limit who will use them. Another key limitation is the language of the platform. Some allow listings in many languages, while others require the use of a single language (English, Russian, etc.) in certain countries such as china, access to some global platforms maybe blocked for many years.

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Description automatically generated]()

**Table 1**. The events dataset assembled for our study. “Main language” refers to the most common language on each platform. The numbers of events and periods listed are for the data we were able to download using platforms APIs (Meetup, Behance, Timepad) or scrape (Art & Education, E-flux, Theory & Practice). For two sources, the data an institution assembled is available on their site (Ted, Russian Ministry of Culture).

1. <https://www.e-flux.com/announcements>, <https://www.artandeducation.net/about>. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)