CIRCE

Entrepreneurial Strategizing – towards a new Understanding of Strategies for the Cultural Sector

CIRCE Creative Impact Research Centre Europe

Zurich Centre for Creative Economies

Creative Impact Research Centre Europe
Research Lab Zurich ¦ Final Report

Entrepreneurial Strategizing – towards a new Understanding of Strategies for the Cultural Sector

Written and edited by Andy Schwendener

in collaboration with Hanja Blendin, Claudio Bucher, Simon Grand, Samuel Huber, Roman Page, Katrin Stowasser, Christoph Weckerle, and Justin Wong

CIRCE Fellows at this year's Creative Economies Forum 2023 at the Zurich University of the Arts. 05.10.23. © Ali Zigeli.

Creative Impact Research Centre Europe
Research Lab Zurich | Final Report

Zurich
Centre for
Creative
Economies

Creative Impact Research Centre Europe
Research Lab Zurich | Final Report

Zurich
Centre for
Creative
Economies

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

This final report of the Creative Impact Research Centre Europe (CIRCE) Research Lab Zurich focuses on entrepreneurial strategies in the creative economies.

The report introduces the Research Lab Zurich team, the research questions, the methods used, and the findings of six sub-projects that explore different aspects of strategizing practices in the creative sector. The sub-projects have been:

- **Organizing & Company Creations:** How actors use socio-material prototypes and the creative practice of strategy prototyping to make sense of emerging contexts and enact futures in the present.
- **Entrepreneurship in Contexts:** How the visual arts play a strategic role in leaderless and decentralised protests in Hong Kong, and how a participatory innovation lab is shaping the future of cultural funding in Zurich.
- **Value Creation & (E)valuation:** How to redefine government funding strategies based on new data and indicators, and how to measure the income and impact of creative workers in Switzerland and beyond.
- **Risky Projects & Uncertainties:** How musicians and producers use routines and improvisation to create pop music in the studio, and how to analyse and reflect on the creative process.
- **(Entrepreneurial) Skills**: How arts university curricula can be redesigned from discipline-based to skills-based, and how artificial intelligence can be used to match the skills of students and graduates with job opportunities in the corporate world.

The report also discusses the implications and recommendations of the research for the creative economies, the education sector, the corporate world, and policy makers. It concludes by highlighting the contribution of the CIRCE Research Lab Zurich to the professionalisation and innovation of the cultural policy debate in Switzerland and Europe, and by outlining future research directions and collaborations.

Creative Impact Research Centre Europe
Research Lab Zurich | Final Report

Zurich
Centre for
Creative
Economies

Research Lab Zurich | Final Report

Entrepreneurial Strategizing – towards a new Understanding of Strategies for the Cultural Sector

The Zurich Centre for Creative Economies (ZCCE) is a centre of excellence for research, teaching, incubation, and consultancy. As the ZCCE we are part of the Zurich University of the Arts - where art education, design, film, fine arts, music, dance, theatre, and transdisciplinary studies are taught under one roof.

In 2023, our Research Lab has focused on entrepreneurial strategies in the creative economies. Our multidisciplinary team includes researchers, practitioners, communicators, and administrators. We have been involved in producing papers, workshops, artworks, and organising of exchange formats across five sub-themes. Closely linked to these activities is our annual Creative Economies Forum, which brings together creative professionals, entrepreneurs, researchers, students, alumnae:i, and policy makers from Switzerland and beyond. Our aim was to establish and analyse strategizing practices of the creative economies as an important approach to solving current challenges between culture, business, education, politics, and society.

But how can strategizing practices be establishes when many actors in the creative economies are unsure of – or even deny – the relevance of strategy for their own creative practice? Instead, they tend to emphasise their focus on driving initiatives, projects, and collectives forward to achieve an ever-greater impact within their chosen field. This understanding, however, has surprising similarities with Rumelt's definition of strategy, which succinctly describes it as the way "how an organization will move forward" (Rumelt, 2011, pp. 6–7). Indeed, strategy appears to play an important but under-researched role in the creative economies.

Embedded in our understanding of strategy are three key aspects: First, we understand strategy as continuously moving in a process of strategizing (Jarzabkowski & Spee, 2009; Whittington, 1996). Second, such strategizing is not limited to C-level managers but unfolds through collective engagement across organizations (Jarzabkowski et al., 2007; MacKay et al., 2021). And third, strategizing is concerned with future directions and the uncertainty that is an inherent part of contexts that are just about to emerge (Gomez & Jones, 2000; Grand, 2016). All these aspects resonate with creative practice, as they aptly describe the challenges creative practitioners face when seeking impact beyond their individual practice.

Artists, singers, designers, and creative entrepreneurs need to make sense not only of what has happened in the past and is happening now, but also of what will happen in the future. Embedded in today's perpetual state of crisis, the questions leading up to this challenge can best be described as wicked problems (Rittel & Webber, 1973). Being wicked, they don't have a clear formulation, require the involvement of multiple stakeholders with sometimes conflicting values and motivations, and are characterized by high interdependencies. In short, they need to be continuously defined out of the circumstances. Making sense of the process thus becomes more important than the final solution (Buchanan, 1992). But how can actors make sense of something that does not yet exist?

Creative Impact Research Centre Europe
Research Lab Zurich | Final Report

Zurich
Centre for
Creative
Economies

To unlock the potential of the creative economies to address our most pressing societal challenges, we need to develop a new understanding of strategies in and for the cultural sector. Three key takeaways from our theme "Entrepreneurial Strategies within the Creative Economies" are:

1. *We do not need four-year strategic plans, but ongoing strategic processes.*

    Traditional strategic planning often involves the creation of fixed, long-term plans. However, in the context of the creative economies, the dynamics and rapid changes require a more adaptive approach. This means recognizing that strategies need to evolve continuously in response to new opportunities and challenges in the creative sector. It involves fostering a culture of adaptability and continuous learning, enabling actors and organizations to remain responsive to the ever-changing landscape of the creative economies.

    Proposed Actions: Rethinking the Concept of Strategy
    Shift the focus from theoretical strategic plans to the practical actions and practices of actors and organizations within the creative economies. This involves understanding how creative sector actors engage in strategizing – making decisions, adapting to change, and navigating complexity. In addition, recognizing the entrepreneurial aspect highlights the role of these actors in creating the conditions for innovation and new creations, emphasizing a hands-on, practical approach to strategy development.

2. *We do not need ex ante determinations of results, but risky projects.*

    The creative economies thrive on innovation, and innovation inherently involves a degree of risk. Fixing outcomes before a project starts may stifle the creative process. Encouraging risky projects therefore implies a willingness to embrace uncertainty and experimentation within the creative economies. Rather than seeking predetermined outcomes, the emphasis is on fostering an environment that supports and rewards bold, innovative endeavours. This could include providing resources and support for projects that push boundaries and challenge the status quo, recognizing that not all ventures will follow a predictable path but may lead to ground-breaking results.

    Proposed Actions: Thinking Beyond Established Sub-Markets
    This action calls for transcending traditional boundaries and seeking collaborations and partnerships beyond the confines of the established sub-markets of the creative industries. By tapping into synergies with industries outside the immediate creative sector, there's an opportunity to broaden the impact and reach of creative endeavours and promote a cross-disciplinary approach to addressing societal challenges. We therefore suggest breaking out of silos and exploring intersections with other economic sectors that have a common interest in shaping a desirable future for Europe.

Creative Impact Research Centre Europe
Research Lab Zurich | Final Report

Zurich
Centre for
Creative
Economies

> 3. *We need not a narrow understanding of resources in terms of financial means, but a holistic view that includes values, governance, and stakeholders.*

A holistic view of resources means recognising that financial resources are only one aspect of a wider spectrum. Values, such as cultural significance and societal impact, governance structures that enable effective decision-making, and positive stakeholder relationships all contribute to the overall health and sustainability of the creative economies. This holistic perspective encourages a more comprehensive and nuanced approach to resource management.

Proposed Actions: Rethinking Governance Processes
Adapt governance structures to align with the dynamic nature of creative economies, emphasizing openness and risk-taking. This involves rethinking how decisions are made and resources are allocated within the creative economies. Embracing openness in governance allows for greater flexibility and responsiveness to emerging opportunities. In addition, encouraging risk-taking in funding strategies means moving away from overly cautious approaches and recognizing that some level of risk is inherent in supporting innovative projects.

… and Redefining Assessment and Evaluation Schemes

Recognise the unique impact of creative economies and develop measurement frameworks that go beyond traditional metrics. This action involves creating evaluation criteria that capture the multiple impacts of creative activities, including cultural enrichment, social cohesion, and economic contributions. By redefining evaluation methods, there's an opportunity to demonstrate the wider value that creative activities bring to society, going beyond purely quantitative measures to include qualitative and societal indicators.

In summary, these proposed actions aim to promote a more dynamic, adaptive, and holistic approach to strategy, governance, and evaluation in the creative economies, recognizing the unique challenges and opportunities of this vibrant and rapidly evolving sector.

Zooming-In and Out on different Contexts with different Strategy Practices

We were working on five related sub-themes that are all interconnected:

1. *Organizing & Company Creations* with Samuel Huber
2. *Entrepreneurship in Contexts* with Claudio Bucher and Justin Wong
3. *Value Creation & (E)valuations* with Roman Page
4. *Risky Projects & Uncertainties* with Simon Grand and Andy Schwendener
5. *(Entrepreneurial) Skills* with Hanja Blendin, Samuel Huber, Andy Schwendener, and Katrin Stowasser

The following figure 1 provides an overview of the six research projects within these sub-themes. Nine researchers and creatives from different backgrounds have been working on

Creative Impact Research Centre Europe
Research Lab Zurich | Final Report

Zurich
Centre for
Creative
Economies

research projects that have an impact in different contexts: within the Zurich University of the Arts, in the general context of Switzerland, in the context of Europe, or even reaching the Asian continent with Hong Kong.
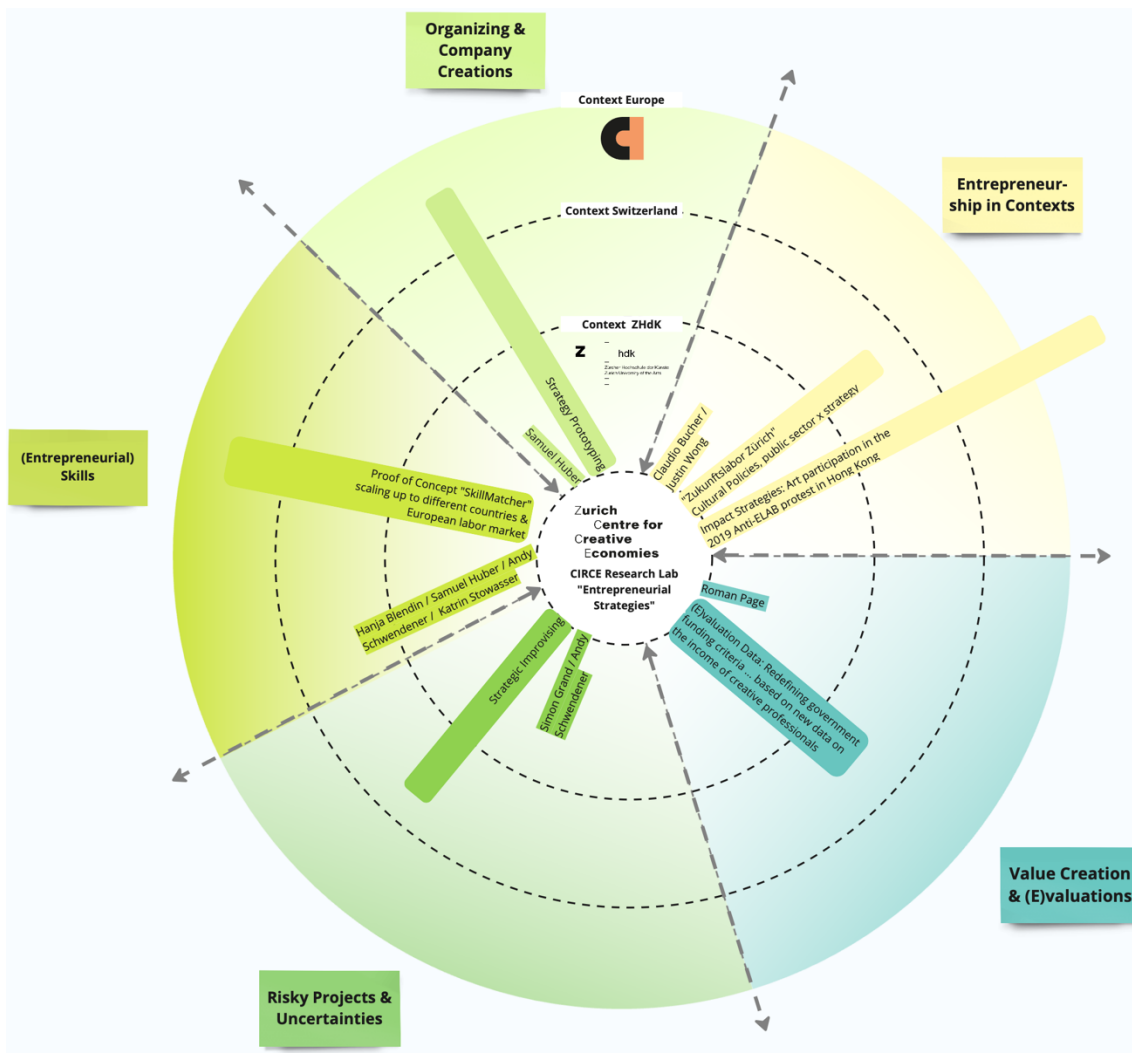

Figure 1: Overview of the six research projects, categorized according to the respective sub-themes and their researcher in charge.

WHAT? Along these sub-themes around entrepreneurial strategies, we wanted to find out at different levels of granularity how creative actors, organisations within the creative economies, public communities, or public (funding) institutions develop their strategies.

HOW? Through observations, interviews, workshops, and conference visits, we immersed ourselves in the private and productive moments of creative economies actors (zooming in), while through quantitative research methods we gained a holistic view of the creative economies (zooming out).

SO WHAT? Across the sub-projects, zooming-in uncovered a nuanced interplay of strategic activities between actors, revealing complex patterns. Understanding these patterns was crucial both at a detailed, project-specific level and when translated into broader contexts within the creative economies.

Creative Impact Research Centre Europe
Research Lab Zurich | Final Report

Zurich
Centre for
Creative
Economies

Organizing & Company Creations

THE WHAT: Samuel Huber's research project focused on emerging contexts – contexts in which new initiatives are organised and created. His research explored how an increased awareness of strategizing practices within the creative economies can emancipate and empower a diverse set of actors. Moving beyond the dominant analysis of discursive practices to examine material practices, he showed how creative practice plays a crucial role in making sense of emerging contexts. Applying a socio-material lens (Barad, 2003; Orlikowski & Scott, 2008), he studied practices that are not limited to language but emphasise the relationality of a variety of artistic and creative forms of expression. His research defined these artefacts, embodiments, and spaces as socio-material prototypes. In doing so, Samuel was able to show how actors in the creative economies engage in what we call strategy prototyping to enable a wide range of actors to collaborate inclusively across disciplines, to make sense of what is about to emerge, and to take up a proactive role in creating the identified alternative futures in the present. Using strategy prototyping as a method, the ZCCE was also able to successfully participate in the EIT Culture & Creativity[1] call for proposals.

THE HOW: Samuel worked his PhD[2] on "Strategizing as prototyping: a socio-material approach to strategic sensemaking". During CIRCE he further developed the topic in new contexts. The results were presented in an academic paper at the International Symposium on Process Organization Studies[3].

In doing so, he further developed the topic of his PhD and focused on the creative economies (figure 2). In his PhD he had the rare opportunity to follow the development of a strategic initiative from its very inception as an abstract idea on a sticky note to its final realization and nationwide roll-out as a joint venture. The study focuses on the collaboration between a Japanese-German design studio and a major insurance company that made this possible. In particular, the success of the initiative can be attributed in part to the persuasive enactment of its desired future, which acted as a guiding principle throughout the process. By embodying this future, the initiative was able to make this enactment a reality.

Data collection included material artefacts, ethnographic observations, and conversational interviews. The socio-material approach led the researcher to pay particular attention to socio-material practices. He carefully collected data from non-human actors and the situations in which they are embedded, being aware that they may be in flux at the moment of collection and at risk of being "personified" by us (Introna, 2013). These activities led to the collection of 32 prototypes, which in turn functioned as an aggregation of further iterations.

---

[1] For more information: https://eit-culture-creativity.eu
[2] https://www.alexandria.unisg.ch/entities/publication/790b9840-d54b-4988-ac69-0efe13afdb7d/details
[3] More about PROS: https://osofficer.wixsite.com/pros

Creative Impact Research Centre Europe
Research Lab Zurich | Final Report

Zurich
Centre for
Creative
Economies

*Figure 2: Samuel speaking at this year's Creative Economies Forum 2023
at the Zurich University of the Arts. 05.10.23. © Ali Zigeli.*

THE FINDINGS: The following key findings can be derived from his work for the Zurich Research Lab. Samuel's research introduces two key concepts to explain how actors collectively make sense of what is not yet there. On the one hand, he enriches strategizing research by introducing *socio-material prototypes* that enable *strategic sensemaking* through inquiring, projection, intra-acting and oscillation. On the other hand, he also introduces strategy prototyping, which is constituted by the continuous movement between crystallizing and liquefying and thus describing a formative practice of enacting futures.

The first key insight revolves around the introduction and evaluation of *socio-material prototypes*, a particular type of material artefact. Applied to the context of the creative economies and beyond, they can be used to facilitate collective sensemaking. Effective socio-material prototypes engage in generative inquiry to learn more about possible futures. They use socio-material practices to project futures into the present and make them accessible to existing stakeholders. In doing so, they possess their own agency as they intra-act across stakeholders in a process of sensemaking. This intra-action is even more powerful when socio-material prototypes manage to simultaneously enact concrete states and remain open to change according to the resonance they generate. In short, they oscillate between crystallized and liquefied states to iteratively integrate and collectivize resonance. We thus contribute directly to recent research on strategic sensemaking, which shows how organizational resources are collectivized to be strategically mobilized (Nissi & Pälli, 2020; Salomaa & Lehtinen, 2022).

The second key insight focuses on the practice of *strategy prototyping,* in which s*ocio-material prototypes* are embedded. Its interrelated sub-practices of crystallizing and liquefying are both material and discursive in the way they interweave the synthesis of tangible enactments, the resonance generated, and the re-incorporation of such reactions

Creative Impact Research Centre Europe
Research Lab Zurich | Final Report

Zurich
Centre for
Creative
Economies

into socio-material prototypes again. Samuel thus extend the notion of opening and closing phases as introduced by Gioia and Chittipetti (1991) by extending such movements beyond sequential temporal phases and describe them as simultaneous movements that integral to the practice of strategy prototyping.

Together, *socio-material prototypes* and *strategy prototyping* form a socio-material practice bundle that explains how creative practices take on a vital role in strategizing by creating collectivized strategy artefacts and embedding them tightly in a practice that continuously moves them forward.

Entrepreneurship in Contexts – Kultur Labor Zürich

THE WHAT: The ZCCE wishes to emphasize that in the creative economies, a wide variety of actors in a wide variety of contexts are interdependent. For creative workers, cultural funding institutions, among others, can be of great relevance. The project "Kultur Labor Zürich" aimed to investigate the strategic development of one of these institutions to meet the diverse demands of its stakeholders. The process was scientifically accompanied by ZCCE research fellow Claudio Bucher.

As a participatory, multi-year innovation laboratory within the framework of a cultural strategy development, the "Kultur Labor Zürich 2020-2023" represented a novelty in the field of public cultural funding in Switzerland. Against the background of the impact of technological, societal, cultural, and ecological developments on the arts and culture sector, it addressed the relevance and topicality of the existing concept of culture and art and the practices of cultural funding in the city of Zurich. The starting point was the question of whether the existing concept of art and the selection and evaluation practices are still up to date and whether they are gaps in the funding strategy, e.g., regarding the cultural representation of social and aesthetic diversity.

THE HOW: Initiated by the Culture Department of the City of Zurich, elements of an innovative and future-oriented funding system were developed, tested, and evaluated in a process lasting about three years and with a funding volume of about 570,000 euros. One aim was to incorporate the results into the city's 2024-2027 cultural strategy. The project was significant in that it was able to critically examine the foundations and framework conditions of cultural funding in Zurich to better respond to current and future challenges and opportunities in the arts and culture sector.

The project started before CIRCE. However, as the Research Lab Zurich coincided with the final phase of Kultur Labor Zürich[4], interesting insights were generated. The project took an interdisciplinary and participatory approach, bringing together actors from different fields to address forward-looking public funding strategies. The project team included, for example, a game designer, a digital expert, a film composer, and a diversity expert, as well as the internal department heads of the culture department in the areas of visual arts or jazz, rock, and pop. The "Kultur Labor" was thus a setting that made it possible, at least temporarily, to work across departments and with users and target groups at eye level on future-oriented issues, specifically: to identify fields of action and to develop pilot projects, tenders,

---

[4] official homepage for further information: https://www.stadt-zuerich.ch/kultur/en/index/funding/kultur-labor-zuerich.html

Creative Impact Research Centre Europe
Research Lab Zurich | Final Report

Zurich
Centre for
Creative
Economies

procedures, and prioritizations. In the feedback and adjudication processes, the network was expanded to include specific topics, e.g., around "participation" by a representative of Diversity Arts Culture, the advisory office for diversity development in Berlin's cultural sector.

The project used Design Thinking (see figure 3 for a workshop setting) and agile working as an experimental field to test new prototypical solutions to the strategic challenges facing the public sector. A core team led the process, supported by ZCCE in the role of participant observer or 'critical friend'. The development of the lab was a dynamic process that continuously integrated the findings of the scientific monitoring. The process included the development and testing of new selection procedures and tools, the opening of the funding system to new art forms, and, for example, the implementation of a digital participation platform. The challenges and changes in the process were related to the organization, processes, methods, and the level of cultural administration, including the implementation of agile ways of working (e.g., no 'experimentation clause' in the legal framework; personnel changes at executive level). The working method allowed for analysis and reflection on existing practices and concepts of cultural funding, while providing space for experimentation and critical discussion - outside of established funding mechanisms. By using design methods, it was possible to create experimental spaces, i.e., a lab, to shape even rather static contexts in an entrepreneurial way. This allows for innovative and sustainable solutions.

Figure 3: Design Thinking Workshop within the "Kultur Labor Zürich", 2022. © Ali Zigeli.

THE FINDINGS: Where cultural workers have a lot of freedom for their "Risky Projects" to face uncertainties, state funding institutions tend not to have this freedom due to legal

Creative Impact Research Centre Europe
Research Lab Zurich | Final Report

Zurich
Centre for
Creative
Economies

regulations. The "Kultur Labor Zürich" is a counter proposal and uses similar practices as the cultural workers themselves who are to be funded. The project has produced important insights and learnings that are relevant to the future design of funding systems. In the priority area of action Cultural Participation, the multi-year lab project was an exemplary participatory strategy development process, in which the culture department worked with cultural practitioners and professionals to develop new forms of funding. The "Community Based" pilot project, for example, transferred funding competence to a selected community. Related to this is the interpretation of cultural concepts and understandings, and the definition and value of art and culture in the context of pluralistic negotiations in an increasingly diverse urban society. The results of the lab have led to a broadening and opening of the funding system for open-disciplinary projects and digital art forms, which has made it possible to reach cultural practitioners who had only limited access in the existing system. New selection procedures and tools were developed and tested, and the introduction of digital participation platforms was recommended. The pilot projects enabled the creation of thematic, inter-agency linkages and networks. The lab highlighted the importance of the arts in addressing global challenges such as climate change and provided additional impetus.

The "Kultur Labor Zürich 2020-2023" was an exemplary project that showed new ways in cultural funding and provided impulses and changes in the cultural funding practice of the city of Zurich. It served as a model for an agile, forward-looking cultural administration and showed how innovative solutions for cultural funding can be developed through interdisciplinary, participatory collaboration. The results and experiences from this project can serve as a basis and inspiration for further strategic processes and innovations in cultural funding, both in Zurich and in other cities and regions that wish to explore and exploit similar challenges and opportunities in the arts and culture sector.

Entrepreneurship in Contexts – Impact Strategies in Hong Kong

THE WHAT: This research by Justin Wong, a London-based Hong Kong political cartoonist, explored how the visual arts played a strategic role in leaderless and decentralized protests and the tactics used by artists. Drawing on the impact of visual arts during three landmark social movements in Hong Kong over the past decade – the Anti-National Education Movement (2012), the Umbrella Movement (2014), and the Anti-ELAB protest (2019) – the study sheds light on the expansive strategic impact of art. During the Anti-ELAB protest, the internet saw a proliferation of illustrations and graphics, supported by a large community of artists and citizens. In the context of the decentralized nature of the protest, these artworks skilfully bridged the leadership gap in a highly strategic and entrepreneurial way. Leveraging social media, the artworks transcended their conventional roles in mobilization and propaganda, facilitating internal communication and refining protest tactics. They were also instrumental in shaping the identity of the protest, documenting one of Hong Kong's most significant demonstrations.

While existing research has largely focused on the role of social media in the decentralized nature of the Anti-ELAB movement, there is a conspicuous gap in understanding the compensatory and strategic role of the visual arts in such a leaderless framework. This research ambitiously seeks to bridge this void by:

Creative Impact Research Centre Europe
Research Lab Zurich | Final Report

Zurich
Centre for
Creative
Economies

1. Offering an in-depth analysis of the multiple roles played by illustrations and graphic artworks in the movement.

2. Delving into the genesis and dynamics of the creative clusters, focusing on strategic practices such as the "open source" ethos, the sharing of resource, the resonating impact of Lennon Walls (see figure 4 for an example) throughout the cities, the collaborative synergy between artists, and the intertwining of internet culture leading to the emergence of new protest aesthetics.

Figure 4: Lennon Wall – protest notes and messages supporting freedom of speech and human rights during 2019 Hong Kong umbrella movement. Retrieved on 22.11.23. © stock.adobe.com

THE HOW: This experiment used content analysis as its primary research method. By meticulously examining symbols, textual elements, and various graphic components, Justin aimed to decipher and interpret the messages inherent in the creative works of the Anti-ELAB movement that he researched. Beyond the immediate content, he delved into the context surrounding each piece. Factors such as the artist's background, the distribution channels of the artworks, and audience responses were analysed. This comprehensive approach enabled Justin to identify the strategic roles and functions these artworks played within the larger framework of the movement.

To facilitate the study, Justin based his analysis on an image archive which was constructed, comprising digital images collected between June 2019 and January 2020. The archive includes a diverse range of images, such as illustrations, cartoons, graphic design, paintings, as well as photographs of graffiti and street art found on Lennon Walls. One of his own works is displayed in figure 5 below.

Creative Impact Research Centre Europe
Research Lab Zurich | Final Report

Zurich
Centre for
Creative
Economies

*Figure 5: "Edward Hopper" by Justin Wong – one of his own
works during the anti ELAB-movement. © Justin Wong.*

In order to present a structured overview of the works, Justin used his CIRCE year to use a tagging system to categorize the images. Using these tags, he was able to carry out comprehensive analyses, delving into both the explicit messages and the broader context of each artwork. In fact, this method is not without its limitations. Many artworks may embody multiple functions that the artists themselves might not have originally intended. Categorization becomes a challenge when works transcend singular definitions. In addition, analysing works, especially those created by the public, within the confines of established art frameworks can be a complex process.

THE FINDINGS: Justin outlined the twelve different strategic roles that artwork played within the Anti-ELAB movement, encompassing a range of both external and internal functions. These roles include commentary, satire, confrontation, explanation, propaganda, documentation, rallying, mobilisation, tactic, consolation, ideology, and self-expression. This exhaustive categorization underscores the fact that artists did not simply create artworks in general support of the movement but were acutely attuned to the specific strategic demands from the protesters' point of view. This shift in the artistic spectrum transformed artists from mere creators to key contributors with an entrepreneurial mindset that guided the movement.

The wide range of artistic roles was shaped by a confluence of factors in a unique context. The trio of dominant social media platforms - LiHKG, Telegram, and Facebook - each served different strategic purposes. LiHKG was central to tactical discussions, Telegram was essential for action planning, and Facebook was instrumental in dissemination information through live streaming. These platforms formed the digital backbone of the movement. Within this interconnected social media matrix, a creative consortium emerged, ranging from

14

Creative Impact Research Centre Europe
Research Lab Zurich | Final Report

Zurich
Centre for
Creative
Economies

professional artists to everyday citizens. Although these individuals operated autonomously, they managed to harness synergies through joint campaigns – exactly what we mean by entrepreneurial strategizing. The rise of open-source culture, which stemmed from the leaderless nature of the movement, amplified the sharing of digital assets, including art, over a distributed network. The emergence of the 'public sea', a vast archive of images and artworks collected on Facebook and Telegram, revolutionized the way artworks were disseminated. Furthermore, the proliferation of Lennon Walls across the city updated the 'Be Water' philosophy and offered a novel approach to the occupation of space. The artworks' journey from virtual platforms to tangible spaces not only intensified their impact, but also reshaped the artists' methodologies as the format of Lennon Walls continued to evolve.

Value Creation & (E)valuation

THE WHAT: Another research team led by Roman Page was interested in what new data would be needed to redefine government funding strategies in the current era of shrinking budgets. They were looking at a) what statistical data would be needed to define robust policies, and in particular b) how heterogeneous the income situation of creative actors is.

In the context of the consultation on the Culture Dispatch 2025 - 2028, the Zurich Research Lab aimed to contribute to the objectification and professionalisation of the cultural policy debate in Switzerland. More detailed knowledge about the income of creative workers is a basic prerequisite for the upcoming discussions on issues such as adequate remuneration, social security, new funding strategies and more. The data situation in Switzerland is not yet sufficient in this respect. To achieve this, we have also experimented with new formats: Closed workshops bring together people who would not otherwise talk to each other in public because of their different – sometimes political – interests. The ZCCE provided a basis for discussion ex ante and moderated the process.

THE HOW: For this study the Zurich Research Lab worked with different data sources – public, web, experimental. We distinguished between a focus on «occupations / activities», and a focus on «industries / sectors». Most of the analyses were carried out for the first time for Switzerland.

The research process followed an iterative development strategy using feedback circles and improvements.

1.   Starting with a literature review and own statistical data analysis on the topic of «income of creative workers», different income data were calculated. This led to a first conclusion that a strategic and thus sustainable discussion on the income of cultural and creative workers in Switzerland is currently not possible - neither in isolation nor as part of an overarching (cultural) policy debate.

2.   In an internal workshop with Zurich Research Lab members, we presented and discussed basic observations based on the Swiss Labour Force Survey (SLFS) of the Federal Statistical Office (FSO). Are the analyses plausible? What do they say? What questions do they raise? How do we want to communicate the results?

Creative Impact Research Centre Europe
Research Lab Zurich | Final Report

Zurich
Centre for
Creative
Economies

We concluded that our method has advantages and that we should pursue the approach further.

3. To further reflect on our research, we held a workshop with actors of the Swiss cultural sector, such as local and national government's departments of culture, local and national cultural promoters, (umbrella) organisations of professional cultural and creative workers, associations, and others.

    After a short methodological introduction and a presentation of the first findings by the Zurich Research Lab, an discussion took place on the two topics «What could an evidence-based cultural policy look like?» and «How do we strengthen the situation of cultural and creative workers?».

It became clear that Switzerland is at the beginning of a relevant discussion here and that a contribution of the ZCCE to the professionalisation of the debate is necessary and welcome.

4. To enter the public debate, we published our research and analysis as a contribution of the Zurich Research Lab to consultation the Swiss Federal Government on the Culture Dispatch 2025 – 2028, in an online paper «Focus on cultural policy: Income of cultural and creative workers» on our research website.[5]

Based on the ongoing discussions about the income situation of artists and creative workers, we point out a fundamental need for clarification in in Switzerland.

5. As part of the Creative Economies Forum 2023, we also organised a closed expert workshop (figure 6) on the topic of "Creative Economies in Data: What data do we need for a strategic and sustainable discussion? Where are the relevant data gaps for stakeholders in politics, business, education, and cultural promotion? Is the focus on income or on the much broader dimensions of "good work" (wages; quality of employment; education and training; working conditions; work-life balance; and consultative participation & collective representation)?

---

[5] https://creativeeconomies.com/schwerpunkt-kulturpolitik-zur-einkommenssituation-von-kreativschaffenden/

Creative Impact Research Centre Europe
Research Lab Zurich | Final Report

Zurich
Centre for
Creative
Economies

*Figure 6: Workshop with data scientists from Switzerland and Germany at the
Creative Economies Forum 2023 at the Zurich University of the Arts. 05.10.23. © Ali Zigeli.*

The research process, especially the exchange and evaluation with cultural sector actors, led
to a continuous improvement of our research. Further meetings with cultural policy decision
makers at national and regional level are already planned for 2024.

THE FINDINGS: Using the example of "income of creative workers", Roman Page's team
shows that key aspects of the definition of the cultural sector and its interfaces have not been
clarified in the Swiss cultural policy debate.

In direct relation to the consultation on the Culture Dispatch 2025 – 2028, our analysis
focused on four aspects:

1. *Heterogeneity: The internal structure of the cultural sector*

    If we look at the incomes of creative workers along individual groups, they vary widely
    (figure 7). The result is a highly heterogeneous cultural sector or cultural and creative
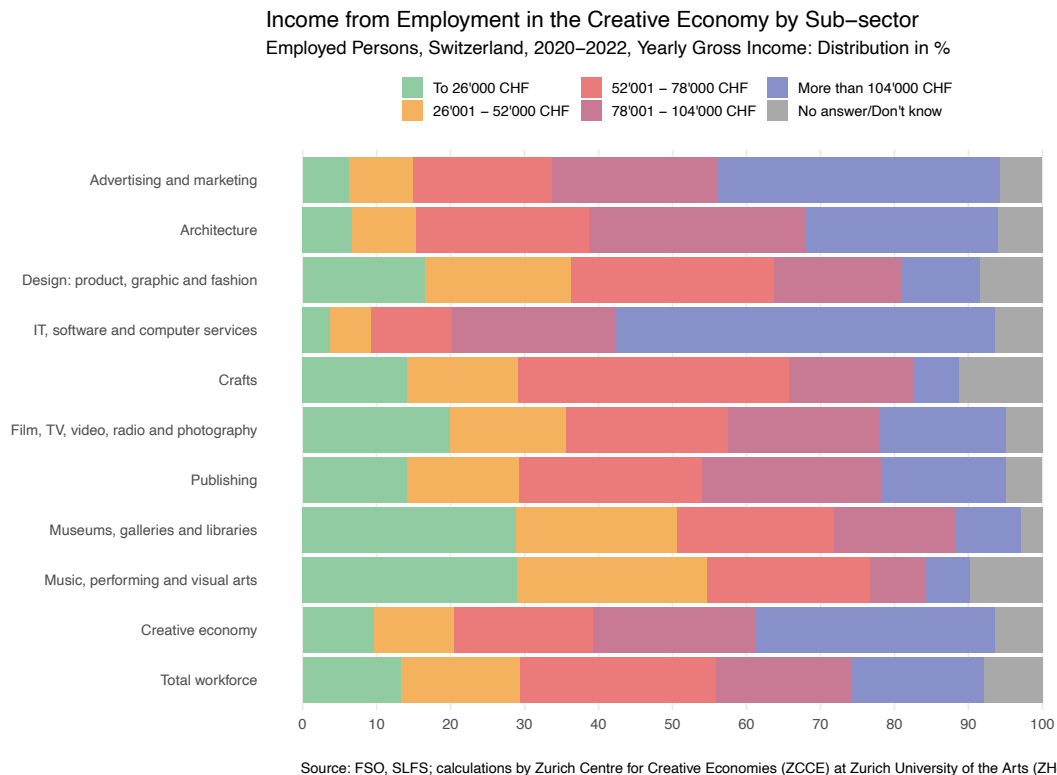   industries sector.

Creative Impact Research Centre Europe
Research Lab Zurich | Final Report

Zurich
Centre for
Creative
Economies

Income from Employment in the Creative Economy by Sub–sector
Employed Persons, Switzerland, 2020–2022, Yearly Gross Income: Distribution in %

Legend:
- To 26'000 CHF
- 26'001 – 52'000 CHF
- 52'001 – 78'000 CHF
- 78'001 – 104'000 CHF
- More than 104'000 CHF
- No answer/Don't know

Source: FSO, SLFS; calculations by Zurich Centre for Creative Economies (ZCCE) at Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK)

Figure 7: Income from employment in the creative economy by sub-sector.
© Zurich Centre for Creative Economies at Zurich University of the Arts.

2. Governance: Policy areas to be involved

Income within an industry often depends on dimensions that are difficult to influence by traditional cultural policy measures. Multiple jobs are by no means common everywhere, but they are found where incomes are low. Interfaces with fields such as research or innovation are financially attractive but outside the scope of cultural policy. A shortage of skilled labour in the economy has a significant impact on salaries. Digitalisation skills make a big difference.

3. Ecosystem: Cultural and creative workers outside the cultural sector

A significant proportion (around 50%) of cultural and creative workers are not employed in the cultural sector. "Embedded" means actors using their performance skills in a consulting context; game designers using their storytelling skills in the non-profit sector for sustainability strategies; curators facilitating complex negotiations in

Creative Impact Research Centre Europe
Research Lab Zurich | Final Report

Zurich
Centre for
Creative
Economies

global companies; ... The incomes of cultural and creative workers outside the
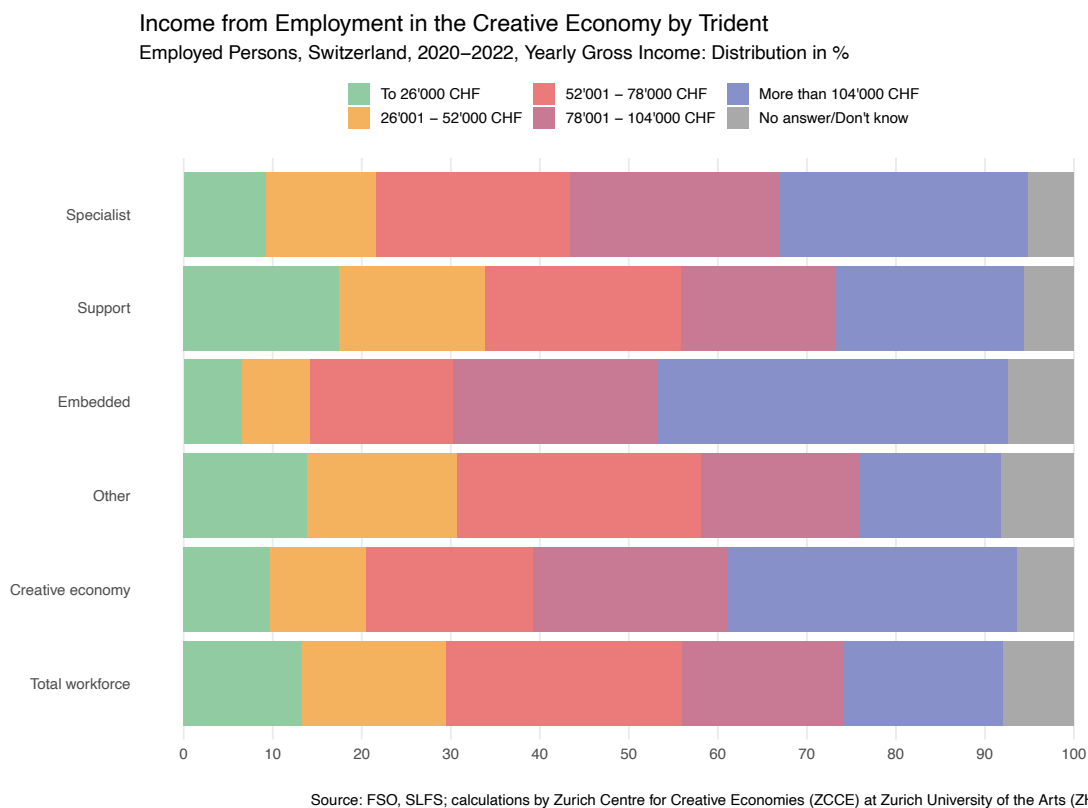cultural sector (embedded) are higher than those inside (figure 8).

Income from Employment in the Creative Economy by Trident
Employed Persons, Switzerland, 2020–2022, Yearly Gross Income: Distribution in %

Legend:
- To 26'000 CHF
- 26'001 – 52'000 CHF
- 52'001 – 78'000 CHF
- 78'001 – 104'000 CHF
- More than 104'000 CHF
- No answer/Don't know

Categories (y-axis): Specialist, Support, Embedded, Other, Creative economy, Total workforce

x-axis: 0 to 100

Source: FSO, SLFS; calculations by Zurich Centre for Creative Economies (ZCCE) at Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK)

Figure 8: Income from employment in the creative economy by trident.
© Zurich Centre for Creative Economies at Zurich University of the Arts.

4.   Monitoring: New / Other Data and Indicators

Today, the production of relevant statistical information with a high degree of
granularity is limited.

For a strategic and future-oriented discussion of the cultural sector and its interfaces,

- more differentiated categories than e.g. artists or cultural workers are needed
  ("Heterogeneity of the cultural sector")
- cultural policy needs to be complemented at least by dimensions of education,
  innovation, and labour market policy ("Governance in/for the cultural sector")
- the career paths of cultural and creative actors should be better understood - in terms
  of content, personnel, finance, and structure. What exactly is "atypical employment"?
  What is the reference model? ("Ecosystem of the cultural sector")
- indicators are needed to complement the existing set ("Monitoring the cultural sector")

Meaningful discussions about the cultural sector require indicators that complement existing
data. In Switzerland, a strategic and thus sustainable discourse on the income of cultural and

Creative Impact Research Centre Europe
Research Lab Zurich | Final Report

Zurich
Centre for
Creative
Economies

creative workers – either in isolation or as part of an overarching (cultural) policy debate – is currently hampered.

There is a lack of better data on, for example, second jobs, voluntary work, atypical forms of employment and freelance income, as well as sector-specific data on the composition and development of income flows, including by gender. Supplementary online data sources (web scraping), e.g. from online job advertisements, data from social and digital media platforms, industry associations, collecting societies and public-private data cooperation would be appropriate.

Risky Projects & Uncertainties

THE WHAT: Simon Grand and Andy Schwendener asked how actors in the creative economies manage uncertainties while participating in often risky projects. They asked how creative actors repeatedly create the conditions for artistic and commercial success. What practices and processes (Langley, 2009; Nicolini, 2009, 2013; Nicolini & Monteiro, 2017) do they use strategically to be repeatedly creative, and what are their evaluation criteria?

To answer these questions, they focused on the process of record creation in the pop music industry in the context of ongoing challenges such as advancing music creation and disrupted business models (Wikström, 2020). The research explored how artists strategically use routines to facilitate systematic improvisation.

In the studio, a unique blend of highly routinised and strategic improvisation was observed in music creation. In contrast to the traditional view of improvisation as non-routinised (Cunha et al., 1999), the study emphasises its systematic nature, particularly in the recording studio. It aims to understand how improvisation unfolds in this context, where musicians and producers work together to record and edit tracks, adapting creations to mainstream musical expectations while maintaining uniqueness.

THE HOW: For the Zurich Research Lab, the researchers presented their work on strategic improvising at various international events, such as the "1st Transalpine Organizing Creativity Paper Development Workshop" at the Johannes Kepler University in Linz (AT). By reflecting on their research experiences with an expert audience, they were able to write an academic paper on strategic improvising, which will be published in 2024 in a special volume on routine dynamics in the prestigious journal "Research in the Sociology of Organizations".

In this strand, the researchers zoomed in on the most intimate and creative moments of a creative process. They explored the work of music producers and their artists in the studio - where new tracks and albums are created and tomorrow's mainstream is born (figure 9). Through field observations, interviews, and action research approaches (one of the researchers is a member of a researched band), they were able to answer research questions about strategizing during improvising. The following key findings can be derived from their work for the Zurich Research Lab.

Creative Impact Research Centre Europe
Research Lab Zurich | Final Report

Zurich
Centre for
Creative
Economies

*Figure 9: Observed synth-pop band in the music studio
in Stuttgart, Germany. 17.05.22. © Andy Schwendener.*

In their research journey they used ethnographic observations and interviews, capturing non-verbal music creation through video, photography, and track analysis. Simon and Andy delved into the visual and other dimensions to unveil how routines evolve in context. Focusing on the making of records, they explored individual song phases and compilations.

The more academics results were regularly reflected with the research team at the Zurich Lab to create further impact for an extended circle of interested actors within CIRCE and the creative economies.

THE FINDINGS: In the creation of pop music, improvisational techniques constantly generate novelty. However, simply creating something new is not enough in art, as we must consider art as an assertion – pop music should be both connectable and distinguishable from others. During the production process the actors oscillate between mainstream and uniqueness. They circumvent this uncertainty by strategically switching to a "what if" mode to search for new possibilities and perspectives.

The ethnographic study of pop music creation highlights essential moments of improvisation and its strategic execution in relation to mainstream expectations and artistic distinction. Here is a concrete example: When artists try out new chord progressions during creation or improvisation, they must be careful to stay within the evaluation framework for their genre. If it gets too jazzy, it becomes difficult again for pop radio productions. This means that strategic decisions are already being made during the actual creation of the song. Unlike jazz improvisation (Berliner, 1994), pop music creation in the studio allows for editing, repetition, and recurrent enactment, enabling the recording of multiple variations during improvisation. This feature facilitates proactive and explicit strategizing concerning how songs and albums relate to the industry context, contributing to the strategic advancement of pop artists and the reputation of music producers.

However, the example of a pop band not only shows how the artists and the producer strategically deal with uncertainties of their art. The study also shows that the artists act very entrepreneurially within their "risky projects". Of course, they don't know beforehand whether the produced song will be well received by their target audience - but by choosing the right producer, by working with their label, by creating appropriate content alongside the music (images, videos, lyrics, ...) they create their own world around a release. They build the conditions to obtain the crucial currency in their field: Attention. Attention that will hopefully

Creative Impact Research Centre Europe
Research Lab Zurich | Final Report

Zurich
Centre for
Creative
Economies

translate into streams, downloads, likes, views and hopefully also into a lot of relevant emotions for their audience.

(Entrepreneurial) Skills

THE WHAT: In an attempt to have an impact on our home institution, we looked at the situation of ZHdK students and alumnae:i and their opportunities to earn a living through the arts, both within and outside the cultural sector. It became clear that the skills taught at art universities are highly relevant to the labour market – beyond buzzwords such as 'future skills' or 'creative skills'. Hanja Blendin, Samuel Huber, Andy Schwendener and Katrin Stowasser therefore addressed the question of whether and how the curricula of art universities could shift from discipline-oriented to skills-oriented educational programmes. The aim of the sub-theme "(Entrepreneurial) Skills" is to strategically reframe the content taught at art universities. We are interested in how we can use self-learning matching algorithms to bridge the gap between art schools and the business world – across Europe.

The team around the four researchers also asked themselves how they could have an impact beyond the ZHdK through the theme of "skills". After several workshops, it became clear that the topic had great potential – and not just for art universities:

- The skills dimension is also relevant for companies and their HR departments. Are the right people being approached?
- And, of course, it is also relevant for students and alumnae:i of other art schools in Switzerland, but also throughout Europe: What skills will I acquire in addition to my main profile as a design student? What other courses could I take to acquire a specific skill?
- These questions then become interesting for the curriculum developers at the art schools themselves: What courses do I need to invent today that will take place in 5 years' time and equip students with skills they will only need in 10 years' time?

It is precisely such discussions about time that are inherently strategic and therefore important for our overarching research topic.

THE HOW: Prior to CIRCE, we had already carried out a comprehensive comparison between selected ZHdK degree programmes and the prevailing occupational profiles in the Swiss labour market. This comparative analysis was carried out at qualification level and provided valuable insights into the match between academic programmes and professional requirements.

We then began to implement an artificial intelligence solution in collaboration with a software start-up. This innovation, known as SkillMatcher, seamlessly matches the skills outlined in study programme curricula with real-time job postings in the corporate world.

CIRCE gave us the opportunity to scale up SkillMatcher to a European level. To achieve this, we used a strategy prototyping approach to design a project with European reach - a pioneering not-for-profit business idea. This concept aims to promote a dialogue of equals,

Creative Impact Research Centre Europe
Research Lab Zurich | Final Report

Zurich
Centre for
Creative
Economies

facilitating cooperation between stakeholders from the creative industries, politics, business, education, and society. The aim is to create a platform for joint action and cooperation. We submitted the resulting "Skill Hub Europe" as a "Breakthrough" Lab in this year's EIT Culture & Creativity call and were able to win a crucial project realisation sum for 2024.

THE FINDINGS: The ongoing polycrisis is reshaping the way we work, live, and prosper together. The ZCCE is not alone in believing that such global challenges require new skills, which is why the European Union has declared 2023 the Year of Skills. But how?

The analysis of specific ZHdK degree programmes has shown that professional profiles outside the cultural sector could be addressed much more consistently. However, these are hardly on the radar. The SkillMatcher prototype, an AI tool, addresses this problem by intelligently matching students' skills with different job opportunities. In this way, an expanded set of job opportunities is suggested.

The Skill Hub Europe (SHE) – the not-for-profit project developed at Research Lab Zurich - aims to go one step further. In addition to the European community of art universities, it also aims to address the young generation in emerging countries in the MENA region and the corporate world (skills shortage):

- The education sector is looking for better data on the Cultural and Creative Sector. Data is used to make policy decisions, develop curricula, and guide students. A competency-based approach builds the capacity of institutions and members alike. It also contributes to the meaningful development of existing educational programmes.
- The corporate world is suffering from a shortage of skilled workers. At the same time, emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence are making the sector's existing understanding of key skills obsolete. Better ways need to be found to describe the skills of increasingly iterative and transdisciplinary roles within organisations.
- The labour market potential of emerging economies in the MENA region remains largely untapped for Europe.

SHE is an interesting solution that focuses on the European creative economy, offering transdisciplinary skills matching at the micro level, consulting on skill-driven roles at the meso level, and policy advice at the macro level.

The EIT Culture & Creativity-funded project will start in spring. Results will be posted on the ZCCE website.

Creative Impact Research Centre Europe
Research Lab Zurich | Final Report

Zurich
Centre for
Creative
Economies

Linking these Insights back to CIRCE

CIRCE stands for Creative Impact Research Centre Europe, which is why we want to re-enact those important categories:

- **Creative**: Creativity can be found both inside and outside the creative economies. Roman Page's research has shown that the creative economies are very heterogeneous. This isn't breaking news, but the implication should be that we shouldn't focus on sub-markets when funding creativity, but rather on the processes and practices of individual actors.

- **Impact**: The project has once again highlighted the need to define for whom we measure impact and how we do it. What creates value for one person is a nightmare for another. We need to recognise that there are different dimensions of value(s) for different actors – it's always about much more than money. Our zooming-in methods helped us to describe the impact on the concrete actions of creative economy actors. Using zooming-out methods, we looked backwards at impact within the creative economies. To say that impact does not matter in the cultural sector is not a solution.

- **Research**: Our understanding of research in the creative economies implies processes and practices of creation and experimentation, curation, and entrepreneurial engagement. Accordingly, we see research as a field of action in the creative economies that enables the description and interpretation of key dynamics, practices, strategies, and transformations. It helps to translate important terms such as 'strategizing' and 'entrepreneurship' into the vocabulary of the very transdisciplinary creative economies.

- **Centre**: As a laboratory, we have experimented and pursued "risky projects". We have remained true to our processual character and have been able to take exciting projects forward in the CIRCE flow, disseminating them and sharing what we consider to be important lessons with a wide audience. However, we did not perceive the European Research Centre at the same level. The concept of a centre worked in terms of a platform, but not in terms of in-depth collaboration between the various research laboratories. In any case, we are grateful for the many inspiring encounters, especially within the fellow programme. The ideas and projects of the fellows across Europe have opened new approaches to a wide range of topics. Our Skill Hub Europe is open to all CIRCE enthusiasts.

- **Europe**: The creative economies are an international, global phenomenon. Achieving impact means thinking beyond the horizon, beyond the borders. CIRCE has taught us to include the great diversity of Europe(s) in our research projects. By analysing the cultural sector at a skills level and describing the potential of creative actors through skills profiles, it will be possible to develop a broader understanding of diversity. The project uses skills to empower and connect creative economies actors beyond job titles and roles to contribute to a diverse and resilient sector.

Creative Impact Research Centre Europe
Research Lab Zurich | Final Report

Zurich
Centre for
Creative
Economies

References

Barad, K. (2003). Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter. Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 28(3), 801–831. https://doi.org/10.1086/345321

Berliner, P. (1994). Thinking in jazz: The infinite art of improvisation. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Buchanan, R. (1992). Wicked Problems in Design Thinking. Design Issues, 8(2), 5. https://doi.org/10.2307/1511637

Cunha, M., Miner, A. S., & Antonacopoulou, E. (2016). Improvisation Processes in Organizations. In A. Langley & H. Tsoukas, The SAGE Handbook of Process Organization Studies (pp. 559–571). doi:10.4135/9781473957954.n35

Gioia, D. A., & Chittipeddi, K. (1991). Sensemaking and Sensegiving in Strategic Change Initiation. Strategic Management Journal, 12(6), 433–448.

Gomez, P.-Y., & Jones, B. C. (2000). Crossroads—Conventions: An Interpretation of Deep Structure in Organizations. Organization Science, 11(6), 696–708. https://doi.org/10.1287/orsc.11.6.696.12530

Grand, S. (2016). Routines, strategies, and management: Engaging for recurrent creation "at the edge." Edward Elgar Publishing.

Introna, L. D. (2013). Epilogue: Performativity and the Becoming of Sociomaterial Assemblages. In F.-X. de Vaujany, N. Mitev, & Palgrave Connect (Eds.), Materiality and space organizations, artefacts, and practices. Palgrave Macmillan. http://proxy2.hec.ca/login?url=http://www.palgraveconnect.com/doifinder/10.1057/9781137304094

Jarzabkowski, P., & Spee, A. P. (2009). Strategy-as-practice: A review and future directions for the field. International Journal of Management Reviews, 11(1), 69–95. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2370.2008.00250.x

Jarzabkowski, P., Balogun, J., & Seidl, D. (2007). Strategizing: The challenges of a practice perspective. Human Relations, 60(1), 5–27. https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726707075703

Kvale, S. (1996). Interviews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing. Sage Publications.

Langley, A. (1999). Strategies for Theorizing from Process Data. Academy of Management, 24(4), 691–710. https://doi.org/10.2307/259349

MacKay, B., Chia, R., & Nair, A. K. (2021). Strategy-in-practices: A process philosophical approach to understanding strategy emergence and organizational outcomes. Human Relations, 74(9), 1337–1369. https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726720929397

Mills, A., Durepos, G., & Wiebe, E. (2010). Encyclopedia of Case Study Research. SAGE Publications, Inc. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412957397

Moura, E. O. de, & Bispo, M. de S. (2019). Sociomateriality: Theories, methodology, and practice. Canadian Journal of Administrative Sciences / Revue Canadienne Des Sciences de l'Administration, cjas.1548. https://doi.org/10.1002/cjas.1548

Creative Impact Research Centre Europe
Research Lab Zurich | Final Report

Zurich
Centre for
Creative
Economies

Nicolini, D. (2009). Zooming In and Out: Studying Practices by Switching Theoretical Lenses and Trailing Connections. Organization Studies, 30(12), 1391–1418. doi:10.1177/0170840609349875

Nicolini, D. (2013). Practice Theory, Work, and Organization. An Introduction. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Nicolini, D. & Monteiro, P. (2017). The Practice Approach: For a Praxeology of Organisational and Management Studies. In: A. Langley & H. Tsoukas (Eds.), The SAGE Handbook of Process Organization Studies. SAGE Publications, Inc. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781473957954.n7

Nissi, R., & Pälli, P. (2020). Textual artefacts at the centre of sensemaking: The use of discursive-material resources in constructing joint understanding in organisational workshops. Discourse Studies, 22(2), 123–145. https://doi.org/10.1177/1461445619893794

Orlikowski, W. J., & Scott, S. V. (2008). 10 Sociomateriality: Challenging the Separation of Technology, Work and Organization. Academy of Management Annals, 2(1), 433–474. https://doi.org/10.5465/19416520802211644

Rittel, H. W. J., & Webber, M. M. (1973). Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning. Policy Sciences, 4(2), 155.

Rumelt, R. P. (2011). Good strategy, bad strategy: The difference and why it matters (1st ed). Crown Business.

Salomaa, E., & Lehtinen, E. (2022). Changing the ownership of ideas: Multimedial accomplishment of collaborative reflection in an organizational workshop. Language & Communication, 85, 14–33. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.langcom.2022.04.001

Whittington, R. (1996). Strategy as practice. Long Range Planning, 29(5), 731–735. https://doi.org/10.1016/0024-6301(96)00068-4

Wikström, P. (2020). The music industry: Music in the cloud (Third edition). Medford, MA: Polity.