

ACCESSIBILITY, DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION *in the Cultural Sector*



INITIATIVES
AND LESSONS
LEARNED
FROM
REAL-LIFE
CASES

Julie Bérubé ♦ Marie-Laure Dioh
Antonio C. Cuyler

Accessibility, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the Cultural Sector

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Accessibility, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the Cultural Sector: Initiatives and Lessons Learned from Real-life Cases

EDITED BY

JULIE BÉRUBÉ

Université du Québec en Outaouais, Canada

MARIE-LAURE DIOH

Université du Québec en Outaouais, Canada

AND

ANTONIO C. CUYLER

University of Michigan, USA



United Kingdom – North America – Japan – India – Malaysia – China

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About the Editors

Julie Bérubé is a Full Professor in the Department of Administrative Sciences at the Université du Québec en Outaouais (UQO). She holds a master's degree in Project Management from UQO and a PhD in Management from HEC Montréal. Her research interests focus mainly on arts and culture management. She has conducted research projects on artists' identity tensions and the effects of the pandemic on the cultural sector. She also studies issues of accessibility, diversity, equity, and inclusion, in particular the role of cultural organizations and the attractiveness of audiences. Finally, she pays particular attention in her research to culture in a regional context. Her teaching focuses mainly on management and entrepreneurship.

Marie-Laure Dioh is an Occupational Psychologist and an Associate Professor in the Department of Administrative Sciences at the Université du Québec en Outaouais. She is also a regular member of the Équipe de recherche en partenariat sur la diversité culturelle et l'immigration dans la région de Québec (ÉDIQ) and the Centre de recherche en innovations sociales (CRISES). Her main research interests are the socio-professional integration of immigrants, skilled workers and refugees in Quebec, and the life story method. In connection with this theme, she has presented numerous papers at national and international conferences and publishes her work in refereed journals.

Antonio C. Cuyler, PhD, is a Professor of Music in Entrepreneurship and Leadership in the School of Music, Theater & Dance at the University of Michigan. He is the Author of *Access, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Cultural Organizations: Insights from the Careers of Executive Opera Managers of Color in the US*, the Editor of *Arts Management, Cultural Policy, & the African Diaspora*, the Author or Co-Author of 25 peer-reviewed articles that appear in the *American Journal of Arts Management*, *Cultural Management: Science and Education*, *Cultural Trends*, *ENCACT Journal of Cultural Management & Policy*, *GIA Reader*, *Grant Professionals Association (GPA) Journal*, *International Journal of Arts Management*, *International Journal of the Inclusive Museum*, *International Journal of Social, Political and Community Agendas in the Arts*, *Journal of Arts Management*, *Journal for Cultural Research*, *Journal of Arts Management*, *Law*,

and Society, and the *Polish Journal of Management Studies*, chapters in *Music as Labour: Inequalities and Activism in the Past and Present*, *Business Issues in the Arts*, *Voices for Change in the Classical Music Profession: New Ideas for Tackling Inequalities and Exclusions*, *Oxford Handbook of Arts and Cultural Management*, and the Co-Author of *Racial/Ethnic and Gender Diversity in the Orchestra Field in 2023*. He also consults cultural organizations on access, diversity, equity, and inclusion (ADEI).

About the Contributors

Luis F. Aguado holds a doctorate in Applied Economics and Economic History from Universidad de Sevilla (Spain). He is a Professor in the Department of Economics and director of Programs and Projects, *Riqueza Completa*. Center for Applied Research at the Pontificia Universidad Javeriana (Cali, Colombia), and undertakes research and provides consultancy services in the cultural economics and creative industries. In Colombia, he has measured the economic impact of mega-cultural and sporting events such as the Cali Fair, the *Petronio Alvarez Pacific Music Festival*, and the World Games 2013 Cali. He is the Co-Founder of the Workshop on Popular Culture Economics and Business (WPCEM). He has published in prestigious journals on cultural participation and appreciation of intangible cultural heritage: *Journal of Cultural Economics*, *Empirical Studies of the Arts*, and *Journal of Arts Management, Law and Society*.

Mohammadreza Akbari is an MBA Academic Director (Singapore Campus) and Senior Lecturer (Supply Chain Management) at James Cook University, College of Business, Law, Governance. His research interests include logistics and supply chain management, sustainable development, emerging technologies, digital transformation, smart cities, pollution control, and the hybrid work environment.

Alexei Arbona holds a PhD in Entrepreneurship and Management from the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, UAB (Spain). He is an Associate Professor in the Department of Economics and the Director of *Riqueza Completa*. Center for Applied Research at the Pontificia Universidad Javeriana (Cali, Colombia). He leads the line of research on Enterprise and Sustainable Competitiveness of the Territory. He has published in prestigious journals such as *Socio-economic Planning Sciences* and *Journal of the Operational Research Society*.

Nancy Aumais is a Professor in the Department of Management of “École des sciences de la gestion de l’Université du Québec à Montréal (ESG UQAM).” She is also a member of the Chair of Entrepreneurship, Otherness, and Society. Her research primarily explores identity transformation and gender as social practice. This includes examining the construction of managerial and entrepreneurial identities, understanding how gender practices contribute to the (de)construction of difference, otherness, and inequality in organizations, and advocating for engaged pedagogy.

Mélanie Boucher is a Full Professor in museology and art history at the Université du Québec en Outaouais. She is the Founder of the CIÉCO Research and Inquiry Group, which brings together the main centers of study in francophone museology in Quebec and Canada for research on art collections and museums. She is the Director of the research creation project “Creating with collections” (FRQSC 2022–2026) and of axis 3 (the expanded collection) of the research Partnership “New uses of collections in art museums” (SSHRC 2021–2028). Mélanie Boucher is also a Principal Investigator of the Art and Museum Team, which brings together curators, visual artists, and graphic designers from three Quebec universities, and a Principal Investigator of the group “The origin and currentness of the subject’s becoming object: recreating oneself at the museum and in exhibitions” (SSHRC 2021–2024). She is also a Researcher within the Research Chair in Creative Economy and Well-being (FRQSC 2022–2026). Her most recent book, *Réinventer la collection: l’art et le musée au temps de l’évènementiel* [Reinventing the collection: art and the museum in the time of events], coedited with Marie Fraser and Johanne Lamoureux, was published at the PUQ in 2023.

Tiffany Bourgeois works at the Ohio State University’s Department of Arts Administration, Education and Policy as an Assistant Professor of Arts Management. Her scholarly work uses mega-event legacy theory as a lens to examine the relationship between sports mega-events and arts organizations. It also highlights exercises in soft power and cultural diplomacy. Bourgeois’ recent publications can be found in *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, *American Journal of Arts Management*, and *Visual Inquiry: Learning & Teaching Art*.

Stephen Boyle is the Dean of the College of Business, Law and Governance at James Cook University. He undertook his MBA at University of South Australia and then completed his PhD in Cultural Economics at Macquarie University. He studied with cultural economist, Professor David Throsby, examining the economics of symphony orchestras in Australia. Professor Stephen Boyle won best paper in the *Economic Papers* journal in 2012 for his work on productivity analysis of symphony orchestras. His teaching and research interests are in cultural policy, arts management, and the creative economy. He chaired the 41st International Conference on Social Theory, Politics and the Arts and is an Executive Editor of the *Journal of Arts Management, Law and Society*. He is an Adjunct Researcher at the Culture and Leisure Industry Research Center at the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing, China.

Julien Doris is a Postdoctoral Researcher. He works as a Research Administrator at the Université du Québec en Outaouais. He holds a doctorate degree in Public Administration (University of Ottawa). His thesis analyzes the institutionalization of public policies aimed at increasing the representativeness of the public service and their application to organizational management systems. It also examines the emergence and professionalization of ADEI as a new venue in managing cultural organizations.

Sophie Galaise is the Managing Director of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra (2016–). She has been a Director of not-for-profit boards for more than 20 years.

She is a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and, since 2021, the Chair of Symphony Services International. She has extensive global experience working with orchestras at the executive level and as a professional musician and musicologist. She is a member of the International Advisory Committee of the Master in International Arts Management (Southern Methodist University, SDA Bocconi and HEC Montreal). Prior to the MSO, Galaise was the CEO of the Queensland Symphony. Previous roles include Executive Director of the Orchestre symphonique de Québec, Executive and Artistic Director of the Orford Arts Center, and Music Coordinator of the Quebec Arts Council. Starting her career as a Flautist in Germany, she has worked in Switzerland and France. Sophie has a PhD in Musicology (University of Montreal) and an Executive MBA (McGill University/HEC Montreal). She is the Co-Author of two books and has published several articles. In 2022, she was appointed Honorary Consul of Canada to Melbourne and recognized as an Asia Society Game Changer. Asia Society Australia. <https://www.Asiasociety.org>.

Fátima Gigirey, PhD, graduated in Law and Economics from the University of Sevilla (Spain). At this same university, she has completed a master's degree in Economic Consulting and is currently a PhD in Economics. Among the main research topics, she addresses those related to the economics of culture and competition policy.

Brea M. Heidelberg, PhD, is an Arts Management Educator, Researcher, and Consultant. She is an Associate Professor of Entertainment & Arts Management at Drexel University. Dr Heidelberg earned her PhD in Arts Administration, Education, and Policy from the Ohio State University. Her research focuses on diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout the arts management ecosystem, human resources in cultural organizations, the professionalization of the field of arts management, and the training and development of arts administrators. In addition to earning an MA in Arts Policy & Administration, Dr Heidelberg has also earned an MS in Human Resource Management from Villanova University. She is the Founder and Principal of ISO Arts Consulting. Her consulting practice focuses on human resources issues, particularly those related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Dr Heidelberg enjoys the emotional roller coaster that is raising her two sons, office supplies, supporting craft artists, and occasionally baking.

Jesús Heredia-Carroza, PhD, researches and oversees the cultural economics and leisure and tourism sectors. At present, Jesús is a Professor of Economics and Economic History at Universidad de Sevilla. Also, he was a Postdoctoral Researcher at the University of Sevilla for the competition-based project fund: “Ayudas para la Recualificación del Sistema Universitario Español en su Modalidad Margarita Salas” granted by the Spanish Ministry of Universities by means of Resolution of November 29, 2021, of the Universidad de Sevilla, financed by the European Union – Next Generation EU. He is the Co-Founder of the Workshop on Popular Culture Economics and Management, the Director of the Social Theory, Politics and the Arts Conference, and the Vice President of the Fundación Pública de Estudios Universitarios Francisco Maldonado de Osuna.

He has published in prestigious journals on cultural participation, copyright, and the appreciation of intangible cultural heritage: *Journal of Arts Management, Law and Society*, *Empirical Studies of the Arts*, *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, among others.

Sandy Larose holds the position of Professor of Social Psychology at the State University of Haiti and is a member of the management team of the Observatoire de recherche sur les rapports élites-populations et les migrations (ORREM). His research focuses on social inequalities, hip-hop, identity, gender, and working-class neighborhoods. He is currently on the executive committee of the International Association for the Study of Popular Music (Canada) and a member of the CELAT research center at Université Laval.

Olivia Leclair is the Programming and Communication Coordinator at l'Association la Girandole d'Edmonton since April 2022. Dance is at the heart of what Olivia does, being a member of Zéphyr since 2013, a dance teacher and workshop animator, as well as an artist in residence since 2018, reaching audiences on a national and international scale. She has recently collaborated with the Fédération Culturelle Canadienne-Française and the Société Historique de la Saskatchewan on interdisciplinary and dance pedagogy tools and workshops.

Álvaro Andrés Martínez Coronel is the General Manager at the Teatro Villa Mayor in Colombia. He has a Master of Management in International Arts Management from SMU and HEC Montreal, in alliance with SDA Bocconi. A Business Administrator with an option in Anthropology and a Bachelor in Literature with an option in Classical Studies from the Universidad de los Andes. He has worked in the Ministry of Culture of Colombia in different positions such as managing the Colombia Creativa program, an alliance between the Ministry and nine universities to offer higher education programs to artists without a university degree. Advisor to the Direction of Arts supervising projects related to public investment for the arts, international relationship agreements, investment resources from the general royalty system and arts education programs for the development of different communities. He is a Fellow 2018, 2019, 2021 of International Society for the Performing Arts (ISPA). Currently, he is leading the revitalization project of the Villa Mayor Theater.

Akhona Ndzuta is a Lecturer in Cultural Policy and Management at the Wits School of Arts (University of the Witwatersrand). At the time of writing this chapter, she was a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the Chief Albert Luthuli Research Chair (University of South Africa). Her research interests lie in the intersections of the management of South African music and public policy. She holds a PhD from the Ohio State University and has taught a broad range of courses in cultural studies and arts management across five universities. As a music practitioner, she has performed as a vocalist in popular music ensembles in Cape Town and Johannesburg. She was a contributing Editor to volume 1 of the book "Culture and Liberation Struggle in South Africa: from colonialism to post-apartheid." In 2022, she managed "MusoCulture: A Music and Public Policy

Series,” a project funded by a grant from the National Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences (NIHSS).

Srilata Ravi is an Emeritus Professor of Francophone Literature at the University of Alberta (Campus Saint-Jean). Prior to joining the University of Alberta in 2010, she worked at the National University of Singapore (1994–2003) and then at the University of Western Australia (2004–2010). She has published extensively on global Francophone literature as well as on Canadian francophonies from comparative, postcolonial, and transnational perspectives.

Carmen Reaiche holds an MBA from the University of Adelaide and a PhD from the University of South Australia in the area of Project Management/Soft Systems Self-Organization. Beyond her research successes (including more than 70 papers to date and others in preparation), A/Prof Reaiche has obtained several research grants and a wide range of cross-cultural teaching and supervisory experience (teaching and supervising research students in Australia, Venezuela, Singapore, Hong Kong, China, Singapore, and Malaysia). Her present research interests include project management, digital transformation, cross-cultural leadership, and the social network aspects of business management models. Prior to joining the College of Business, Law and Governance at James Cook University in the role of MBA Academic Director, she was the Associate Head (Teaching and Learning) in the Entrepreneurship, Commercialisation and Innovation Center at the University of Adelaide.

Javier Reyes-Martínez holds a PhD in Social Work from Boston College and a PhD in International Social Welfare from Universidad Iberoamericana. He is a Research Professor in the Public Administration Division of the Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas (CIDE) in Mexico, specializing in socio-economic and cultural inequalities, well-being, and vulnerable groups. Additionally, he is a member of the Mexican National System of Researchers at level I.

Coline Sénéac is completing an interdisciplinary doctorate in semiotics and communication at the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQÀM). Her interdisciplinary research focuses on knowledge and gender inequalities in organizations. Her work has been published in international journals such as *Language and Dialog* and *Labyrinth*, as well as in research reports by the Institut national de la recherche scientifique (INRS) and the Volunteering on the move (VOTM) research group. She recently coedited a pedagogical work on communication published by Presses de l'Université du Québec.

Tobie S. Stein, PhD, is a Visiting Distinguished Professor at National Sun Yat-sen University in Kaohsiung, Taiwan. She is a three-time Fulbright Specialist (South Korea, Israel, and Taiwan) and is a member of the Fulbright Specialist Roster. She is the Author of five books, including *Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the Performing Arts Workforce* (Routledge) and *Leadership in the Performing Arts* (Allworth). Two of her books, *Performing Arts Management: A Handbook of Professional Practices*, second edition, and *Leadership in the Performing Arts* have been published in Mandarin. She is also a Professor Emerita at Brooklyn College,

where for over 20 years she was the Director of the MFA Program in Performing Arts Management. She is a member of the Diversity Scholars Network at the National Center for Institutional Diversity, University of Michigan.

Foreword

Julie Bérubé

No need to argue the importance that issues of accessibility, diversity, equity, and inclusion (A DEI) play in our societies. More than ever, we need social justice in all spheres. We need a balm to heal wounds inflicted by transgressions like hate crimes, oppression, exclusion, and more. This perspective shaped the idea for our book.

In studying the cultural sector for almost a decade, I have taken an interest in the identity tension experienced by artists who are torn between giving their creativity free rein and needing to earn a living. Cultural activity in rural areas is also of significant interest to me because the concentration of resources in major urban centers leaves artists in rural areas with limited resources and, unfortunately, leads to a less robust cultural offering. Nonetheless, culture should remain accessible to all citizens regardless of factors such as their origins, social status, gender, and location. Art and culture bring well-being and have positive economic and social impacts (Boix et al., 2022; Tubadji et al., 2015). This book affirms the importance of promoting culture and its accessibility for all; it is essential, even vital, that culture becomes a common good.

I have always dreamed of a just society where differences are accepted and appreciated for their uniqueness. However, as I grew up, I quickly realized that differences could frighten, making it easy for people to discriminate against others who did not belong to dominant groups. This led me to take an interest in understanding issues of A DEI. Similar to many people, I have both privileged and unprivileged social identities. I didn't want to assume that I understood other peoples' experiences with discrimination and marginalization, but I could dream of an inclusive and just society. So, with humility, I began to study A DEI issues.

My first research project on A DEI focused on the role that cultural organizations played in relation to A DEI issues in the cultural sector. This project led me to meet artists and cultural workers who are interested in A DEI issues and who are striving for a fair and inclusive sector. I quickly became interested in the initiatives they were implementing to promote inclusion. Cultural workers and artists around the world are advocating for A DEI and seeking greater social justice. We must recognize their work and efforts and share these initiatives to inspire others to join in making cultural sectors more fair and more inclusive. This desire to acknowledge and highlight the work of others gives the book purpose.

By sharing these initiatives that promote ADEI in the cultural sector, we aim to reach two target audiences: practitioners and academics in the cultural sector. Practitioners may find interest in concrete initiatives that can be used to replicate or to inspire other actions. Several best practices emerge from the cases presented, and initiatives from one artistic discipline can also inspire other cultural disciplines. Our goal is to break down barriers and foster exchanges across all disciplines for all cultural disciplines. Similarly, initiatives in one country can inspire cultural workers in others to adopt certain practices or initiatives.

For academics, real cases fuel reflection on the challenges related to ADEI in the cultural sector. Several cases present ideas that academics can further explore, especially in collaborative research projects. In these cases, we can identify not only best practices but also the ADEI challenges that the cultural sector faces. Thus, academics could undertake research projects to find ways to overcome these challenges. The cases can also serve as teaching material, providing concrete examples that illustrate the theories taught in arts and cultural management classrooms. University programs that focus on arts and culture management are increasing in number. These programs must teach the concepts of ADEI, and this book is a perfect tool to promote the practical application of theories. Real cases from various disciplines and regions help students to understand the breadth of possibilities for promoting and integrating ADEI in the cultural sector.

As the idea for the book took shape, it became clear that I couldn't work alone on a project of such significance and scope. I instinctively turned to my close network and invited my colleague Marie-Laure Diah to join me. Marie-Laure has a strong research background on themes of equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI), Quebec immigration, and socio-professional integration. Her knowledge of these subjects made a valuable contribution to steering this book. Her openness, empathy, ability to engage in dialog, and her desire to continually learn about others make her a perfect editor.

Next, I approached someone I didn't know personally but who is a leader in the field of ADEI in the cultural sector, Antonio C. Cuyler. I have immense respect for all of Antonio's work on ADEI, particularly his relevant and timely contributions to the opera field. His knowledge of the sector, experience, and network were major assets for our work. The contributions of Marie-Laure and Antonio were essential for success; without their efforts and input, the book could not have been realized. I am immensely grateful to them for accepting my invitation and for their dedication for more than a year to deliver a high-quality manuscript.

Of course, the book could not have come to fruition without the participation of all the authors and practitioners who contributed to writing the separate chapters. We reached out to you, and you all responded with enthusiasm for the project. Your experiences make this book even more relevant. On behalf of the editing team, I warmly thank you for your participation and the quality of your chapters.

To maintain an open-minded approach, we intentionally placed few constraints on the contributing authors. Indeed, we only asked them to present an

initiative that promotes ADEI in the cultural sector. Recognizing that the concepts of accessibility, diversity, equity and inclusion are social constructs and inherently polysemic, we acknowledge the existence of multiple and coexisting definitions to understand these concepts. We chose to let the authors refer to their own definitions rather than impose our vision of ADEI on them.

In the same vein, we did not determine the specific type of initiative that authors could present. As readers will observe, some chapters focus primarily on accessibility, others on social justice, and others on inclusion or equity. Thus, we embrace the plurality of perspectives related to ADEI and the various ways of conceptualizing them in the cultural sector.

It is, however, relevant and important for us to share with the reader at the outset how we frame these concepts. We opt for broad and inclusive definitions. For accessibility, we concur with Cuyler (2023) who conceives it as: “Access is the removal of all barriers to participation” (p. 86).

There is a range of definitions for diversity; some identify specific components such as race, gender, ethnicity, age, national origins, religion, and disability (van Ewijk, 2011). We prefer a broader definition suggesting that diversity includes all the ways in which individuals differ from one another and encompasses the characteristics that make an individual or group of individuals different from one another (Cuyler, 2013; van Ewijk, 2011).

For equity, we adopt the definition used by a Canadian funding agency, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (2017):

Equity means fairness; people of all identities being treated fairly. It means ensuring that the processes for allocating resources and decision-making are fair to all and do not discriminate on the basis of identity. There is a need to put measures in place to eliminate discrimination and inequalities which have been well described and reported and ensure, to the best degree possible, equal opportunities. (p. 3)

Finally, for inclusion, we propose one of the definitions suggested by Dobusch (2014): “a process and condition where people gain access to areas from which they were formerly un/intentionally excluded” (p. 220). As mentioned, we did not impose these definitions, but in the foreword, we wanted to offer an initial way of conceptualizing accessibility, diversity, equity, and inclusion. While readers can understand these as individual concepts, in most cases, they are interconnected, where, for example, accessibility promotes inclusion, and so on. Thus, we advocate for a unified and comprehensive conception of ADEI.

Given the richness of chapters we received, we have chosen to organize them according to artistic discipline: performing arts, music, visual arts, and events. Initially, we aimed to highlight similarities or differences in ADEI initiatives across various artistic disciplines, but it is clear that such classification is not feasible at this stage. Indeed, faced with the diversity of cases presented, we have not been able to identify specific practices unique to each artistic discipline. The initiatives are

therefore presented as independent of each other. Chapter 1 introduces the structure of the book and provides a brief overview of some literature on ADEI in the cultural sector.

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Chapter 1

ADEI in the Cultural Sector: Theories, Concepts, and Real Case Studies

Julie Bérubé and Marie-Laure Dioh

Université du Québec en Outaouais, Canada

Abstract

In this first chapter of the book, we present our perspective of the cultural sector along with the terminological choices we have made. Subsequently, we provide a brief literature review on issues of accessibility, diversity, equity, and inclusion (ADEI) in the cultural sector. Finally, we outline the structure of the book, which is divided into five sections. The first four sections group chapters that discuss ADEI initiatives in specific sectors. The first section focuses on the performing arts sector and includes three chapters presenting cases from a theater, the opera sector, and a dance organization. The second section delves into the music sector, with four chapters covering cases from an orchestra, the electronic music sector, musicians from South Africa, and hip hop in Haiti. The third section comprises three chapters presenting cases from the visual arts sector, including Canadian and Chilean museums and a cultural organization. The fourth section explores the events sector, presenting three chapters, two of which discuss festivals and one focuses on the Super Bowl. The final section presents two chapters not tied to a specific discipline. The first chapter shares an experience of teaching ADEI in art in Taiwan, while the second chapter deals with policies related to ADEI from a federal cultural administration in Canada.

Keywords: ADEI; cultural sector; literature review; structure of the book; concepts

Introduction

In the foreword for this book, we proposed definitions for the central concepts of accessibility, diversity, equity, and inclusion (ADEI). These concepts traverse all

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areas of society and all sectors. However, as these are social constructs (van Ewijk, 2011), it is important to specify the context in which the authors study them. The book is based entirely on real cases from the cultural sector. In this first chapter, we present a brief review of the literature on the concept of cultural sector and introduce a few ADEI studies for this sector. Next, we present the different sections of the book and the theme of each chapter.

One can study this sector according to a variety of approaches, and ADEI is generally considered within the broad spectrum of arts management or arts administration. In the early 1990s, some questioned the very legitimacy of the field by showing the lack of seriousness that some universities reserved for it (Dorn, 1992), but since then, several authors have argued in favor of its legitimacy (Jung, 2017; Kirchner & Rentschler, 2015; Paquette & Redaelli, 2015). Jung (2017) identified the interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary theories of the field: “I postulate that this is due to the nature of arts administration. Its topics and issues are too broad and interconnected with other areas to be addressed or solved in one artificially confined discipline” (p. 11). In articles published in the *Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Society* between 1990 and 2014, she classified theories associated with nine disciplinary categories: art, law, sociology, psychology, policy, political science, management and organization, marketing, and economics. In this book, we embrace the diversity of theoretical approaches. We did not attempt to divide the chapters according to theoretical approaches. Given that the cases presented in this book originate directly in the field, we opted for an empirical division, based on distinctions between the artistic or cultural disciplines themselves. First, it is important to define the broader concept of the cultural sector.

Cultural Sector

UNESCO (2012) defined creative and cultural industries as: “sectors of activity whose main purpose is the creation, development, production, reproduction, promotion, dissemination or marketing of goods, services and activities that have cultural, artistic and/or heritage content” (free translation, p. 17). We prefer the term sector to industry in order to avoid any confusion regarding the purpose of this sector. Indeed, one can categorize cultural activities as either private or public ownership, and many of the organizations that make up the cultural sector are not-for-profit (Thibodeau & Rüling, 2015). Some authors use the terms creative and cultural sectors interchangeably indiscriminately, while others see the cultural sector as a subcategory of the creative sector (Lazzeretti et al., 2008). The United Kingdom’s Department for Culture, Media and Sport (2001) first proposed a sectoral definition of creative industries: “industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property” (p. 5). For Lazzeretti et al. (2008), the creative sector remains an extension of the cultural sector which is traditionally associated with artistic disciplines such as music, the performing arts, and the visual arts. After systematically reviewing the

literature on cultural and creative ecosystems, [de Bernard et al. \(2022\)](#) reported that in general, authors tend to refer to the cultural sector when discussing the “not-for-profit and/or ‘arts’ portion of the cultural and creative sectors” (p. 339), whereas the creative sectors are considered to be aimed at market-oriented activity. However, they add that many authors do not necessarily distinguish between the creative and cultural sectors. In the context of this book, we focus on the cultural sector by embracing its diversity, which includes a large number of subsectors or disciplines such as visual arts, performing arts, music, etc. In turn, one can divide these disciplines into several other subdisciplines or genres.

ADEI in the Cultural Sector

Before presenting the rationale for the structure of the book, we offer a brief overview of some research projects on ADEI in the cultural sector. In recent decades, several industries and sectors have expressed ideals and commitments about ADEI and implementing these concepts at a systemic level. These concerns have developed in private sector organizations ([Thompson, 2022](#)), as well as public sector higher education ([Bombaro, 2020](#)), training ([Morukian, 2022](#)), and the surgical and medical sector ([Mulholland, 2020](#)). However, there are challenges that impede ADEI-related progress in both the private and public sectors. First and foremost, the changing vocabulary surrounding these concepts does not provide for a stable base for communication and understanding ([Bombaro, 2020](#); [Morukian, 2022](#)). We do not pretend to address all the concerns related to ADEI issues in all these sectors of activity, but we join the debate by assembling authors whose questions delve into ADEI issues in the cultural sector around the world and who present relevant initiatives. We hope to contribute to reflection on the subject.

In the cultural sector, several authors have studied ADEI, particularly in Europe and North America. A growing number of studies have explored the lack of ethnic diversity in many subsectors ranging from film to television ([Cobb, 2020](#); [Henry & Ryder, 2021](#)), publishing ([Saha & van Lente, 2020](#); [Shaw, 2020](#)), music ([Cuyler, 2020](#); [Hesmondhalgh & Saha, 2013](#)), museums ([Heidelberg, 2019](#)), or media ([O’Brien & Arnold, 2022](#)). As an example, the literature highlights a lack of racial diversity in the performing arts in the United States. [Stein \(2020\)](#) goes so far as to speak of “white privilege” in the arts sector by exposing barriers and biases that have created inequalities for minority groups. Other authors ([Cuyler, 2007, 2013, 2020](#)) have pointed out the nonrepresentation of racially diverse communities in the management of arts and entertainment organizations in the United States, including opera, and how such factors as ethnicity, different abilities, race, gender, sexual orientation remain barriers in pursuit of career. As a result, people of color remain underrepresented in leadership positions.

In museums, researchers have reached similar conclusions ([Davies & Shaw, 2013](#); [Heidelberg, 2019](#); [Kinsley, 2016](#)). Indeed, [Heidelberg \(2019\)](#) stressed that individuals from diverse backgrounds are underrepresented. The author asserts that despite several initiatives to diversify the workforce to accommodate

individuals limited by disability, economic means, or other diversity, museums must develop decision-making processes that dismantle discriminatory practices. The author's findings echo what other authors (Davies & Shaw, 2013; Kinsley, 2016) have said about museums and the lack of diversity or inclusion, especially in management positions.

Other researchers, meanwhile, have focused on the media sector (Banks, 2017; O'Brien & Arnold, 2022). For example, in Europe, some professionals in the sector experience inequality, exclusion, and discrimination on the basis of their social identity; ADEI initiatives to facilitate their integration are lacking. And these workers do not see themselves as key players in bringing about the social change needed. On a different note, authors in the creative and cultural industries literature have looked at youth inclusion, particularly in community arts in Canada (Campbell, 2021), and also point to a lack of diversity and equity.

Researchers in the cultural sector have also studied the impact of underfunding in the sector. Indeed, according to some authors (Helicon Collaborative, 2017; Sidford, 2011), the majority of arts funding supports large organizations with budgets over \$5 million, that primarily present Western European art forms and serve white audiences. In other cases, larger scale permanent institutions and certain types of management structures and business models receive funding at the expense of the independent precariat (Greer, 2021, pp. 235–236). Using the publishing industry as an example, Shaw (2020) explained how the lack of financial opportunities contributes to underrepresentation of working-class writers in the United Kingdom. The author argued that this lack impacts their networking abilities and opportunities to showcase their skills. Consequently, the literary industry is the least diverse of all creative and cultural industries in the United Kingdom. In this case, increasing the investment in mentoring programs, unconscious bias training, and policy development to counter the “class ceiling” (p. 224) would address this situation.

Several other studies have examined the integration of ADEI into municipalities' overall goals and master plans for their arts and culture programs (Ashley et al., 2022; Loh & Kim, 2021). They found that, occasionally, these values are only considered guiding principles and that the level of commitment varies across municipalities. Quite often, municipalities continue to ignore marginalized and low-resource groups in providing services and encouraging participation (Ashley et al., 2022). Similarly, when looking at organizational structures in the cultural sector, such as museums (Haupt et al., 2022; Scott & Luby, 2007), authors found that internal culture, management, and leadership practices or change strategies can inhibit the evolution of ADEI. Some research in the arts and creative industries has highlighted various initiatives to address imbalanced representation of minority groups in production, distribution, and consumption of public cultural goods (Gregory, 2019; Saha, 2017 cited in Hadley et al., 2022).

Scholars have also studied the effect of the pandemic on artists' livelihoods (Connor, 2021; Jones, 2024; Walmsley et al., 2022). The literature shows the vulnerability and discrimination experienced by artists in the field, underlining that during the pandemic, this structural precarity was exacerbated, due to lack of funding and relief assistance (Jones, 2024). Indeed, in many countries around the

world, support from governments and funding agencies in the arts and culture sector has been lacking, which has increased individual and organizational vulnerability (Bailey, 2020). Other research has argued that the pandemic has had an impact on inclusion and diversity of the workforce in the cultural sector. In this regard, Eikhof (2020) found that women, older people, people with disabilities, and workers with family responsibilities, who were already underrepresented in cultural careers, experienced further job losses and precariousness. We see that ADEI research in the cultural sector is flourishing, whether done in Europe or North America, but to solve these issues, we have much more work to do. This book and its illustrative cases from different artistic disciplines and countries contribute to the research efforts for effective solutions.

Structure of the Book

We organized the material according to four categories of artistic discipline: performing arts, music, visual arts, and events. Each discipline forms a section of the book, while the concluding synthesis section presents two chapters that are not specific to any artistic discipline. It's difficult to draw a line that clearly separates certain disciplines. Given the breadth of the music discipline, we chose to treat it in a separate section, but for some, the discipline of music is an inherent part of the performing arts. For example, opera straddles the line between the performing arts and music. We made editorial choices when allocating the chapters to sections, but we are aware that some could have separated the sections differently.

The first section of three chapters focuses on the performing arts, such as theater, dance, circus, opera, etc. Doris, Bérubé, and Martinez's chapter presents the case of Teatro Villa Mayor in Bogota. In recent years, this theater has undertaken an initiative to promote its accessibility, following a three-step approach (mindset, possibility and capacity, and productive learning). The implementation of their accessibility management plan is outlined. The second chapter by Cuyler concerns Black opera leaders in the United States. In addition to defining the concept of Black opera, this chapter describes the unique and powerful role that Black opera leaders play in shaping audiences' appreciation, engagement with, and understanding of Black opera. The third chapter by Ravi and Leclair presents the history of a dance troupe and school in a francophone minority context. In the other nine English-speaking provinces and three territories, there are minority francophone communities. The case of L'association la Girandole, in Edmonton, Alberta (Canada), demonstrates the challenges faced by this cultural organization dedicated to teaching and promoting French-Canadian dance there.

The second section focuses on the music sector and consists of four chapters. The first chapter is by Sophie Galaise, who has been the Managing Director of the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra (MSO) in Australia since 2016. Galaise explains the MSO's desire to transform itself to embrace greater diversity and strive for greater equity. She particularly emphasizes the gender equity targeted by the

MSO, as orchestras are traditionally recognized as predominantly male environments. She explains how the pandemic provided an opportunity to launch the transformation of the MSO. In the second chapter of this section, Aumais and Senac also explore the role of women in the Canadian music industry in Montreal. They focus, among other things, on the place of women and their identity in electronic music and the strategies women employ to build a career in a male-dominated environment. The third chapter, by Ndzuta, focuses on South African musicians who struggle to find employment opportunities after they graduate from university. Public and institutional policies during and after apartheid encourage musicians to exile themselves to other countries where they can fulfill their career and economic ambitions. In the last chapter of this section, Larose examines the case of hip-hop in Haiti, where practices of solidarity and mutual aid in Port-au-Prince help rappers to cope with social and financial challenges.

The third section is comprised of three chapters on ADEI in the visual arts discipline. In the first chapter, Boucher presents initiatives by three Canadian museums to develop and use their collections. Boucher relies on the three strategies established by Maura Reilly – areas of study, revisionism, and polylogue – to promote inclusion in exhibitions. In the second chapter, Heidelberg explains the concept of fakequity, where organizations talk about equity but do not take the necessary steps to bring about real changes. She relates the case of a mid-western museum, which illustrates the elements that contribute to false starts in equity work within predominantly white arts institutions. The third chapter by Heredia-Carroza, Reyes-Martinez, and Gigurey focuses on attendance in Chilean museums by disabled people, using data from the National Survey of Cultural Participation in Chile. They are researching the impact of certain disabilities on museum attendance. To make Chilean museums more accessible and inclusive, their findings have implications for museum infrastructure, funding, and management policies.

The fourth section offers three chapters on the events industry. In the first chapter, Bourgeois analyzes a partnership between a mega-event, Super Bowl LIII, and a local arts organization, WonderRoot. WonderRoot created a mural to promote ADEI that accented elements of Atlanta's civil rights and social justice journey. In the second chapter, Aguado, Arbona, and Heredia-Carroza discuss how the Petronio Álvarez Pacific Music Festival in Colombia promotes ADEI in the city of Cali. This festival serves as a source of income for traditionally marginalized Afro-Colombian communities and fosters intercultural dialog between the local community and tourists. The last chapter by Boyle, Reaiche, and Akbari details the digital transformation of the North Australia Festival of Arts. This transformation requires adjustments in roles, personal skills, management techniques, technologies, and digital inclusion initiatives.

The final section comprises two chapters that address different aspects of ADEI without a specific discipline focus, as well as our conclusion for the book. In Stein's chapter, she shares her experience as a visiting professor in Taiwan, teaching 16–18 week courses on creativity, marketing, theater management, the cultural and artistic environment, and research methods to undergraduate and graduate college students. Her inclusive pedagogical methods incorporated ADEI

concepts, and she reports on two relevant cases from her experience teaching the arts in Taiwan. In the final chapter, Doris discusses how two federal government departments, Heritage Canada and Library and Archives Canada, implemented an ADEI management strategy. His chapter illustrates how the mandate of a public cultural administration evolved to promote ADEI. In the conclusion, Dioh proposes a synthesis of the different concepts presented in the book.

Conclusion

We hope that you will learn from each of authors' insights about the cases presented in this book, and that the initiatives presented will inspire and shape future ADEI goals of the cultural sector worldwide. The book is also an invitation to international collaboration and the sharing of best practices. Several ADEI initiatives for the cultural sector are already underway, and we wanted to present a few of them to inspire future generations.

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