



 Berlin, Germany – Research Lab

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Transformative Governance – New Solutions for and with the cultural and creative economies

Research Lab Berlin

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Final Report

As societies face significant ecological, political and social challenges, public policies should encourage and prioritise contributions to sustainability across those dimensions. Cultural and Creative Economies (CCE) play a leading role in crafting innovative solutions and generating ideas. They also collaborate with other sectors and employ specialised methodologies such as prototyping, storytelling, design thinking, and speculative/future design. Particularly during crises, creatives help to navigate new meanings and envision alternative futures. Therefore, this sector is of central importance for transformative processes. Public governance structures and administrative procedures are crucial in supporting this creative impact. That is why among the biggest challenges in creative economies is the need to transform funding and governance structures in the creative ecosystem to become more just, fitting, and effective.

These considerations build the foundation of this report, which summarises the findings of three research projects hosted by CIRCE's **Research Lab Berlin**. The expert teams of Oyoum, Metaplan – Gesellschaft für Verwaltungsinnovation (referred to as “Metaplan” in the following text) and Urban Heat Studio provide insights into the transformative role of intermediary organisations to link public administrations and policy makers with creative practitioners and enterprises as well as to reinforce the principles of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) in governance structures. They also showcase the potential of innovative and participatory approaches and methodologies anchored in the CCE, such as experiential futures, to allow better decision-making for present generations and those to follow. This paper presents a summary of the findings of these research projects as a collection of key takeaways that touch upon various aspects of governance in the CCE. The three research papers as well as the specific sets of policy recommendations derived by all three project teams are available as separate documents, providing a more detailed description of backgrounds, methodologies, analyses and results.

Research Lab Berlin

The Research Lab Berlin is interested in transformative governance structures for the CCE. It aims to understand what structural changes in the work of policy-making and public administrations are needed to support impact-orientated people in the creative ecosystem in a better and more inclusive way. Building on years of experience in the field of CCE, u-institut as the founding institution of CIRCE and facilitator of the Research Lab Berlin hosted three research projects that have been carried out by partners with specialised expertise. The main goal of those research projects has been to suggest evidence-based recommendations in answer to the following research question:

How can governance structures support creative enterprises more equitably and sustainably so that they can unlock their unique potential to address pressing contemporary challenges?

Transforming governance and the importance of DEI

Adapting governance structures and the administrative framework to bridge the gap between policy, administration and practitioners in the CCE has been an ongoing task and source of discussion in the sector. Many European countries have been setting up institutional structures to support and monitor the CCE in the past decades. Structures such as the Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre in UK are publicly supported to provide research and policy recommendations.

Still, further efforts are needed to account for the heterogeneous and interdisciplinary nature of the cultural and creative economies, to ensure better and fairer access to support and funding of a sector composed of a vast majority of freelancers and micro businesses. Against this background, the Research Lab Berlin has placed the idea of 'transformative governance' at the heart of its activities. It explores how political and administrative structures can better support individuals, businesses and other organisations within the creative ecosystem, especially those whose primary aim is to contribute to society, the environment, and the economy. That involves re-evaluating political and administrative strategies, competencies, and structures to address ever-changing circumstances and contexts and to provide space for experimentation and continuous learning.

DEI are essential considerations in examining this transformation. Structural barriers and unequal representation in design and governance processes often fail to consider diverse and marginalised viewpoints, leading to insufficient or inadequate outcomes. When elaborating more inclusive governance structures, addressing and dismantling structural discrimination to provide a safe platform to involve the entire spectrum of the population is crucial. That is why the Research Lab Berlin specifically addresses how a more inclusive governance of the CCE could function.

A collaboration to explore the relation between CCE and public structures

Three institutions with expertise in scholarly and artistic research and experiences with public sector innovation have contributed to the lab's work by generating insights testing and expanding beyond the above-mentioned observations. These research initiatives focused on exclusion mechanisms in accessing funding, the development of equitable cultural policies, and the transformative potential of collective imagination practices. A central aspect of these collaborations lies in their practical orientation. All three projects

have embraced this approach while using different forms of qualitative research, relying on knowledge from lived experiences and including interactive components such as future design practices and workshops. Furthermore, the lab's work has produced actionable findings geared towards informing policy and decision-makers with specific recommendations.

The research projects are:

Oyoun: *Reimagining the role of intermediary organisations centring care and trust*

Oyoun is an antidisiplinary critical cultural collective for unconventional and innovative artistic and cultural approaches, practices and productions. The project team includes eleven members with plural academic, practical and lived experiences. With their lab research project, Oyoun developed recommendations for decision-makers to make (public) structures of cultural policy and administration more equitable. They have been working in an interdisciplinary way and cooperating with stakeholders at various levels to explore alternative models and transformative solutions through prototyping, speculative design and storytelling. Their research process relied on a reflection of their own experience and position as an intermediary organisation in the CCE as well as surveys and interviews among the creative community, cultural policy representatives and funders. The focus lay on an analysis of participatory funding approaches, transparent knowledge transfer and empowerment.

Metaplan - Gesellschaft für Verwaltungsinnovation: *Exploring the influence of intermediary organisations in the promotion of CCE*

Metaplan is an organisation combining research with consulting for public administration. Their expertise lies in dealing with issues specific to administrations, especially in the fields of transformation and innovation. Their project explored organisational exclusion mechanisms in the promotion of CCE from an organisational sociological perspective. Their team based their work on Systems Theory and public administration research and gathered insights through interviews with different stakeholders from the CCE, intermediary organisations and policy experts. They identified mechanisms that produce exclusion as well as levers to reduce discrimination. A particular focus lay on intermediary organisations, which act as interfaces between funding providers and funding recipients, taking not only coordinating functions for projects, but also playing an active role in shaping them.

Urban Heat Studio: *Exploring governance decision making through narrative and experiential approaches*

Urban Heat Studio is a collective for transformative climate resilience and collective imagination. The interdisciplinary research team brings together experience in climate adaptation, collective imagination and experiential futures, as well as experience in innovation and change processes with local governments, non-profit organizations, and social innovators. Their design research project builds on the HeatCon – a half-real, half-fictional conference involving climate practitioners, policy makers and creatives involving immersive theatre, community building as well as a reflection. With an analysis of the use of speculative and experiential approaches in policymaking as well as with the case-study of the HeatCon, they explored how narrative and experiential approaches (experiential futures, climate fiction) can support exploration and decision making on climate adaptation and resilience, and expand collective imagination of what is considered possible in becoming more climate resilient in Europe. Their results have been gathered into a toolkit for policy makers to help bridge the temporal gap, engage and align diverse stakeholders, and advance a collective imagination practice.

An overview of the results and findings of these research projects have been clustered and presented in the following sections.

Transformative Governance in the CCE: Research Insights

The governance of the CCE faces several challenges due to the heterogeneity of the sector with various networks and industry associations and due to the decentralisation of political structures, authority and ministerial responsibility. As described in **Metaplan's** report, when looking at the German governance of the CCE, ministerial responsibilities for the sector are spread across both cultural and economic departments at both regional and federal levels. The political representation of the sector is itself fragmented as well, being composed of a multitude of syndicates and networks representing the interests of different subsectors and types of organisations within them. This, together with navigating actual times of global challenges such as the climate crisis, social and economical insecurities or political polarisation and fragile democracies, make transformative action on the level of policy and public-administration increasingly complex. That is why both **Oyoun's** and **Urban Heat Studio's** reports underline how imagination and creativity – both inherent to the CCE – become important allies in dealing with such issues.

The central finding of the Research Lab Berlin regarding levers for transformative governance surrounding the creative ecosystem lies in the configuration and utilisation of the “between”: bridging gaps and translating and opening space between top-down public policy and bottom-up community-based approaches between policy professionals, community organisers and practitioners on the one hand and imagination and daily-business constraints on the other.

The Importance of Intermediaries

The research from **Oyoun** and **Metaplan** points out the important role of intermediary organisations in the governance of the CCE. Intermediaries, which include professional associations and networks, non-profit cultural institutions, funding bodies, think tanks, and consultants, act as critical links between government and the creative sector. Their role is mainly to facilitate, support, and sometimes translate the needs and potentials of the creative sector to government bodies as well as to support public offices in their administrative functions and navigate the according intricacies with creative funding receivers.

In doing so, these organisations play a crucial part in the governance system of the CCE. Thanks to their proximity to the sector, they hold a great expertise on the practical challenges, needs and operations of creative enterprises. According to **Metaplan's** analysis, this specific knowledge is precious to public administrations when developing tailored programmes for the sector. In light of the sectoral heterogeneity and complexities described above, this expertise becomes particularly relevant. By involving intermediaries in the conception and execution of support or funding programmes, public institutions benefit from their know-how while giving these entities the possibility to influence the design of programmes. For the CCE, these intermediaries are important in a variety of functions:

- *Bridging gaps*: Intermediaries act as bridges between the creative community and policy-makers and funding bodies. They understand the language/communication style and needs of both sides and can communicate and translate between these different groups.

- *Advocacy and representation:* These organisations often advocate for the needs and interests of creative practitioners. They can lobby for favourable policies, funding, and recognition. Some of them also build networks or act as node point for creative professionals. In doing so, they can contribute to ensuring that marginalised groups within the creative sector are heard.
- *Facilitating access to resources:* Intermediaries play a crucial role in helping creative professionals access resources, including funding, training or professional development opportunities. They often guide creatives through complex bureaucratic processes related to public funding or private investment. When redistributing resources, they can implement new ways of selecting and accompanying beneficiaries.
- *Innovation and Experimentation:* Some intermediaries, especially those involved in cultural policy, research or funding, contribute to innovation within the CCE. They introduce new models of working with the sector, experimental approaches, and multiple perspectives that challenge the status quo.

When looking at specific levers to provide better access to support for creatives from marginalised communities, **Metaplan**'s research emphasises the importance of intermediary organisations. In what they define as a first still broad exploration of the topic, they argue that, thanks to their particular position, intermediaries have a particular potential to introduce more DEI principles into the development of programmes for the CCE. Their analysis suggests several areas where this applies: the simplification of grant applications and documentations, facilitation and mediation between the communities and public administrations as well as in fostering more knowledge and professional expertise on DEI inside administrations and decision-making bodies.

Oyoun highlights the importance of inclusive and safer spaces within the cultural sector as well as in addressing structural barriers and power mechanisms in the governance of the CCE. Their research focuses on the function of intermediaries for empowering marginalised communities, advocating for their representation, and ensuring their voices are included in broader cultural policy dialogues. In this process of facilitating access and equity within the CCE policy sphere, they reflect on how to align innovative cultural practices centring decolonial, queer * feminist and migrant perspectives with traditional governance structures by enabling a more inclusive distribution of power.

In its analysis, Oyoun's team especially looked at principles and values that bridge the gap between different stakeholders. Their report emphasises the importance of trust and transparency in operations and interactions with various communities, funding institutions and politics. It demonstrates that these principles are essential in building and maintaining effective, sustainable relationships with all parties. Additionally, the report suggests that mutual open communication, and early and consistent implementation of participative structures are key to strengthening trust in the relationship between public bodies and intermediary organisations. The further development of such relationships could enable a more equitable access to funding for practitioners of the CCE.

Experimental and Participatory Approaches

While **Metaplan's** team mentions the role of intermediaries and networks in the governance of the CCE, **Oyoun's** report delves deeper in the importance of interdisciplinary and intersectional grassroots collectives in collaborating with funding institutions to curate a fairer and more empowering distribution of resources in the sector. The report of Oyoun furthermore references a [report](#)¹ on how principles of the Solidarity Economy can be applied to grant making in the Arts. This serves as a possible inspiration for innovative funding, where the role of funders shifts from gatekeeping to a focus on learning and supporting and calls for a profound change in the culture of grant making and governance.

While this shift is addressed in different ways by all three research teams of the lab, the members of **Urban Heat Studio** have focused their design research on an approach to make change possible. They explore the use of experiential futures and climate scenarios in aiding climate practitioners and policymakers to understand future challenges and start taking action in the present. Experiential futures, as explored in the **HeatCon** research, are a method of understanding and engaging with potential future scenarios in a tangible and immersive manner, using creative methods. They involve creating experiences or environments that simulate desirable future situations, allowing individuals to 'live' these futures in a controlled setting. The research team argues that experiential futures have a great potential to foster structural change. They advocate for facilitating an emotional response over intellectual engagement in dealing with issues as complex as the climate crisis. In this regard, the use of scenarios:

- allows participants to open-up to new ideas and perspective by practicing imagination
- enables them to process complex challenges on a personal level, focusing on desirable core values and overcoming assumed boundaries
- brings a better understanding of long-term transformation
- allows the participation of a broad and diverse group of stakeholders, ranging from policy-makers to community organisers and representatives

This kind of methodology could have a special relevance in terms of DEI as it gives the possibility of creating desirable scenarios based on specific principles and values such as care, equality or fair access to resources while accounting for the voices of marginalised communities. As the example of HeatCon shows, the preparation of the scenarios and of the immersive experiences are key to the process of engaging or responding to possible futures, thus sparking off action in the present.

Looking at the climate crisis as one major political issue demanding rapid and major transformation, the Urban Heat Studio team has proposed and reflected on a methodology anchored in the CCE to enable an experiential and participatory framework in governance. While it bears a great potential for transformative processes, it is not yet established in public administrations or political circles. The project recognises the need to gain trust among this audience for such formats. As a first response to this, they propose a case study to show the value of such approaches as appendix to their report.

¹ Linares, N., & Wollard, C. (2021). Solidarity not charity: Arts & culture grantmaking in the solidarity economy

Conclusion and Recommendations

Research Lab Berlin's studies conducted by the research teams of Oyoum, Metaplan and Urban Heat Studio collectively emphasise the importance of intermediary organisations, innovative governance models, and the implementation of DEI principles at the core of the governance of CCE. They also shed light on the potential of CCE in supporting and collaborating with policy-making, for example by fostering transformative action through experiential learning and emotional connections. These insights complement each other uniquely as they come from different research traditions and involve various methodologies. As shown in this summary, they provide a first set of answers as to how public structures can support the CCE in a more sustainable and equitable way. At the same time, they reveal that until now, only little research has been conducted on this specific matter. Some elements, like the idea of a more participative policy-making or the question of including creative anticipation methodologies into decision-making have implications exceeding the scope of the sector.

To support the idea of transformative governance, each research project has devised a set of policy recommendations from their analysis. These include both practical ideas as well as general suggestions regarding values and approaches:

Trust, openness and recognition:

- Public administrations and decision-makers need to **rely more on the expertise of involved communities** and informed **intermediaries** in CCE,
- Prioritise principles of **transparency** and **participation**,
- Allow and **encourage bold and utopian visions** for the present and future to support positive change inside public structures,
- Entrust and transfer **insights, competencies and methodologies from the CCE** to develop and implement visions into policy making,
- Recognise **potential of CCE for fostering societal transformation** and acknowledge the importance of (intermediary) organisations fostering an **intersectional and fair culture** and
- Incorporate the concepts of **agility, time flexibility and autonomy** in devising programmes for the CCE.

DEI in practice:

- **Prioritise DEI** inside public administration, including professional training and external support at all levels,
- Consider funding on a **longer-term basis** and focus more on contributing to the development of lasting **networks of support** within the CCE and marginalised stakeholders rather than short project-based models,
- Make support programmes for the CCE **more accessible** by simplifying and adapting both the language they use as well as bureaucratic procedures such as tender applications or reporting schemes,
- **Involve experts** from marginalised communities and specialised intermediary organisations in conceiving programmes and allocating funding,
- Encourage **resilience against systemic barriers** by providing specific **counselling as well as human and financial resources** for intermediary organisations and publicly funded projects,
- Prioritise programmes supporting not only certain key themes or clusters but also **innovative types of organisations**,

- Devote resources for **experiential futures practices** to foster anticipation and informed long-term transformation inside administrations.