EXPLORING FUTURE CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES FOR CULTURE & CREATIVE ECONOMIES

Learnings from the Culture and Creative Economy Foresight workshop in Turin, April 23 – 25, 2025

BRITISH COUNCIL

ITC ILO
International Training Centre

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INTRODUCTION

From April 23 to 25, 2025, a group of 30 cultural and creative professionals, strategists, researchers, and policy thinkers from over 15 countries gathered at the ITC-ILO's Innovation Lab in Turin. Over the course of three days, they engaged in a collective foresight exercise, exploring how the cultural and creative economy might evolve — and how we might best shape it — in the face of future societal and technological shifts.

This report does not aim to offer final answers or blueprints for next steps. Rather, it wishes to stimulate readers to ask themselves the right questions today, as to enable them to anticipate upon tomorrow. Its goal is not only to imagine how things might be done differently in the future, but also how we might be doing different things — and to reconsider the evolving position and potential role of cultural and creative actors in shaping resilient, just, and thriving futures. If - as they say - every vision of the future is also a reflection of the present, one could assert that also this gathering illuminated some of the most pressing issues, aspirations, and opportunities currently shaping the realm of culture and the creative economy.

After a series of inspiring panel discussions with a select group of experts from UN agencies, academia, and the cultural domain itself, participants immersed themselves in four speculative futures. Each of these narratives focused on a key strand of the cultural and creative economy: content creation and advertising, design and architecture, cultural heritage, and performing arts. Important to note: they were intentionally designed to be aspirational — not to avoid complexity, but to explore the full potential of culture and creativity as engines of societal well-being. Within these imagined futures, cultural work was not on the receiving end of, but at the centre of innovation, care, governance, and economic transformation.

For example, in one future content was no longer merely consumed — it was lived. Through adaptive, immersive, and multisensory media, storytelling became the connective tissue of society, blurring the lines between creator and audience. Content creation played a vital role in helping communities navigate complexity, restore trust, and regenerate shared meaning. Open protocols and decentralized tools ensured equitable reward and creative autonomy, while analog traditions flourished alongside the digital, keeping meaning rooted and culturally diverse.

Designers, meanwhile, in their future, operated not as service providers but as systemic shapers. Design had evolved into a societal operating system — embedded not just in objects or interfaces, but in governance, ecosystems, rituals, and relationships. It was collaborative by nature and deeply intertwined with sustainability, local knowledge, and planetary boundaries. In this world of constraint and complexity, design was the language of renewal — of shared authorship, care, and regeneration.

In the future, driven by cultural heritage, heritage was no longer treated as a static memory, but as a dynamic resource that actively informed the present and guided the future. It permeated all domains of life: education, planning, civic dialogue. It was alive, mobile, and inclusive, supported by technologies that ensured fair attribution, access, and participation. Elders and memory-keepers reclaimed authority, and heritage served as a vital tool for resilience, conflict resolution, and sustainability — anchoring identity while enabling exchange and innovation.

In yet another future, the performing arts — such as theatre, music, dance, etc. — were recognized as civic infrastructure. These forms were not sidelined as entertainment but understood as powerful modalities for collective sense-making. Artists worked at the heart of public life, helping communities simulate decisions, embody complexity, and rehearse transformation. Participation was widespread. Everyone played a role, and the measure of success was not applause, but the depth of connection, insight, and societal renewal.

These fictional futures sparked grounded reflections, too — sector-specific insights rooted in the lived realities of participants. In content creation, the vision was decisively creator-centric, with strong interest in unionisation or organised networks to amplify representation and bargaining power. Participants underscored that content itself is the true currency of the sector, deserving stronger protections and fairer rewards. In design, the consensus was that it is not merely a standalone sector but an essential, connective discipline embedded in every creative field, making its influence both pervasive and indispensable. For the performing arts, the conversation centred on the need for greater empathy from business leaders, administrators, and policy makers, to shape policies that are genuinely responsive to the lived realities of performing artists and arts managers.

As you turn the pages that follow, you'll encounter the questions and provocations this journey surfaced — questions about decent work, inclusion, trade, technology, and lifelong learning. You'll see how today's assumptions might be challenged, how tomorrow's possibilities might be shaped, and how the creative economy might itself be redesigned to serve broader social aims.

This report is not a roadmap or a blueprint. It is an invitation — to anticipate, to inquire, and to imagine differently. It is a tool to help cultural and creative actors, policymakers, and partners prepare for the emerging conditions of tomorrow and strengthen their capacity to anticipate with insight, care, and creativity. Foresight, in this sense, is not only about imagining different futures — it is about developing the capacity to navigate uncertainty, sustain long-term aspirations, and build more adaptive strategies together.

CREATIVE WORK RESHAPED

Each future scenario introduced not only new opportunities, but also new demands and conditions for those working in the cultural and creative sectors. These imagined worlds called for shifts in roles, in ways of working, and in how creative professionals define their contribution to society. As the boundaries between sectors, disciplines, and audiences blur, the nature of creative labour evolves — not only in terms of content and form, but also in the broader conditions that shape how, where, and why that work happens.

In each future, the systems that determine how creative value is produced, exchanged, and sustained undergo transformations. The economic logic underpinning cultural production shifts, as do the regulatory and legal frameworks that govern it. Public policies are called to respond in new ways — to anticipate emerging challenges, support new modes of collaboration, and steer value chains in directions that are inclusive, environmentally and socially sustainable[1], just, adaptive, and future-fit.

The very environments in which creative work takes place are also reshaped. From the design of physical and digital workspaces, to the tools and infrastructures creatives rely on, to the support systems that surround them — everything is in motion. And within that motion lies a key question: how do we ensure that creative work, in all its forms, can continue to thrive, while remaining decent, fair, and generative for both individuals and society?

We begin with this focus on work because it offers a powerful lens through which to step into these possible futures. Imagining the everyday realities of cultural and creative professionals allows us to empathize with their needs, understand the potential they might unlock, and explore how their roles and circumstances could shift shape in response to a changing contexts. It anchors our foresight in lived experience — and provides a tangible entry point for exploring the larger, systemic shifts that follow. From this grounded perspective, we can later surface the broader questions about policy, infrastructure, governance, and value that these futures provoke.

Changing work

Regardless of the future explored, work in the cultural and creative sectors is expected to undergo significant shifts — not only in tasks and roles, but in how labor is understood, structured, and valued. Creative work may increasingly become purpose-led, with a stronger orientation toward societal relevance and meaning-making.

This redefinition of roles will also require a shift in how institutions value creative labor — not as a supplementary voice, but as a core input in strategic decision-making. Recognising the economic and

[1] See also “Promoting CE for Sustainable Development” (UN Resolution 78, 2023) https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/a_res_78_133_en.pdf

social value of creative professionals means placing them at the centre of policy and system design, not just project delivery.

Participants anticipated that creative fluency — particularly in storytelling, improvisation, and performative expression — could emerge as a core requirement across a wide range of professions. Some envision a future where a background in the performing arts is seen as a foundational asset, especially in fields like communication, education, health, or public policy. With technologies acquiring ever more intelligence and agency, and access becoming increasingly democratized, certain skills are expected to either be further replaced or commoditized by AI. How we embed them in hybrid creative workflows however will be an area of differentiation. What today are called "soft skills" may evolve into a new class of "power skills", deeply intertwined with creativity, empathy, and adaptability.

The centrality of originality is expected to persist, but be supplemented by the need for deep, contextual knowledge in specific topics or cultural domains — along with the ability to make connections across disciplines. Traditional educational paths may give way to continuous, modular learning, blurring the lines between study and practice. Rather than formal degrees, demonstrated capacity to learn, adapt, and collaborate may take precedence.

Furthermore, technological advancements — especially in AI — are expected to drive the emergence of entirely new roles, such as prompt engineers, AI model trainers, and AI managers. Participants foresee a growing demand for professionals who can both understand and critically engage with AI systems in creative contexts. There's a belief that creative literacy will become increasingly important even for technical fields, and that some current roles — like data scientists — might be less valued unless paired with cultural or artistic insight.

In the heritage domain, new positions such as cultural guardians, heritage ambassadors, and digital heritage officers are expected to gain visibility and importance. As societies become more diverse and diasporic, the role of heritage professionals may expand to include mediation and interpretation, not just preservation. Participants suggest that architects and designers will be expected to work with a deeper awareness of cultural history, especially in contexts where heritage is plural, contested, or in flux.

Within the design sector, participants expect a rise in occupations linked to circular economies, such as waste stream designers, traceability auditors, and sustainability strategists. With technologies like food and tissue printers and biofabricated materials gaining traction, new forms of making may demand new kinds of thinking. Thus, design work is expected to become more embedded in long-term systems thinking, with greater involvement in challenges like resource regeneration and life cycle design. This may also be accompanied by shifts in how jobs are recognized, accounted for, valorized and appreciated, including a potential decline in administrative burdens due to automation.

The performing arts are envisioned to play an increasingly cross-sectoral role, with therapeutic, educational, and civic applications becoming more commonplace. Emerging roles might include policy performers, content curators, and creative facilitators — individuals who use performance-based techniques to convey complex information, support emotional expression, or enable participatory processes. Participants also expect to see more demand for arts managers and intermediaries who can navigate between creative production and broader institutional or policy frameworks.

Overall, the future of work in the cultural and creative economy is expected to be more fluid, hybrid, and interdisciplinary. Career paths may involve more frequent transitions and re-skilling, with a growing emphasis on roles that bridge domains — between humans and machines, between creativity and care, between culture and sustainability. Participants suggest that systems of recognition and reward may need to adapt accordingly, especially as value creation becomes more collaborative and relational.

While these shifts remain speculative and contingent on broader technological, economic, and political developments, they reflect a strong desire to imagine futures where creative labor is more visible, respected, and woven into the fabric of daily life.

A changing workplace

In just about every future of cultural and creative work, the notion of the workplace is expected to evolve dramatically — becoming more fluid, distributed, and adaptive to both human and technological shifts. The traditional office, studio or house of culture, once the assumed default for creative labor, may no longer hold that central position. Work is expected to happen anywhere and everywhere, thanks to the growing use of telepresence, mobile technologies, and holographic interfaces. For many, particularly in content creation, geography may become increasingly irrelevant, with creators collaborating across continents in real time and through immersive digital environments, where they meet each other and their creations.

This shift is likely to bring new spatial needs and social dynamics. As permanent offices give way to hot desks, pop-up studios, and off-grid creative hubs, the role of physical space is anticipated to become more purposeful and context-specific — supporting co-creation, rehearsal, prototyping, or collective learning.

At the same time, virtual interaction will need to compensate for the loss of informal social encounters. There is an expectation that "virtual watercoolers" — digital spaces that are conducive to spontaneous dialogue and connection — will become essential to team cohesion and wellbeing in hybrid workplace contexts. Reimagining workspaces also means creating alternative, inclusive environments that are open to all — places where community engagement, experimentation, and mutual learning can thrive beyond traditional formats.

In the performing arts and beyond, workspaces are imagined as becoming increasingly ephemeral, temporary, itinerant, and embedded in daily life. Artists may no longer be tied to studios or performance halls, but instead engage directly with communities, institutions, or political forums. The boundaries between audience and performer, stage and city, are expected to blur. Meanwhile, the infrastructure of these creative workplaces may follow open-source principles — modular, shareable, and reconfigurable according to need, rather than ownership or permanence.

Across sectors, AI is anticipated to take on a growing role in shaping and supporting creative workspaces. From scheduling and coordination to aggregating citizen input for collaborative design processes, intelligent systems could help surface collective priorities and facilitate decision-making. In design specifically, AI and AR/VR tools are expected to enhance the ideation process, enabling spatial simulations, immersive testing, and real-time adaptation. These technologies, when combined with blockchain-based product passports and material traceability systems, may allow designers to better manage life-cycle impacts and move toward circular, low-waste production ecosystems.

There are also expectations that new forms of knowledge will shape future workplaces — not only technical data, but also indigenous knowledge systems, which may be digitized and integrated into AI tools. In parallel, neurotechnologies and speculative modes of learning, such as learning during sleep, are seen as possible future features of the creative workspace, challenging traditional rhythms of work and rest.

Finally, participants envision a narrowing of the technological gap between nations, particularly in the deployment of design and workplace-related AI. This could open up more equitable access to tools, markets, and collaborative networks, allowing creative professionals in diverse regions to participate more fully in global conversations and production chains.

Altogether, the workplace of the future in cultural and creative sectors is expected to be less about location and more about connection — designed for agility, inclusivity, and co-creation, whether across networks, in town or in nature, or around shared tables. It reflects a growing belief that creativity is not just something that happens in designated spaces, but something that travels, adapts, and embeds itself wherever it's most needed.

Working conditions

Looking ahead, working conditions in the cultural and creative sectors are expected to evolve in ways that reflect both expanded flexibility and new forms of complexity. The traditional 9-to-5 model may become increasingly obsolete, replaced by more fluid work rhythms tailored to the nature of the work and the needs of the worker. Particularly in fields like heritage, where deep engagement, contextual understanding, and

long-term stewardship are central, there is an expectation that time itself — how it is structured, valued, and experienced — will be redefined.

Flexibility is seen as a double-edged sword: while it enables individuals to blend personal and professional responsibilities more fluidly, it also threatens to blur boundaries, making it difficult to disconnect or protect one's private time. In the future, the freedom to work when and where one chooses may come at the cost of feeling perpetually "on."

This is further complicated by concerns around tech-enabled surveillance and the rise of new performance metrics. The use of digital tools to monitor productivity, attention, and output — coupled with algorithmic evaluations or "like"-based success indicators — raises fears of unilateral and reductive measures of quality. Many expect the creative workforce to face growing pressure to conform to such external standards, even when they do not align with the slower, more exploratory nature of artistic or heritage work.

Across sectors, employment is expected to become more fragmented and freelance-based, with individuals working across multiple teams, projects, and sometimes even borders. Co-working spaces, shared studios, and nomadic modes of employment may become increasingly common, offering new kinds of autonomy but also raising questions around long-term security, collaboration, and institutional belonging. At the same time, there are calls to reimagine freelance work — not as precarious, but as part of a more robust system of shared employment, where workers are connected to networks that offer mutual support, social protection, and a shared set of values.

There is also an emerging hope that AI integration will help rebalance workloads — not simply by automating tasks, but by reducing unnecessary hours, minimizing overtime, and allowing for healthier work-life dynamics. In some scenarios, creative labor is compensated not only through wages, but through alternative systems like time-based remuneration, access to people and networks or leave-time instead of cash. These new models could support well-being while recognizing the diverse forms of value generated by creative work.

A greater emphasis on inclusivity and neurodiversity is also anticipated. The expectation is that working contexts will be better designed to support different cognitive styles, energy patterns, and sensory needs. Instead of one-size-fits-all environments, the future may offer a variety of working configurations, adaptable to task, team, and individual. Within this more humane and pluralistic landscape, a renewed sense of community is imagined to emerge — one rooted not just in co-location, but in shared purpose, respect, and care.

Altogether, the working conditions of tomorrow are expected to be more flexible, decentralized, and interdependent, shaped by technologies, values, and social contracts that are still in flux. While this future presents opportunities for greater autonomy and well-being, it also demands careful attention to equity, ethics, and sustainability in how work is defined and supported.

Work in a changing economic context

In a future shaped by accelerating technological change and shifting societal values, the economic structure of the cultural and creative sectors is expected to become increasingly complex, competitive, and volatile. Networks and visibility are anticipated to become primary currencies, with success often tied less to institutional affiliation or formal recognition and more to one's personal brand and digital presence. Some describe this as a "LinkedIn economy," where value flows through connections and perception as much as through expertise or output.

As content production scales with the aid of AI and automation, the marketplace is expected to be flooded with material, making expert, human-created content more scarce and therefore valuable. In this saturated environment, curation, trust, and quality assurance may become premium features, often locked behind paywalls or specialized platforms. At the same time, metrics of value and success are expected to shift — moving away from simple counts of views or likes, toward more contextual and qualitative forms of assessment, possibly even redesigned through participatory or decentralized means.

Economic models may evolve in response to the changing nature of content consumption itself. As AI agents increasingly mediate access to information — recommending, filtering, and even engaging with content on behalf of users — creators may begin optimizing for machine readability over human readability. This shift could fundamentally alter how content is structured, prompting concerns around algorithmic distortion and the erosion of nuance in public discourse. At the same time, content engagement is expected to become more interactive and less passive, facilitated by user tools and AI-generated customizations, opening new modes of co-creation but also new dependencies.

Across domains, there is a growing recognition that traditional economic indicators — from GDP to standardized KPIs — are poorly suited to capture the full value of creative and cultural work. In the heritage

sector, for instance, there is strong resistance to the notion that economic output can serve as a proxy for cultural significance. Instead, impact assessments are expected to become more context-specific, plural, and qualitative, acknowledging the diversity of cultural contributions and the limits of universal metrics.

New economic mechanisms are also anticipated to emerge. These may include tax incentives or exemptions for artists and cultural producers, support at the micro-enterprise level, and even tokenization of intellectual property, allowing creators to monetize and control their work in more flexible ways. Tax regimes themselves may be reshaped to reflect new labor dynamics and revenue models, with individual contributions tied to personal value creation in digital or distributed markets.

Also designers are expected to play a more active role in shaping economic policy — not just responding to markets, but participating in their reconfiguration.[2] Imagined futures include the establishment of entities like a "Ministry of Interdependencies," tasked with ensuring that creative production aligns with planetary boundaries and circular economy principles. In such a scenario, waste is not discarded but recycled or upcycled, and value is traced and continuously redistributed throughout products' and materials' full lifecycles.

Timewise as well, economic cycles may become more varied. Some companies or initiatives may operate in short bursts, responding to urgent needs or creative spikes, while others may follow longer regenerative cycles grounded in social or ecological goals. Decentralized participatory spaces for decision-making — including in economic governance — are expected to gain importance, stimulating more inclusive dialogue and potentially giving rise to new forms of voting or ranking systems that allow for greater nuance and collective agency.

Altogether, the creative economy of the future is not imagined as a monolithic marketplace, but rather as a dynamic constellation of interlinked ecosystems — local and global, human and technological, formal and informal. Its sustainability may depend not on scale or speed, but on its ability to adapt, diversify, and honor the full spectrum of values that creative work brings to society.

Work & policy

Looking toward the future, labor policies in the cultural and creative sectors are expected to adapt significantly to meet the demands of new work patterns, emerging technologies, and evolving notions of value. The proliferation of AI, in particular, is likely to prompt the development of new liability frameworks to clarify accountability in cases of automated production, content misuse, or creative infringement. As human oversight becomes a final safety net in automated processes, the concept of "last resort: human appeal" may become a legal safeguard to ensure fairness, responsibility, and ethical recourse.

In parallel, the rise of individual content creators may be accompanied by new forms of collective organization, including creator unions and federated associations that advocate for rights, visibility, and fair compensation. These may help push for better attribution and credit systems, particularly in sectors like cultural heritage and performing arts, where contributions are often collaborative or intangible.

[2] See also NDPC (2023) for a policy brief exploring how arts and design-led collaboration can be scaled through cross-innovation policies. Northern Dimension Partnership on Culture. (2023). Arts & design-based collaboration and cross-innovation: Practices to be enabled, orchestrated and scaled (Policy Brief). NDPC. https://ndpculture.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Report.pdf

Participants also anticipate increased recognition of invisible labor, including the emotional and preparatory work that sustains creative processes but often goes unacknowledged in conventional frameworks.

Systemic barriers — including outdated institutional requirements and rigid criteria for recognition or mobility — continue to constrain creative potential globally. Emerging ideas like a "creative passport" suggest new ways to support borderless cultural exchange and offer legitimacy to diverse creative practices.

The idea of "credits" — not only as financial remuneration but as symbolic and cultural capital — is expected to play a larger role. This could take the form of reputation-based compensation systems, credits for participation in collaborative processes, or recognition of one's contribution to a cumulative cultural fabric. In performance, for instance, some imagine systems that measure and reward the "artistic density" of work — acknowledging the intensity, impact, or innovation involved, rather than simply time spent or outputs delivered.

More speculative proposals include diplomatic passports for artists, symbolizing their role as cultural ambassadors and enablers of international exchange. Meanwhile, experimentation in heritage work is expected to be supported and legitimized through policy, reinforcing the idea that cultural memory is not just preserved but actively constructed through ongoing labor.

In the design sector and beyond, labor policy is envisioned to move toward greater personalization and ecological accountability. Mixed pension-wage systems may give individuals more flexibility in planning their futures, while new wage policies could reward not only outputs but sustainable practices — such as recycling, upcycling, or designing within carbon limits. The use of certain harmful materials may be banned entirely, and eco-taxes could be levied to reflect environmental costs. This suggests a broader shift toward "planned economies" of care and sustainability, especially in sectors where material and information flows and production cycles intersect closely with ecological and societal concerns.

Participants also expect policy changes to support a transition from informality to formality, offering creators better access to protections without forcing them into rigid employment structures[3]. This could include new labor codes that accommodate freelance and hybrid work, as well as policies tailored to neurodivergent workers, ensuring accessibility and flexibility across roles and settings.

Work time itself is expected to be reconsidered. Beyond standard working hours, policies may account for nonlinear, intermittent, or asynchronous rhythms of creative labor, better reflecting how people actually work in these fields. This could include compensation for hidden preparation time, reflective thinking, or long-term conceptual development — crucial dimensions of cultural labor that currently escape traditional metrics.

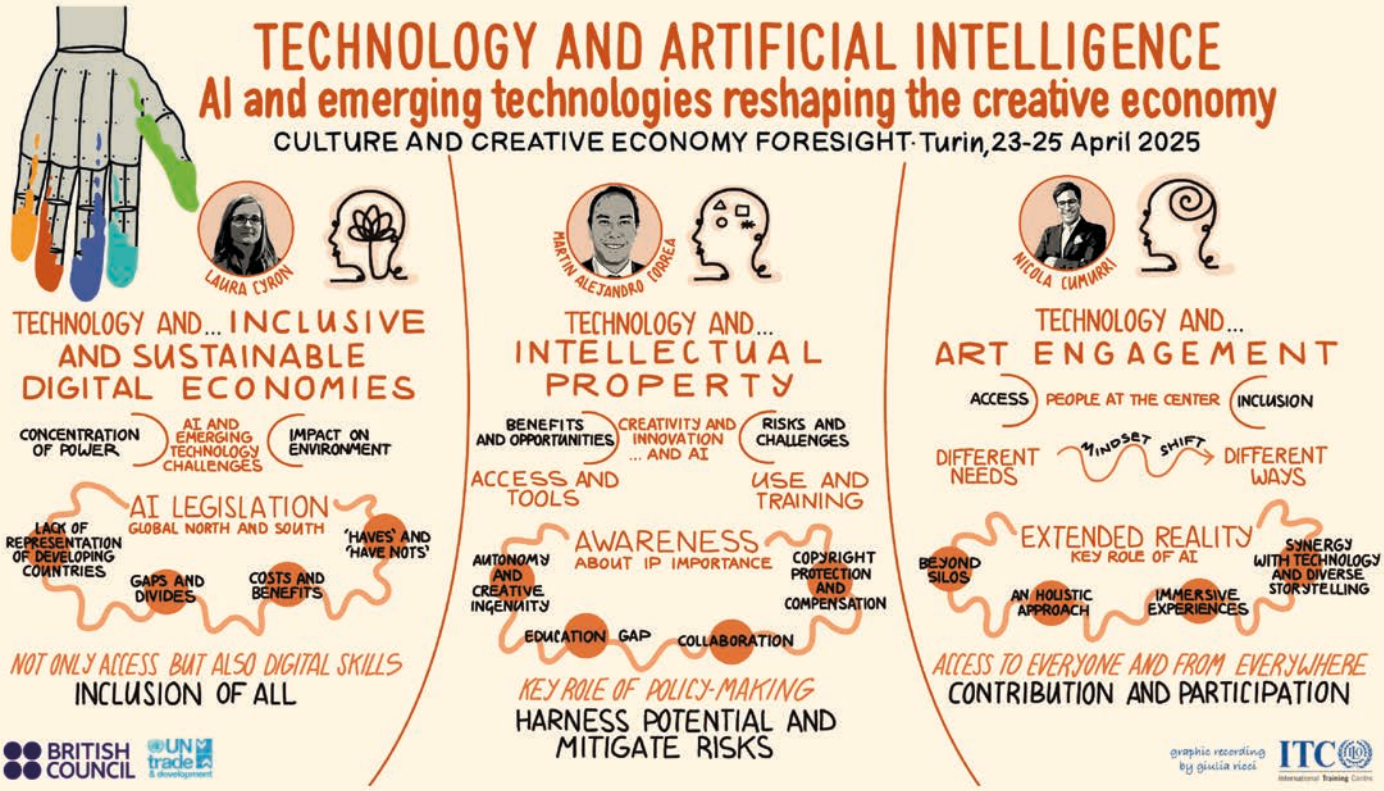
Altogether, the future of labor policy in the cultural and creative sectors may be defined less by rigid categories and more by flexibility, fairness, and a holistic understanding of creative value. It reflects a broader hope that policy can evolve not only to regulate, but also to empower and enable — protecting workers, recognizing diverse contributions, and sustaining the conditions for cultural life to flourish.

[3] In the Philippines, for example, current statistics on the contribution of creatives to GDP exclude the informal creative workforce, as the primary metric used is business registration. Official 2024 data from the Philippine Statistics Authority shows that the creative economy contributed ₱1.94 trillion to GDP (7.3%) and employed 7.51 million people — yet there is no published figure capturing the number of unregistered creatives. This means a significant portion of the workforce remains invisible in national data despite their contributions. Transforming this gig economy into sustainable enterprises ("from GIG to BIZ") has become a strategic focus for local initiatives working in close partnership with government.

FROM SHAPESHIFTING CREATIVE WORK TO TRANSVERSAL THEMES

Having explored a series of future scenarios and how they might reshape the work of cultural and creative professionals — in terms of roles, conditions, environments, and value flows — we now turn to a set of broader transversal themes around which many conversations were clustered during the workshop: technology and AI, trade and investment, gender equality, diversity and inclusion, reskilling and upskilling, and decent work. Each of these themes offers a different lens on the future, but together they form a tightly interwoven fabric. They touch on infrastructure and policy, ethics and equity, access and agency. They are where ideas meet systems — and where creative responses are needed most.

Each of the following sections draws on insights that emerged during the workshop and distills them into a set of forward-looking strategic questions — to support reflection, spark research, and inspire policymaking. To ground the discussion, every section also highlights a tangible example or prototype



proposed by participants in response to one or more of these challenges: a glimpse of how such questions might begin to translate into concrete action.

On technology & AI

Artificial intelligence is rapidly reshaping society in general and the cultural and creative economy in particular, altering not just how creative work is made and shared, but also who benefits from it and under what conditions. At the heart of this transformation is a growing tension between opportunity and inequality. While AI[4] has the potential to democratize access to creative tools, it is currently amplifying existing divides — economic, geographic, and infrastructural. In many parts of the world, creators contribute data and labor that fuel AI systems but remain excluded from the value generated by those systems.

Levers such as AI-assisted content creation, better targeting, and the possibility of interactive algorithms offer promising ways to increase inclusion and diversify creative outputs. When harnessed thoughtfully, these tools can facilitate collective virtual experiences, amplify marginalized voices, and support more motivated and fulfilling work. However, this potential is unevenly distributed — access to the necessary infrastructure and literacy varies widely, and the systems that shape content curation and moderation are still far from equitable.[5]

Intellectual property frameworks are struggling to keep pace with this shift. Awareness of IP rights remains limited in many regions, particularly in the Global South, yet there is increasing recognition of IP's dual nature: as a system that can either entrench monopolies or enable creative livelihoods, depending on how it is designed and governed. The rise of AI only sharpens this dilemma, as creative outputs generated by machines often rely on uncredited or uncompensated human work. There is an urgent need for adaptive, inclusive IP systems that support attribution, licensing, and equitable sharing — not only of content, but of control.

Power asymmetries in the digital economy are mirrored in the governance of AI. The vast majority of national AI strategies have been developed by high-income countries, with low- and middle-income countries often left to adopt external standards and technologies not suited to their needs or values. This creates a global dynamic in which data is extracted from less powerful regions and converted into high-value digital services elsewhere, reinforcing a model of cultural and economic dependency. Concerns around content traceability, data bias, and overreliance on AI for decision-making raise important questions about trust and sovereignty.

Yet there are promising pathways forward. New technologies — from immersive media to blockchain and digital twins — can support more participatory, localized, and inclusive cultural experiences. When designed around the needs of diverse users, these tools can expand access and engagement across sensory, cognitive, and geographic boundaries. Holistic design approaches, rooted in the principle of "designing with, not for," are beginning to redefine how cultural content is created, shared, and experienced. The use

[4] See for example also Lee, H. K. (2022). Rethinking creativity: Creative industries, AI and everyday creativity. Media, Culture & Society, 44(3), 601-612. Furthermore, in Acemoglu, D. (2025). The simple macroeconomics of AI. Economic Policy, 40(121), the Nobel laureate explains how AI could affect the labour market and productivity more generally.

[5] See The Economist (2023) "The dawn of the omnistar: How artificial intelligence will transform fame" The article explains the impact of AI on the creative sector and reflects on how it may mostly benefit already famous artists and thus give rise to the so-called "omistar".

of blockchain[6], for instance, offers new methods for acknowledging authorship, managing content flow and even help to redistribute value and preserve cultural heritage in digital form.

In line with these evolutions, education and training systems must also adapt. Current models often teach people to use tools without questioning their limits or implications. As AI becomes embedded in creative and technical workflows, it becomes essential to cultivate skills that persist beyond the interface: critical thinking, ethical reasoning, contextual judgment. People must be equipped not only to operate AI, but to interpret and interrogate its outputs. The future of work depends on the ability to navigate complexity — with and without automation. Barriers such as content fatigue, mental stress, or an overabundance of information call for stronger curatorial skills and a renewed focus on the quality, not just the quantity, of digital expression.

This moment calls for a shift in mindset: from seeing AI as a replacement or shortcut, to understanding it as a collaborator that must be guided and contextualized. Creative ecosystems must be supported by frameworks that promote shared authorship, cultural diversity, and sustainable use of resources. Rather than striving for technological maximums, future systems might prioritize frugality, adaptability, and relevance to local contexts — particularly in regions already accustomed to innovating under constraint.

What is ultimately at stake is not only how creative work is made, but what values shape the systems that support it. Inclusion, recognition, sustainability, and agency must become central design principles — not afterthoughts. The challenge is to ensure that technology serves creativity, rather than the other way around.

[6] See for example also: Patrickson, B. (2021). What do blockchain technologies imply for digital creative industries?. Creativity and Innovation Management, 30(3), 585-595.

TODAY'S QUESTIONS FOR TOMORROW

Empowering Creative Agency through Technology

- ☐ How might we utilize AI to enable and extend human creativity, rather than replace it?
- ☐ How can we avoid a binary society of uploaders and downloaders, creators and consumers—and instead promote co-creation?
- ☐ How might we design intellectual and emotional challenges that keep the human brain engaged and resilient in an AI-saturated era?
- ☐ How can we prevent the misuse of AI—such as plagiarism or misattribution—while promoting authentic, human-centered creativity?
- ☐ How might we reduce bias in AI-assisted content creation and curation, while promoting diverse and inclusive outputs?
- ☐ What frameworks are needed to ensure equitable access to creative technologies and tools across regions and communities?

Governance, Rights & Fair Value Distribution

- ☐ How might we build a diverse, interoperable ecosystem of creative technologies that ensures shared governance and accountability?
- ☐ How can blockchain and other distributed tools be used to track, preserve, and fairly reward creative and cultural assets?
- ☐ What lessons can be drawn from real-world IP practices to develop ethical, scalable models for creative revenue?
- ☐ How might we design international governance systems for AI and digital infrastructures that support transparency, justice, and sustainability?

Equity, Inclusion & Access

- ☐ How might we democratize access to performances and creative experiences through immersive technologies (e.g., XR)?
- ☐ How can we expand access to design tools, prototyping labs, and production facilities to support local and inclusive development?

- [ ] What approaches ensure data collection and AI training processes are representative, ethical, and culturally diverse?
- [ ] What policy frameworks can prevent digital exclusion and ensure meaningful access to digital cultural infrastructures?

Commons, Heritage & Stewardship

- [ ] How might we treat cultural heritage as a living commons—one that fuels both preservation and innovation?
- [ ] How can digitization be used as a precondition for cultural continuity, access, and resilience?
- [ ] What role could digital twins and immersive technologies play in both safeguarding and unlocking the value of cultural heritage?
- [ ] How might we ensure that data used in AI systems fairly reflects the diversity and dynamism of global heritage?

Infrastructure, Traceability & Sustainability

- [ ] How might we integrate digital infrastructure, resource management, and governance to enable traceability in creative production?
- [ ] What are the enabling conditions for building ethical, resilient digital ecosystems that support distributed and sustainable creative economies?
- [ ] How can we design infrastructure and tools to prioritize circularity, reduce environmental costs, and support long-term cultural value?

What if … every piece of cultural heritage — a dance, a monument, a storyteller — could have a digital twin?

Imagine a service that captures the essence of cultural expressions and historical artifacts through cutting-edge scanning and motion tracking, turning them into living, evolving digital replicas. These digital twins wouldn't just preserve knowledge — they'd interact with us, teach us, even correct us in real time.

What if a performer could be mirrored by their twin on stage — learning, adapting, and guiding the performance? What if governments, educators, and artists could simulate events, test ideas, and pass on embodied traditions through these living archives?

This vision of Digital Twins as a Service goes beyond preservation. It enables access, interaction, training, innovation, and new jobs in cultural heritage and public service design. But to unlock this future, we'll need new policies for data governance, ethics, and ownership.

It's not just about technology. It's about keeping culture alive — in motion, in dialogue, and in everyone's hands.

On trade & investment

The global trade landscape for cultural and creative industries is marked by deep imbalances. A small number of countries dominate exports of creative goods and services—over 70% stemming from just ten nations—revealing persistent disparities in who is able to translate cultural production into economic value and global presence. While creative potential is widely distributed, the structural capacity to participate in trade, gain visibility, and derive benefit is not. This unevenness limits both economic opportunity and the diversity of cultural exchange.

While creative economies sit at the intersection of culture and commerce, not all cultural expressions are equally recognized, represented, or rewarded. Access to global markets and value chains is uneven, and talent often faces structural barriers, especially when traditional pathways are biased by geography, language, infrastructure or power structures. In some cases, addressing these imbalances has meant the creation of dedicated platforms and support structures that bridge underrepresented communities with global systems—for example, initiatives like Blacmex that elevate Black music by creating export infrastructures outside dominant industry logics[7].

Participants noted that too often, funding priorities remain misaligned, and prevailing models remain extractive—especially when public investment is limited and private investment flows toward high-return or short-term cultural outputs. Building more inclusive trade ecosystems will require more innovative financing schemes, including tax credits and outcome-oriented instruments that support longer-term cultural value creation. Experimenting with alternative business models and investing in distributed local

[7] See also this series of articles exploring the challenges in music for Black electronic musicians internationally https://mixmag.net/feature/a-guide-to-mixmag-blackout?next

supply chains—particularly in sustainable and nature-inspired design—can also help shift the current balance of power.

Efforts to improve the equity of global trade in culture must also contend with major data challenges[8]. Measurement systems remain fragmented and inconsistent, particularly in the services sector, where digital content, platform-based distribution, and informal exchanges dominate. For many countries and institutions, the inability to disaggregate cultural data, track digital exports, or harmonize trade metrics hinders both policy and strategy development. There is also growing interest in exploring how cultural heritage might be more systematically integrated into trade and investment strategies—not merely as a tourism asset, but as a living resource that can generate services and spin-offs while sustaining itself. However, this requires careful governance to avoid commodification or loss of community ownership.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, trade in creative goods and services has undergone shifts that have further widened the gap between countries with mature digital infrastructure and those without. Tokenization, performer passports, and hybrid trade infrastructures offer new entry points, but also surface new regulatory and ethical challenges—especially around intellectual property, audience manipulation, and digital sovereignty.

At the same time, the nature of trade itself is evolving. Increasingly, cultural and creative goods are digitized and delivered as services, and creative outputs are shaped as much by algorithmic visibility as by consumer preference. The prominence of streaming platforms, for instance, introduces new dynamics around discoverability, revenue distribution, and cultural dominance, with opaque algorithms acting as new forms of gatekeeping. The symbolic and economic value of culture is thus increasingly mediated by digital infrastructures whose terms are neither neutral nor equally beneficial.

Looking ahead, a key challenge lies in building resilience and competitiveness among micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in the cultural sector. Support strategies must go beyond financing to include skills development, legal and policy frameworks, better access to data and markets, and stronger collaboration between firms. Moreover, alignment between public institutions and creative enterprises is essential: when policymakers understand the lived realities and innovation models of creative producers, strategies are more responsive and inclusive.

Creative MSMEs are the life force of the creative economy, driving both innovation and cultural value. The question is how trade and investment policies can be redefined to create an environment where these enterprises can thrive, adapt, and build resilience. Not all creative MSMEs intend to scale, so support must be tailored to their stage of development and the depth of their community impact, not solely their economic growth potential. This means looking beyond traditional policy frameworks to design mechanisms that recognise the unique challenges of creative MSMEs—such as market volatility, intellectual property protection and enforcement, and access to local and global value chains—while enabling them to grow or sustain themselves in ways that are meaningful to their mission or goals. Strengthening this ecosystem will require coordinated efforts across government, private sector, and international trade bodies to ensure that creative MSMEs are not only surviving, but actively shaping the future of the economy. Some regional dialogues have begun to address these gaps. For instance, the “Creative Economy, Our Common Future” discussion held in Jakarta in 2024 brought together stakeholders from across Asia-Pacific to explore

[8] The UNESCO 2025 Framework for Cultural Statistics provides a comprehensive conceptual and methodological approach that redefines how culture can be understood and measured. https://www.uis.unesco.org/en/node/256

how investment, regional collaboration, and data systems could better support creative sectors across diverse economies[9].

Some proposals—such as a Ministry of Interdependencies or redesigned voting and decision-making systems—emerged as imaginative ways to reinforce more equitable ecosystems. These ideas reflect a growing recognition that the structures supporting creative trade and investment must be rethought in bold, systemic terms.

To navigate future disruptions—whether technological, geopolitical, or market-based—greater cooperation across sectors is needed. This includes improved coordination between public and private actors, investment in interoperable data systems, and a more holistic approach to trade policy that considers cultural specificity, local capacities, and long-term sustainability. Without this, the promise of a more inclusive and globally connected creative economy may remain unevenly realized.

[9] ACE-YS. (2024). Creative Economy, Our Common Future. International Discussion on Creative Economy, Jakarta. https://ace-ys.org/creative-economy-our-common-future/. See also the Bali Creative Economy Roadmap (2022), which outlines 16 global action areas to support inclusive and sustainable creative economies through international cooperation and policy innovatio (Ministry of Tourism and Creative Economy; Tourism and Creative Economy Agency, Republic of Indonesia. (2022, October). Bali Creative Economy Roadmap 2022: Sixteen Actions [Outcome document of the 3rd World Conference on Creative Economy]. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1WpSL8axE8B9JuuuNCKBaLDE6F3dy6bQg/view)

TODAY'S QUESTIONS FOR TOMORROW

Reimagining Infrastructure and Ecosystems for Trade

- ☐ How might we (re)design national and regional trade offices to better serve the cultural and creative economy?
- ☐ How might we create physical, digital, or hybrid hubs that provide shared tools, services, and infrastructure to support value creation across the creative industries?
- ☐ How might we establish special economic zones or trade corridors tailored to the specific needs of creative entrepreneurs and cultural goods and services?

Innovating IP, Revenue Models, and Value Distribution

- ☐ How might we diversify and redesign intellectual property frameworks to support monetization across a wider spectrum of creative expression?
- ☐ How might tokenization of creative content enable new forms of ownership, royalty structures, and value sharing?
- ☐ What kinds of tax or VAT exemptions, fiscal incentives, or funding channels—such as routing personal income tax into creative sector funds—might support a more equitable creative economy?
- ☐ How might we better measure and value the not-for-profit and public-good contributions of creative professionals?

Mobilizing Investment and Finance for Creatives

- ☐ How might we develop financing schemes that are flexible and responsive to the fast-changing, high-risk nature of creative industries?
- ☐ What public-private partnerships or innovative guarantee mechanisms could help de-risk creative investment?
- ☐ How might targeted support expand investment in nature-inspired design, circular economies, and sustainable creative production?

- [ ] In what ways can tax credits or blended finance approaches increase both public and private commitment to building resilient creative ecosystems?

Trade, Mobility, and Global Collaboration

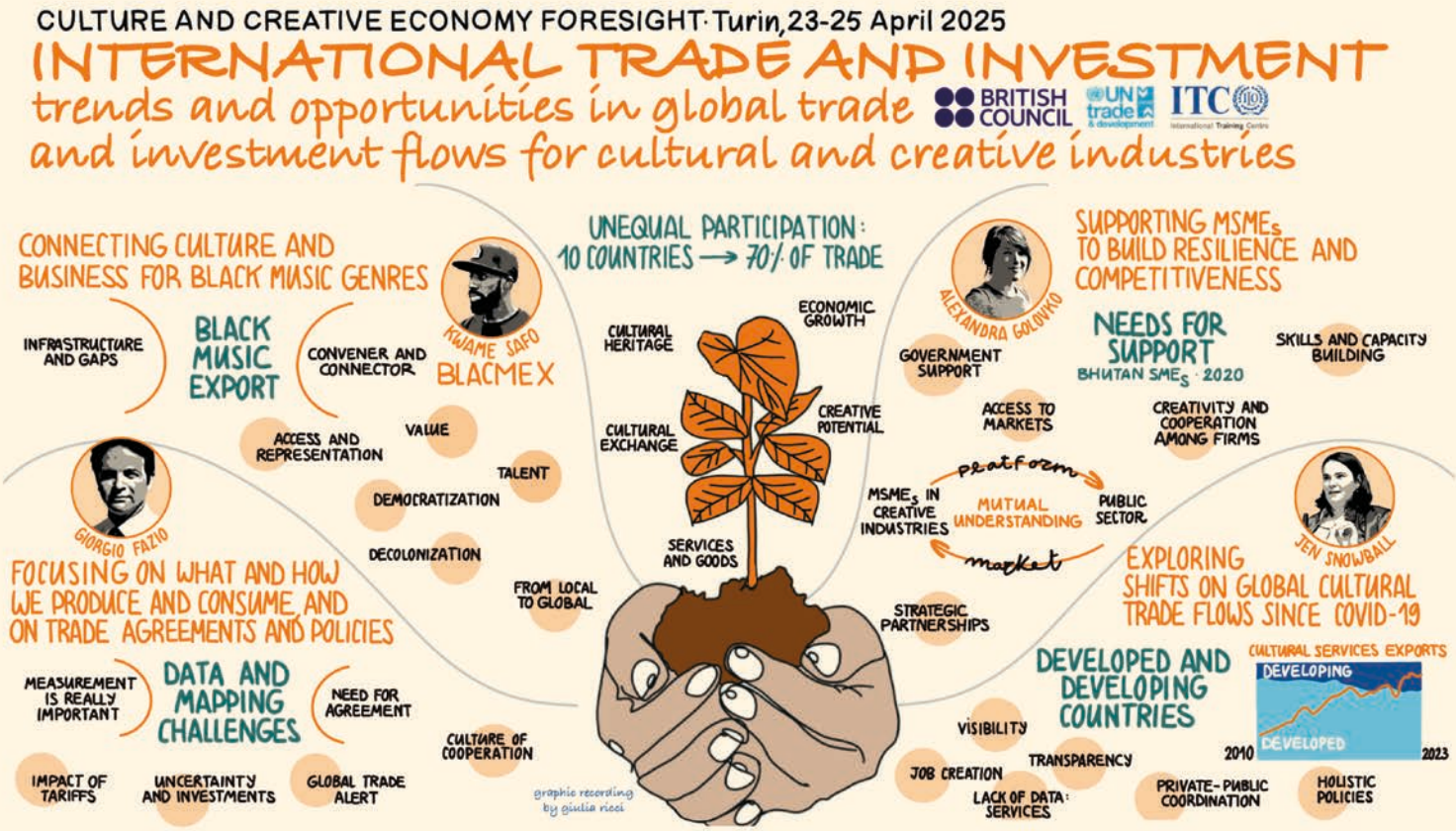
- [ ] How can we update trade agreements to better reflect the hybrid, mobile, and context-sensitive nature of creative work?
- [ ] What would it take to enable easier cross-border collaboration through instruments like performer or artist passports that guarantee safety, rights, and recognition?
- [ ] How might we remove practical trade barriers—such as tariffs or customs hurdles—that impede the free circulation of cultural goods, services, and professionals?

Building Shared Understanding and Tools

- [ ] How might we create a shared language among creatives, policymakers, investors, and statisticians to align objectives, incentives, and data collection?
- [ ] In what ways can national accounts and trade statistics be reformed to better reflect the realities of digital content, creative services, and informal cultural exchange?
- [ ] What new tools or platforms—such as cooperative marketplaces, co-financing platforms, or alternative banking mechanisms—can better support value creation and visibility in the creative economy?

Capacity Building and Ecosystem Readiness

- [ ] What forms of support—at the local, national, and global levels—most effectively sustain creative entrepreneurship?
- [ ] How do the business development needs of different creative sectors vary, and how should support strategies be tailored accordingly?
- [ ] What capacities do public officials, funders, entrepreneurs, and ecosystem intermediaries need in order to co-develop and finance viable, high-impact creative initiatives?
- [ ] How might we better understand and align with investor motivations to attract long-term, values-based investment into the cultural and creative economy?



What if ... we measured the true value of creative work — not just in profits, but in impact?

Imagine a world where the contributions of artists, creators, and cultural entrepreneurs were fully recognized — not only through financial returns, but also through the social, cultural, and intangible benefits they generate.

This initiative proposes a radical shift: to go beyond traditional accounting and capture the full spectrum of creative value. From intellectual property valuations to new codes that reflect how creative industries actually function, it aims to equip policymakers, statisticians, and financial institutions with better tools to understand — and support — the sector.

But it doesn't stop there. By developing arts managers, creative accountants, and cultural entrepreneurship programs, the project also strengthens the support systems behind the scenes. It makes services simpler and more affordable for creators, while building the capacity of everyone involved — from funders and educators to trade officials and local communities.

What if creative work were no longer seen as a passion project on the margins, but as a serious, measurable force for economic and social transformation?

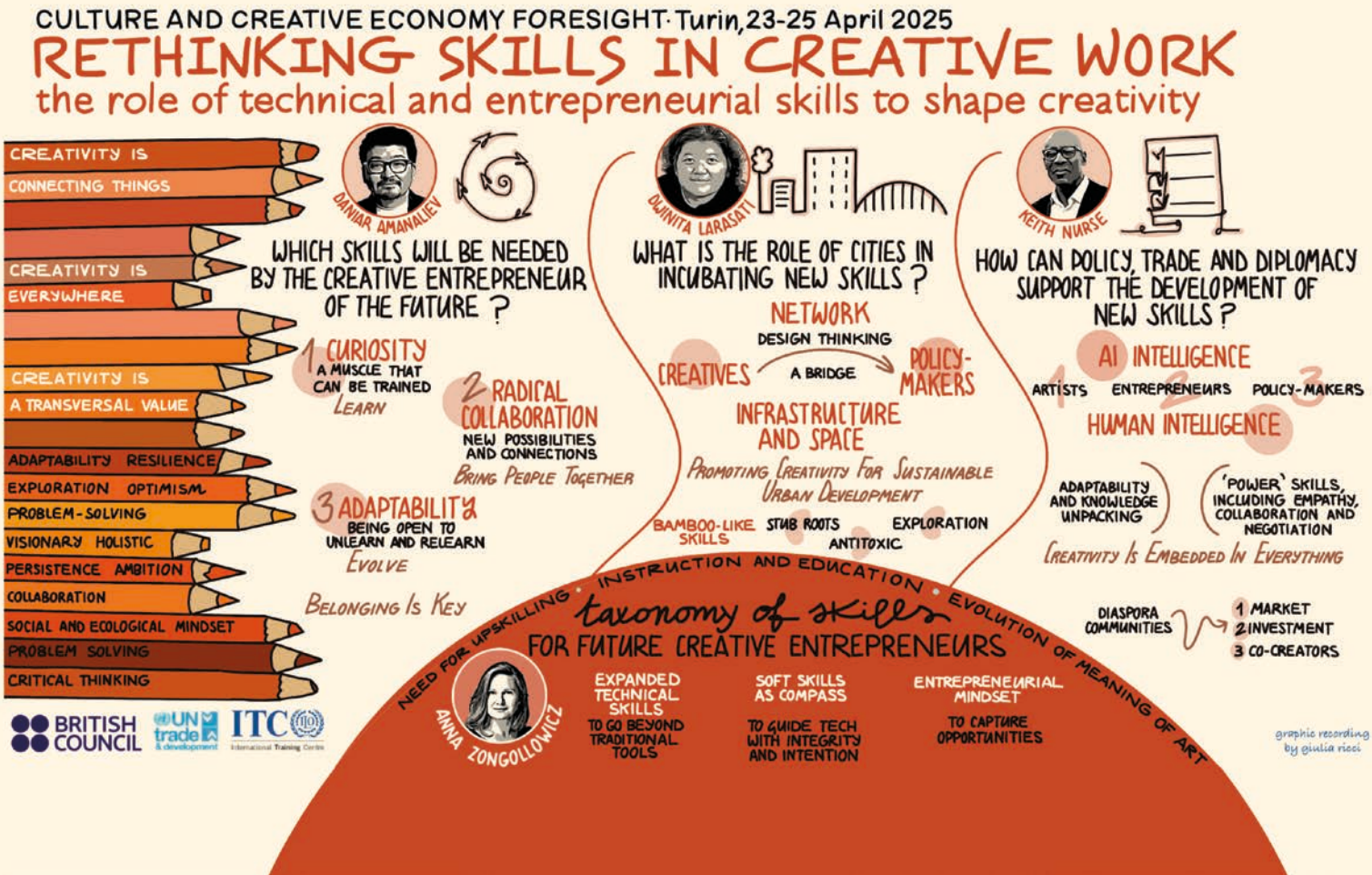
It's time to count what really counts — and build the systems to sustain it.

On reskilling & upskilling

Creativity has never been an isolated act. It is shaped by the tools, skills, relationships, and environments that surround it—and as those evolve, so too must the capacities of those who create. In the cultural and creative economy of the future, success will depend not only on artistic talent or technical expertise, but on a much wider set of capabilities: the ability to navigate new technologies, adapt to shifting market conditions, collaborate across disciplines, and remain grounded in human values.

As digital tools such as AI, virtual production, and blockchain redefine how culture is produced and distributed, creative professionals will need to work with these technologies—not be replaced by them. This requires fluency not only in how to use new tools, but in how to shape them toward expressive, meaningful ends. The creative economy of the future will belong to those who can combine vision with versatility: who understand that a skill like prompt engineering or 3D world-building is only powerful when it serves a compelling idea or social purpose.

An entrepreneurial mindset becomes just as important. As the structures supporting creative work become more fluid and dynamic, individuals must learn to read context, identify opportunity, build networks, and act with initiative. Entrepreneurship in this sense is not only about launching a business—it is about taking ownership of one's trajectory and contributing to larger ecosystems of change. It means being able to move with, rather than be overwhelmed by, constant transformation. Training systems will need to reflect this, blending technical knowledge with scenario-based, cross-sectoral approaches, and supporting even unconventional or informal career paths.



At the core of this adaptability are what might best be called "power skills": curiosity, empathy, critical thinking, collaboration, and ethical awareness. These are not optional extras—they are essential to navigating a world where meaning, identity, and value are increasingly contested. The creative worker of tomorrow must be capable not only of making things, but of making sense of things, and helping others do the same. Whether designing for care in ageing societies, translating heritage into therapeutic practices, or learning how to navigate and moderate immersive digital environments, creatives will require new layers of emotional and ethical competence.

This broader systems fluency—what Civic Square calls "guiding strategy through maximizing co-benefits"—requires that creatives be not just specialists, but community connectors, capable of linking cultural practice with climate adaptation, social infrastructure, and inclusive economic models. As neighborhood-scale transformation accelerates, creatives will play an essential role in shaping how learning, comfort, and sustainability are redefined.

None of these skills are developed in isolation. Systems and environments shape what is possible. Policies, institutions, and investment frameworks must evolve in parallel to enable creatives to thrive—particularly in regions or communities that have historically been underserved. There is also a need to address structural gaps, such as the limited access to affordable and continuous learning opportunities, especially for mid-career professionals or those working informally. Capacity building that is rooted in communities and supported by adaptive local governance can help overcome this, as well as efforts to build shared platforms for cross-generational mentoring and interdisciplinary collaboration.

Diaspora networks, cross-border partnerships, and forms of cultural diplomacy will all be important vehicles for connection, investment, and knowledge exchange. But realizing their potential will require intentional coordination and a shared language around value, fairness, and opportunity.

Urban environments will also play a critical role. Cities are natural incubators for creative capacities: they concentrate infrastructure, diversity, and visibility, all of which help ideas grow. But without inclusive planning and support—affordable space, shared tools, protection from displacement—these benefits can quickly be undermined. Future-ready cities will be those that treat creatives not as bystanders to economic development, but as co-authors of more sustainable, equitable, and vibrant futures.

A useful metaphor for the kind of skills we must cultivate is that of bamboo: rooted in place, flexible under pressure, non-toxic to its surroundings, and capable of regeneration. The future will require not only specialized training, but lifelong, cross-sectoral learning—developed through education systems, professional development pathways, peer networks, and cultural institutions that understand creativity as a systemic asset, not just an individual pursuit.

In short, the creative economy of the future demands a reinvention of how skills are framed, taught, and supported. It is not just a question of equipping individuals with tools, but of growing a shared capacity for renewal—blending technical ability with emotional intelligence, strategic thinking with cultural sensitivity, and artistic practice with systems awareness. This is how creativity will continue to evolve, and how it will remain central to the flourishing of people, places, and societies.

As was highlighted by participants such as the founder of Katha Pilipinas, reskilling and upskilling efforts must recognise the inherently multidisciplinary nature of creative work — where competencies span artistic,

technical, and entrepreneurial domains. Business and behavioural tools, such as those embedded in Katha Pilipinas' skills-building programs, are often essential for long-term sustainability. Crucially, grassroots engagement remains one of the most effective ways to identify actual skills gaps within communities, ensuring that training is relevant and demand-driven. Learning must also be paired with application: open spaces and opportunities for creatives to collaborate, produce, and put theory into practice are just as important as formal instruction. However, common barriers — from lack of awareness and resources to challenges in sustaining a creative enterprise — continue to limit access. Addressing these systemic obstacles will be key to enabling creatives to grow as both professionals and entrepreneurs.

Similar reflections have emerged elsewhere, including in city-level conversations on recovery and skills development in the creative economy.[10]

[10] British Council. (2022). People and the next economy – recovering together [Policy brief]. https://www.britishcouncil.id/en/policy-brief-connecticity-2022

Photo: Daianne Moreno

TODAY'S QUESTIONS FOR TOMORROW

Understanding Evolving Roles and Ecosystems

- ☐ How might we speed up and deepen people's understanding of creative value chains, including both mainstream and niche markets?
- ☐ How might we better frame emerging creative roles (e.g. influencers, prompt engineers) as legitimate businesses that may require new rules, recognition, and training?
- ☐ How might we strengthen institutional capacity among policymakers, educators, and public bodies to keep pace with change in the cultural and creative economy?

Designing Inclusive and Adaptive Learning Pathways

- ☐ How might we ensure that foundational creative and design capabilities are taught early, with sector-specific skills introduced later in training?
- ☐ How might we create flexible programs that allow for multi-disciplinary and cross-sectoral learning, welcoming heterogeneous audiences?
- ☐ How might we support inclusive access to education and lifelong learning for all ages and backgrounds, including the removal of systemic barriers and bias?
- ☐ How can educational policies better support the interdisciplinary and evolving nature of creative work?
- ☐ What inclusive pathways exist, or need to be developed, to better connect underrepresented creatives to the labor market?

Embedding Cultural Competency and Mediation Skills

- ☐ How might we embed cultural literacy, mediation, and ethical awareness into general education and professional development?
- ☐ How might we train professionals from all fields to engage responsibly with cultural resources and identities?
- ☐ How might we cultivate conflict resolution and community-building skills rooted in cultural understanding?

Strengthening Emotional and Social Intelligence

- ☐ How might we increase emotional intelligence and critical thinking through creative education and practice?
- ☐ How might we train facilitators, educators and care professionals to use creativity as a tool for wellbeing and social connection?
- ☐ How might we address and overcome barriers to participation in learning, including reluctance, stigma, or exclusion?

Innovating Entrepreneurial and Hybrid Skillsets

- ☐ How might we establish universal courses or platforms for creative entrepreneurship across disciplines?
- ☐ How might we develop new hybrid roles and skills that merge creativity, technology, data, and social purpose?
- ☐ What roles should governments, educational institutions, and the private sector play in building a resilient and future-ready skills ecosystem?
- ☐ How can educational policies better respond to the multidisciplinary nature of creatives and creative products in order to foster lifelong learning?

What if education could grow as creatively as the people it serves?

In a world where creative industries demand agility, imagination, and collaboration across disciplines, what if learning systems were just as fluid and expansive?

This initiative envisions a future where upskilling and reskilling are not confined to classrooms or job titles, but woven into the fabric of everyday life. Where education policies embrace the multidisciplinary nature of creative work, encouraging lifelong learning that evolves alongside each individual's journey. Where barriers to access are broken down through inclusive training programs and partnerships between schools, industries, and communities — ensuring that the skills people gain truly match the opportunities waiting for them.

It's not about training for fixed occupations. It's about unlocking potential, building adaptable pathways, and shaping a creative ecosystem where everyone can keep learning, keep growing, and keep creating.

On gender equality, diversity & inclusion

To build truly inclusive creative futures, we must move beyond symbolic gestures and toward structural transformation. This means not only opening doors, but also asking who built them, who holds the keys, and what assumptions underpin the architecture. Inclusion, as several speakers underlined, must be systemic—not simply a matter of representation or access, but a rethinking of how power, value, and voice are distributed across the cultural and creative economy.

Efforts to promote inclusion take place across multiple scales. On the international level, UNESCO continues to champion frameworks that advance the rights of artists and cultural professionals. From the 1980 Recommendation on the Status of the Artist to the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, these instruments aim to strengthen the security, mobility, freedom of expression and economic opportunities of creatives worldwide. Yet implementation often lags behind ambition. Rights exist on paper, but many artists—particularly women and those from minority or underrepresented groups—still lack access to networks, resources, and protections in practice. Bridging that gap requires not just policy, but advocacy, research, and capacity building at every level.

But global frameworks[11] alone are not enough. Local, community-based action is equally vital. In many cases, the most meaningful change happens when people collaborate across boundaries—when public institutions, local authorities, entrepreneurs and citizens co-create solutions together. This participatory approach doesn't just generate ideas, it builds resilience. It enhances mutual trust and accountability, especially when mechanisms for transparency, shared ownership, and fair redistribution are in place. Some workshop participants, for example, pointed to creative experiments in formalizing design advocacy across sectors or training caregivers through the arts to foster more inclusive care environments. At their best, such practices allow cultural expression to address real-world needs while cultivating deeper intergenerational and intersectional dialogue.

In practice, inclusion is inseparable from infrastructure. Civic Square's approach to neighborhood-scale regeneration for example, shows how the design of public systems—energy, housing, participation, education—can either reinforce exclusion or become vehicles for equity. By foregrounding marginalized voices in both process and outcome, they shift inclusion from tokenism to transformation.

Still, inclusion cannot be reduced to access alone. It's not enough to say "everyone is welcome" without addressing the deeper exclusions that exist. As highlighted in the discussion, there is a crucial distinction between performative inclusion and transformative inclusion. The former focuses on appearances—numbers, checklists, quotas—while the latter demands a shift in culture, governance, and approach. It involves confronting privilege, redistributing voice, and designing institutions that are inclusive by design, not exclusive by default.

Building fair creative futures means designing an ecosystem where opportunities are not dictated by privilege, location, or networks, but are accessible to all creatives on the basis of their talent and contribution. Fair market access can be central to this vision by providing pathways for growth and entry into spaces that

[11] The latest UNESCO Global Report on cultural policy highlights the importance of systemic alignment to protect cultural diversity and ensure equitable access to creative opportunities. UNESCO. (2022). Re|shaping policies for creativity: Addressing culture as a global public good. UNESCO Publishing. https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/reshaping-policies-creativity-addressing-culture-global-public-good

many cannot reach due to systemic and structural barriers. Equally important is the "art of reciprocity as an intrinsic value", ensuring that exchanges within the creative sector are built on mutual respect, equitable benefit, and sustained support, especially for those historically underserved. Embedding these principles into policies, programs, and cultural norms will be essential in shaping a creative economy that is inclusive, resilient, and truly representative of its people.

Moving forward, a key question remains: How can reciprocity, care, and consideration be translated from values into best practices for creatives, and how can these be integrated into the systems, policies, and market structures that shape the sector? The answers will determine whether fairness in the creative economy remains an ideal—or becomes a lived reality.

Ultimately, this conversation reframed inclusion not as a discrete objective, but as a continuous practice—a commitment to equity, reciprocity, and care. Whether through international frameworks, local experiments, or institutional reforms, building inclusive futures requires collective effort and long-term engagement. It calls on us to listen more deeply, design more deliberately, and act more boldly to ensure the creative economy becomes a space where everyone can not only participate, but thrive.

Throughout the conversations, the importance of participatory approaches was repeatedly emphasized — not only to ensure that policies are inclusive, but also to strengthen legitimacy and impact. Yet, the ways in which these approaches are structured, and the biases they might inadvertently reproduce, are equally important to consider. Developing robust frameworks for stakeholder engagement, and remaining attentive to dynamics of power and exclusion, can help ensure that participatory processes are truly representative and generative.[12]

[12] Amuso, V., & Van Woensel, L. (2025). Reflections on Applying Systems Thinking to Stakeholder Mapping: The STOA Unit at the European Parliament.

TODAY'S QUESTIONS FOR TOMORROW

Embedding Inclusion and Shifting Culture

- [ ] How might we embed inclusion systemically across the creative value chain — not as a one-off gesture, but as a sustained cultural and governance shift?
- [ ] What ethical frameworks and collaborative practices can guide equitable representation, particularly in relation to gender and cultural diversity?
- [ ] What proven methods can drive cultural change at the community level, and how might they be scaled to shape broader national and international policies?

Creating Pathways and Representation Across Generations

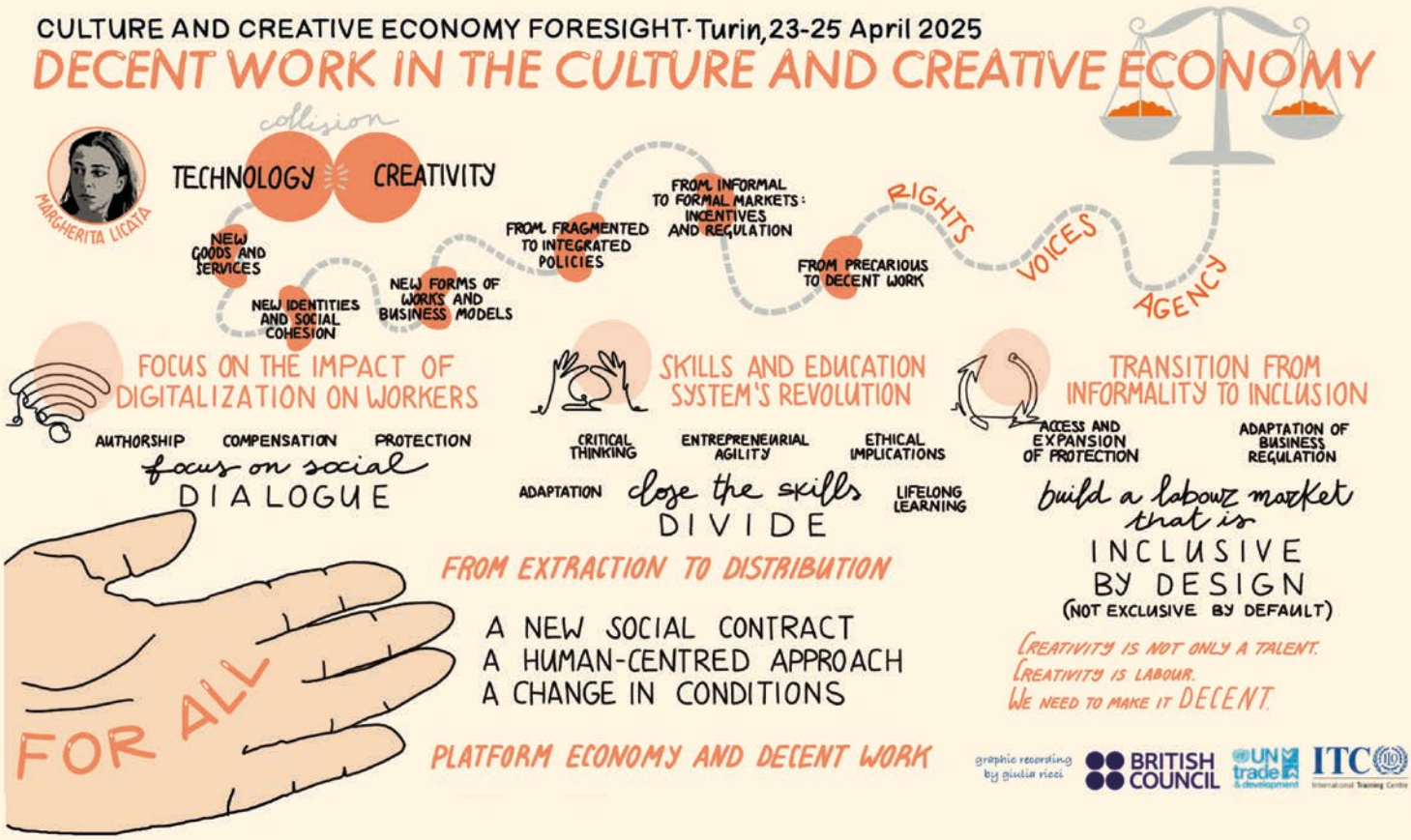
- [ ] How might we design inclusive education and training pipelines that support underrepresented groups from early learning through to creative leadership?
- [ ] How might we empower culturally diverse communities and underrepresented voices to actively shape decision-making in cultural policy and production?
- [ ] How can we ensure intergenerational access to education and meaningful participation across the creative ecosystem?

Shared Practice and Storytelling for Inclusion

- [ ] How might shared creative practices — including performance and storytelling — strengthen intergenerational dialogue, artistic confidence, and social cohesion?
- [ ] How can creative expression help counter audience manipulation and promote ethical, pluralistic narratives?
- [ ] How might we cultivate ambassadors and champions who sustain diverse heritage and advocate for inclusive futures?

Enabling Structures and Inclusive Infrastructure

- [ ] How might we formalize design advocacy and create supportive mobility tools — like creative visas or passports — that promote inclusive, global collaboration?
- [ ] How might we build inclusive digital infrastructures, including fair AI training datasets, that reflect the complexity and diversity of creative identities?



What if we could turn the generational divide into a generational alliance?

In a world growing older and more fragmented, what if we reimagined the relationship between age and innovation — not as opposites, but as a powerful synergy?

Uniting Generations is a global initiative to bridge the gap between young and old, tech-savvy and wisdom-rich, by stimulating meaningful intergenerational and intercultural collaboration. Imagine workplaces where the energy of youth and the insight of experience co-create better futures. Communities where mentorship flows both ways. Teams that are stronger not despite their differences, but because of them.

Through a global open call, the project gathers bold ideas, data, and practices from around the world — funding and scaling solutions that reconnect generations, reshape collaboration, and empower every citizen to contribute fully, no matter their age.

This isn't just inclusion. It's reinvention. And it's how we build futures that belong to everyone.

On decent work

As digital technologies continue to reshape the cultural and creative economy[13], they are not only transforming how creative content is produced and distributed—they are also generating new forms of value, identities, and relationships, as well as altering the social fabric and modes of work. In this fast-evolving landscape, technological progress is outpacing institutional adaptation, creating a disconnect between the innovations that fuel creative industries and the protections available to the people working within them.

Many creative workers today find themselves navigating a highly fragmented and precarious terrain. While platforms and AI tools can amplify voices and broaden access, they also blur the boundaries of authorship, ownership, and fair compensation. These shifts call for a new social contract—one that moves from extractive models toward more equitable systems of distributed control, benefits, and responsibilities. The goal is to create conditions in which creative work is not just possible, but also dignified, protected, and sustainable.

Central to this transformation is the concept of decent work—understood not only as the presence of rights and protections but also as meaningful inclusion in the evolving value chains of the creative economy. To achieve this, several interconnected strategies are needed.

First, there is an urgent need to modernize social dialogue frameworks so they can accommodate new forms of work, including platform-based and freelance arrangements. Without such dialogue, many creative professionals remain excluded from negotiations about the very conditions shaping their livelihoods. Enabling collective representation, even outside traditional employment structures, is key to ensuring that evolving business models do not erode worker agency and bargaining power. In this context, emerging experiments in unionization and creator-centric approaches—some supported by advances in content traceability and digital tools—offer promising entry points for improving transparency and accountability.

Second, lifelong learning must be at the heart of the creative economy's future. As roles become more hybrid and technology-intensive, workers will need support not only to upskill, but also to think critically, act ethically, and respond with agility to changing circumstances. This includes the ability to navigate the risks and opportunities of AI, manage intellectual property in digital environments, and negotiate their role within increasingly globalized cultural markets. Addressing mental stress, digital overload, and the growing sense of isolation reported in creative fields will also be essential if the creative workforce is to remain resilient and motivated over time.

Third, the transition from informality to formality must be approached holistically. Formalization should not be imposed through top-down compliance mechanisms that risk excluding the very people they aim to include. Instead, regulatory frameworks must be designed with inclusion in mind from the outset, offering real incentives and reducing administrative burdens. Creative workers—many of whom are self-employed or operate in informal networks—need accessible paths to social protection, training, and market access.

[13] Recent ILO research highlights how digital platforms are reshaping working conditions in the creative sector, raising new questions around autonomy, attribution, and fairness. Gardiner, D. Balancing Act: The Role of Digital Platforms in Shaping the Conditions of Creative Work. ILO Working Paper 123. Geneva: International Labour Ofice, 2024 (https://www.ilo.org/publications/balancing-act-role-digital-platforms-shaping-conditions-creative-work)

These pathways should recognize and build on the vibrant organizational forms that already exist, even outside official structures.

In many parts of the Global South, creative professionals remain in survival mode, where the immediate need for safety, stability, and fair pay takes precedence over the ability to focus on innovation—unlike in contexts where basic needs are more consistently met. Many creatives are also subject to exploitation, workplace bias, and structural exclusion, often being treated as supplementary input or alternative opinion rather than recognised as key decision makers within organisations. Addressing these disparities requires systemic shifts in labour standards, workplace culture, and leadership representation across the creative economy.

This also raises two urgent questions: a) How can decent work frameworks in the creative sector be designed to prioritise safety, fair compensation, and stability for creatives—especially in the Global South—while still enabling space for innovation? b) How can organisations dismantle workplace bias and restructure decision-making processes so that creatives are valued and recognised as core contributors at leadership levels?

As Civic Square's work in the UK shows, decent work is increasingly tied to broader transformations in how we think about infrastructure, ecology, and belonging. When creative professionals participate in civic-led transitions—through neighborhood retrofits, regenerative design, or participatory cultural programming—their labor not only gains meaning, but contributes to long-term public value. Re-infrastructuring becomes a pathway to revaluing cultural work itself.

Ultimately, creativity is not merely a personal trait or abstract skill—it is labor. It generates value, it shapes society, and for millions, it is a livelihood. The challenge ahead lies in ensuring that this work is treated accordingly: not as a luxury or a side pursuit, but as a vital part of our economies and communities that deserves decent conditions, equitable rewards, and meaningful voice.

If well supported, creativity is not only a source of economic value, but a site of cultural meaning, social cohesion, and systemic imagination.

TODAY'S QUESTIONS FOR TOMORROW

Collective Structures and Representation

- [ ] How might we strengthen collective representation for creative workers — including through unions, cooperatives, or digital platforms — to support fairer bargaining and advocacy?
- [ ] What are the most effective intermediary models for the creative economy, and how can we assess their impact on workers' rights and well-being?
- [ ] How might we accelerate and improve the effectiveness of unionization across fragmented and informal creative sectors?

Rights, Security, and Legal Frameworks

- [ ] How might we build robust legal and regulatory frameworks that ensure safe, transparent, and secure working conditions for creatives in both physical and digital environments?
- [ ] What role could a special legal status for creative professionals play in enhancing rights, protections, and access to support mechanisms?
- [ ] How can international organizations such as the ILO help shape and enforce decent work standards tailored to creative and cultural industries?

Fair Compensation and Recognition of Labor

- [ ] How might we ensure timely, fair, and meaningful compensation for creative work, including non-monetary forms like protected time or recognition of process-based contributions?
- [ ] What compensation models and trade practices — including fair trade for creatives — can offer greater equity and sustainability across the sector?

Inclusion, Informality, and Eligibility

- [ ] How might we open up the creative economy to informal workers through more inclusive policies, platforms, and protections?
- [ ] How can we define appropriate scopes of support and eligibility to ensure that diverse creative professions — including emerging and hybrid roles — are adequately covered?

- [ ] What strategies can support the re-entry and continued inclusion of highly skilled creatives, particularly in times of disruption?

Transnational Protection and Mobility

- [ ] How might we extend social security and benefits across borders to support mobile creative professionals and digital nomads?
- [ ] How can we ensure recognition and portability of digital assets, creative credits, and professional status across jurisdictions?
- [ ] How might international collaboration improve access to shared cultural infrastructure and secure working conditions globally?

New Professions, Metrics and Impact

- [ ] How might we support the emergence of new, socially oriented creative roles — and develop corresponding metrics (such as social or cultural KPIs) to measure their value?
- [ ] What frameworks are needed to recognize and scale creative contributions that generate not just economic, but also social and ecological impact?

What if ... creative workers had their own legal status — one that truly reflected how they live and work?

Imagine a world where artists, designers, performers, and other cultural innovators could access tailored legal protections, healthcare, and financial services designed specifically for the freelance, project-based nature of creative work. Where crossing borders to share ideas and collaborate wasn't blocked by rigid visa systems. Where bureaucratic red tape didn't stifle new ventures before they began.

This initiative proposes a global legal framework — a special statute — for creative professionals. It would assess national challenges, grow international partnerships, and study models of formalization to create policy tools that empower the creative sector.

The result? More resilient livelihoods, greater cultural exchange, and a thriving global creative economy that finally recognizes and supports the people who shape it.

Photo: Daianne Moreno

LOOKING FORWARD TOGETHER

> *When a system is far from equilibrium small islands of coherence in a sea of chaos have the capacity to lift the entire system to a higher level*
>
> Ilya Prigogine

Over the course of three days in Turin, we set out not to predict the future of the cultural and creative economy, but to imagine it—intentionally, collectively, and with a sense of creative responsibility. What emerged from this exercise was more than a set of scenarios, insights or recommendations. It was a shared recognition that the future is not something that simply happens to us—it is something we shape, through the choices we make, the questions we ask, and the ways we learn to work together.

This report reflects both the content of those conversations and the process that made them possible. Participants did not come only to speak from experience, but to listen, prototype, and imagine across boundaries—between disciplines, geographies, and sectors. As one participant reflected, "Beauty emerges in collaboration"—a reminder that the richness of foresight work lies as much in the diversity of perspectives brought into the room as in the tools or frameworks applied.

The workshop revealed a deep interdependence between systemic transformation and the everyday realities of creative work. Discussions about AI, gender equity, decent work, or trade were never just abstract—they were grounded in the lived experience of creatives navigating change. For example, one participant noted that "the world of work needs to catch up very quickly to accommodate and incorporate the value that the informal creative industries can offer," while another emphasized that "grassroots work remains the most effective way to build capacity in the creative industries." These reflections pointed not only to what needs to change, but also to where meaningful change is already emerging—from the ground up.

The role of creativity itself was reframed—not only as a capacity for expression or innovation, but as a method for navigating complexity. Foresight, in this context, proved to be a useful tool for cultivating this mindset. It allowed participants to rehearse different futures, stress-test assumptions, and expand their sense of what is possible. It made space for "critical iteration," as one participant described it—a process of shaping ideas through multiple lenses, rather than rushing to solutions. The Civic Square presentation, with its bold rethinking of neighbourhood-scale climate transition, offered one such "island of coherence" in a system under strain—illustrating how local creativity can produce globally relevant strategies.

The exercise also surfaced some critical tensions. Many acknowledged that the current infrastructures of support—whether legal, educational, financial, or institutional—are ill-equipped to meet the demands of the future. At the same time, there was a strong sense that the cultural and creative economy holds enormous, still-untapped potential to drive broader societal transformation. As one participant asked: What if culture-based innovation, experimentation and discovery received as much political investment as conventional production and consumption? The challenge, as many saw it, is not just to improve what exists, but to do different things altogether—to design new models of participation, ownership, care, and value creation.

The conversations were shaped by a shared insistence that inclusion and sustainability are not simply goals to aim for, but practices that must infuse every layer of strategy, policy, and design. “Inclusion and sustainability are not outcomes—they are ways of thinking, working and planning,” one participant noted. The creative economy cannot be resilient if it is not equitable. Nor can it be innovative if it reproduces exclusionary systems. Participants called for intersectional approaches, co-designed learning pathways, better recognition of informal practices, and new forms of collaboration between artists, policymakers, investors, and educators.

Finally, the process itself became a demonstration of what is possible. Through speculative scenarios, tools, provocations, and design experiments, participants explored not only what could be different in the future, but how we might get there. This approach—rooted in curiosity, collaboration, and adaptability—mirrored many of the qualities that creatives themselves embody. “Foresight,” as one participant put it, “is a great tool for positive planning—futuring while staying calm together with other creative people is wonderful.” It also underscored the value of “power skills” like empathy, negotiation and cultural literacy—capabilities that are foundational for designing inclusive futures.

The insights gathered here are not definitive answers. They are a set of lenses, provocations, and strategic questions meant to spark further conversation and action. In the months ahead, we hope they will continue to inspire cross-sectoral dialogue, policy innovation, and new forms of collaboration across the cultural and creative economy.

Because ultimately, the most powerful outcome of this process may not be the futures we imagined—but the capacities we built together for imagining futures at all.

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