

PRESS RELEASE

Cultural ecosystems, empowering democracy and more: A glimpse into the future with the CIRCE fellows' pilot projects

Berlin, 18 November 2024: With its Creative Impact in Practice Fellowships, the Creative Impact Research Centre Europe (CIRCE) has generated a number of sustainable pilot projects from the cultural and creative economies. We find ourselves in a period of social transformation: we need committed individuals with fresh ideas, people who have the creative drive to advance positive change and are empowered to respond constructively to an ever-shifting landscape. Now, the results of the project, which was jointly funded by the German Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media (BKM) and the Berlin Senate Department for Culture and Social Cohesion, have been shared in the publication "Creative Impact in Practice".

CIRCE is an interdisciplinary international network comprising more than 150 members that brings together a wide range of actors, experts and institutions from the creative ecosystem. Its focus is 'creative impact', a concept that centres entities and initiatives that harness creative methods and practices to achieve social impact.

The 2024 fellowship programme empowered participants to successfully put their knowledge into practice with their pilot projects. The fellows drew on the efficient use of digital technologies and creative methods to strengthen the participation of marginalised groups and foster environmental and social sustainability. Another focus was democratic principles, with the fellows promoting, for example, active participation in their own cities and regions. As a result, fellows were able to develop new prototypes and methods with high social benefit that have the potential to be adapted to other areas. Partnerships with external organisations and specialist institutions also played an essential role in implementing the projects and developing them further. Fellow arjunraj, for instance, designed a storytelling method, "Körperkino: Embodied Cinema as the Future of Storytelling". This method can be successfully transferred to the museum or media outlet context, as illustrated by Joanna Gottschalk, a journalist at Deutsche Welle, who found this method afforded a tangibly useful impact to her work: *"As an international team of reporters and producers, we prioritise creating multifaceted video stories that incorporate diverse perspectives. arjunraj's workshop deepened our understanding of the sensitive connections between ourselves, our protagonists, and our reporting, adding another layer of nuance to our storytelling."*

CIRCE's focus is not, however, just on the fellows' pilot projects, but also extends to the network's impact: *"The fellows' impact is evident in their collective vision to transcend our current understanding and limitations of 'traditional' knowledge claims, measurement and evaluation. Their projects – whether focused on marginalised storytelling, human-centred design or trauma-informed creative processes and practices in multiple contexts – tell us something profound about experiential and embodied knowledge as currency"*, says Dr Marisa de Andrade, a coach and consultant in systems thinking and changemaking, and

Senior Lecturer in Health Policy at The University of Edinburgh. She is currently working with CIRCE on a paper exploring the measurement of creative impact: *“It’s only a matter of time until economists start working with these different definitions of value to ‘measure’ social impact through both tangible and intangible aspects of the human experience”.*

The results of the 2024 CIRCE Fellowships – Creative Impact in Practice – at a glance:

<i>Aiwen Yin</i>	Aiwen developed a toolkit to help intentional cultural and creative communities organise and empower each other in times of crisis. The project uses workshops and trials in a range of cities to demonstrate how ‘Survival Kits’ can promote sustainable community practices.
<i>arjunraj</i>	With ‘Körperkino’ , arjunraj has established an innovative method of collaborative storytelling that empowers marginalised groups to present their own perspectives. The method contributes to pluralistic storytelling and is already being used across workshops and media institutions.
<i>Barbora Andor Tóthová</i>	Barbora created ‘Caring Culture’ as a format that draws on strategies for participation to bring about change in cultural funding and sustainably bolster cultural ecosystems. The inclusive film programme and accompanying workshops foster exchange and political awareness in what is often a marginalised environment.
<i>Empowering Democracy</i>	The project demonstrates how companies can harness pro-democracy social media strategies to improve social cohesion. The combination of a toolkit and workshops helps companies to become credible actors in the democratisation process.
<i>Diana Raiselis</i>	Diana founded the ‘Queer Space Project’ to support LGBTQ+ creatives and club owners with the knowledge and networks to create sustainable cultural spaces. As such, the pilot programme promotes the establishment of clubs as safer spaces for the queer community.
<i>Flore Beaumont</i>	Flore developed an impact financing model that supports the production and dissemination of climate stories in the film industry. This innovative model aims to improve funding for more positive environmental narratives that mobilise more people to take sustainable action.
<i>Isabel Henschen</i>	Isabel was responsible for creating Lou&You , a digital support tool for people who have experienced violence whose user-friendly design fosters greater emotional security. The tool’s trauma-informed design approaches, which were developed as part of the CIRCE Fellowship, are now to be applied to additional platforms.
<i>Jorinde Schulz</i>	With ‘Spaceship SEZ’ , Jorinde developed a toolkit of creative strategies for civic participation in urban development

	processes. A series of workshops and exhibitions transformed the SEZ sports and leisure centre in Berlin into a space for alternative urban visions using methods from the cultural and creative economies.
<i>Maureen Selina Laverty</i>	Maureen's 'Trousers to Climb Trees' are a garment specially designed with neurodivergent people in mind to facilitate both movement and sensory comfort. Both the unique design and materials used in the trousers make them comfortable to wear, thereby aiding social participation. At the same time, the project's findings can be used across the board, for example by firefighters and athletes.
<i>Nepo Schrade</i>	Nepo's project 'Greening on the Verge' equips Berlin's marginalised communities with the tools to design public spaces and fosters climate-resilient neighbourhoods. The creative toolkit leverages spontaneous actions such as urban gardening to establish new approaches at the interface between urban planning and design for local climate justice.

About CIRCE:

The Creative Impact Research Centre Europe (CIRCE) strives to boost the resilience of the cultural and creative sectors and to bolster the industry's innovative potential sustainably. CIRCE leverages pan-European practice-based projects and expert analyses to underscore the importance of open pluralistic cultural and creative economies that focus on partnership. Furthermore, by trialling new approaches and ideas with creative methods, the network drives social change – and thus generates creative impact.

CIRCE Fellowships – Creative Impact in Practice – are funded by the German Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media (BKM) and the Berlin Senate Department for Culture and Social Cohesion. The Berlin-based u-institut GmbH & Co. KG is the central project office for the CIRCE Fellowships and manages the cross-European exchange between the network's members.

Media information

To explore the findings of the CIRCE Fellowships, please see our [final publication "Creative Impact in Practice"](#), which is available for download on our [website](#) or as a free print copy on request. From 25 November, our website will also feature detailed **project reports from our fellows**, and you can stay up to date with the latest developments via our [newsletter](#). Are you keen to hear from one of our fellows? We are more than happy to arrange an **interview**.

We would also like to invite you to our **final event in Berlin on 11 December** where you will have the opportunity to meet the CIRCE network in person, share ideas with the fellows and learn more about their groundbreaking projects. Please register for the event using this [link](#).

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact us:

Press contact and interview requests

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