## Issue 651: CIDOC CRM ontology extension “A multicausal ontology model”-58SIG meeting

The last updated version of the documentation can be found [**here**](/sites/default/files/About_Influence_For%20Distribution%20v2.pdf).

A long discussion followed DO’s presentation, its main points are summarized below:

* **The CRM is about cultural phenomena**. Social behavior, attitudes, artistic creation fall within its scope given that they have a bearing in bringing about cultural phenomena. As such, they fall within scope of the CRM.
* There is **substantial overlap among CRMsoc, CRMaaa, and CRMInfluence**. Part of it has to do with what they represent (social phenomena), and also with connecting these social phenomena to collective beliefs about them (and general assumptions about “the state of things”). This is manifest in collective intentionality, social facts, and mental attitudes, that each forms a core concept in said respective model. There is also a strong link with the concept of belief (as defined in CRMinf), which should also be further explored.
	+ Mental attitudes are the subject of indirect observation on the basis of attested influences, and can form the basis of an extension of the CRM.
	+ Mental attitudes are relevant in order to express how we perceive the world around us and reason about it, how we shape it through our actions.
* **Weak causality** allows to pinpoint known factors of influence in the course of action followed by a person or group of persons. No claim is made about providing an exhaustive list of the factors that influenced a particular behavior. The model focuses on agency, and on tracing documented factors that have contributed to something. To the extent that a set of individual experiences (exchanges between individuals, interactions with objects, registered societal impact) is documented, it allows connections to be drawn along the lines of:
	+ A met with B, and discussed C (for which there is empirical evidence).
	+ A created D shortly after.

The model allows to infer that A was influenced by B and C in creating D, without making the claim that nothing else influenced A in creating D.

* **The relation of influence to individual or collective mental attitudes was heavily contested**:
	+ Given that the point of departure is influence in artistic creation, construed as a similarity or contrast between patterns/styles that is manifested in works of art of individuals | groups of individuals, one can always assume a less psychological approach and only talk about the discernible patterns. In such a structuralist-oriented approach, one only needs to talk about the objectively discernible, formal properties and establish influence based on their presence or absence in contrastively | comparatively examined works of art.
		- The notion of Intertext (taken from structuralist literary studies) is extremely relevant because it detects patterns in the literary text that can be traced to patterns in literary texts predating it. It makes no assumptions about the mental state of the author when it comes to establish an influence, which is critical for teasing apart an empirically attested influence from impressionistic or subjective interpretations.
			* It’s a totally empirical basis for interpreting influence, which relies on the presence of discernible patterns/features in one’s artwork that had been absent from it, prior to their introduction to the works of (a) specific artists that had already deployed them in their art at the time.
			* It creates a dialogical structure among works
		- No assumptions about the mental attitude/state of the influenced artist is made in such a scenario, and this is a good thing because:
			* the output of a mental attitude (a documented course of action, the work of art, etc.) can be observed, whereas the mental attitude itself not so much.
			* It does not resort to psychological and biographical interpretations concerning the “author’s intent” when they created a certain work of art.
	+ Mental states/attitudes are maybe important for integration purposes. The case has yet to be made convincingly.
* **How to proceed with the three competing models**:
	+ The process that the SIG agreed on regarding launching a new extension has been followed by each of the three model maintainers, which has resulted in three available extensions to CIDOC CRM that model social phenomena. The number of competing extensions indicates that there is an active interest form the community, as well as a need for a CRM compatible social ontology.
	+ They all claim to maintain compatibility with the CIDOC CRM, their scope is similar (so there’s substantial overlap, despite the fact that they seem to be going their independent ways in some respects).
	+ The question is: should the SIG sanction one of these three models or all of them? What happens if another extension for social phenomena is launched following the same process?
		- Things become more perplexed if one is to consider the models for (i) Activity Plans, and (ii) Provision and Obligation that also discuss social phenomena.
		- Should the SIG try and harmonize all these models (and also CRMinf)?
		- Methodologically, it makes more sense to create a lightweight construct that would connect to the CRM via very few articulation points. The CRMsoc, CRMaaa, and CRMinfluence maintainers should collaborate on proposing such a high-level model that works for all extensions.
			* GH, OE, CEO, FB were in favor of such an approach.
		- The CRM was never about creating a huge system of extensions in a hierarchical relation to it. Rather, it was about determining a core set of ontological categories.
* **Ontological commitment of the CRM**:
	+ **T**he different approaches concerning what is the best way to represent social phenomena (grounded in philosophical theories with one eye on data integration or making no theoretical claims whatsoever) ultimately digressed to an attempt at defining the ontological commitment of the CRM.
		- DO has drafted a text that he shared with the CIDOC CRM SIG Chairs and wants to get some broader feedback on.
			* The document (still in a draft form) summarizes all the papers that have been issued by the SIG discussing the scope of the CRM and what it’s fit to do.
			* Unless the SIG arrives at some sort of agreement regarding the ontological commitment for the CRM, conflicts about what should be modelled using the CRM are bound to crop up every now and then.

**Decisions**:

* **HW**: CEO, GH, FB, GB, DO, TV (and anyone else interested) to collaborate on proposing a high-level CRM-compatible extension for social phenomena, with points of articulation to the three competing extensions.
	+ Consider CRMact and CRM for Provision and Obligation as well.
	+ Consider the overlap with CRMinf
	+ Report on the progress made at the next SIG meeting in Plovdiv.
* DO to share the Ontological Commitment document with the SIG to get feedback for it.