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# UNDERSTANDING AND SUPPORTING CREATIVE ECONOMIES IN AFRICA:

## EDUCATION, NETWORKS AND POLICY

A POLICY REPORT



**Roberta Comunian, Brian J. Hrats and Lauren England**

# About the authors



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# FOREWORD

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This report critically reflects on the discussions and ideas that emerged during a two-year international research network funded by the Arts & Humanities Research Council (AHRC) in the UK (AH/J005800/1). The funding aimed to encourage research networking proposals that would explore the contribution that Arts and Humanities research can play in debates about international development and/or to the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It also sought to support the development of international boundary-crossing collaborations with countries that receive Official Development Assistance (ODA) and/or with organisations that play an important role in supporting international development.

The research network was created to provide a platform for discussion between academics, practitioners, artists, creative intermediaries and policy organisations about the role, importance and development of creative economies in Africa. Given the scope of the project, we acknowledge that our work could never stretch to cover the whole of the continent; nor did we set out to view and understand Africa as a single entity. However, with strong academic connections, we aimed to engage with a sample of countries (Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa) to explore the practices, opportunities and challenges they face.

This report aims to chart some of the key points of learning and reflection in our journey and to share them with the wider international community of academics, policymakers and practitioners. The tone and content of the report are geared towards highlighting current knowledge and recognising best practices.

The network and associated research, undertaken in collaboration with many African partners and colleagues, has helped us to develop a better understanding of the creative economies in emerging African countries and to explore strategies to encourage and enable sustainable, context-specific cultural, social and economic development. In so doing, the project has also tried to facilitate knowledge exchanges – specifically across the African continent – highlighting the importance of context specific knowledge and encouraging connections between local cultural production networks.

Amongst the activities undertaken by the network, we compiled a literature review of existing research which aims to better understand the specific context of emerging creative economies in Africa. In doing so, we identified five key dimensions that needed further exploration:

1. The role of higher education in African creative economies
2. The role of policy for creative economies
3. Creative work, co-working and skills
4. Creative communities, clusters and development agendas
5. The role of creative intermediaries: networks and support

These research areas were addressed in two edited books published in 2021 and 2022 (full details provided on page. 34). Through the collaboration with African researchers and practitioners, these books allowed us to create shared knowledge based on the five topics listed. The first book entitled “Higher Education and Policy for Creative Economies in Africa: Developing Creative Economies” (Comunian et al., 2021) explores the first two themes with contributors from Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa and Uganda. The second book, entitled “Developing Creative Economies in Africa: Spaces and Working Practices” (Hracs et al., 2022) explores the third and fourth themes with contributors from Kenya, Uganda, South Sudan, Nigeria, Tanzania and South Africa. Although this report discusses a similar range of case studies, experiences and practices, the chapters in

these two books provide more detailed examinations. We, therefore, invite anyone interested in understanding these issues in more depth to engage with these books, which we hope will remain a valuable resource for researchers, practitioners and policymakers in the years to come.

This report aims to engage more closely with the fifth theme, providing more details about the roles that creative intermediaries play in the development of African creative economies. This is supported by the systematic analysis of data collected in three African cities (Cape Town, Lagos and Nairobi) on creative intermediaries.





## RESEARCHING CREATIVE ECONOMIES IN AFRICA: OUR JOURNEY

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This section provides some reflections on our journey during the research project while also clarifying some key conceptual definitions and outlining our methodological approach and the limitations of the research.

Creative Economies in Africa are often regarded as a panacea for development. They have the potential to contribute to economic development (Schultz and Van Gelder, 2008) and put the African continent on the international map. They also provide the opportunity to use the richness and diversity of cultures across the continent to generate benefits for large numbers of the population. This panacea includes not only economic development, but also the opportunity for Africa to re-define itself and its future image and cultural impact. However, while this idyllic scenario has great potential to bring about change and has surely attracted the attention of policymakers towards the sector, it equally presents some dangers. Visser (2014) warns about the extent to which one can consider the creative and cultural industries (CCIs) a “cure all” intervention. He claims that in developing strategies for using the CCIs to encourage growth, ideas are often stolen from developed countries, with no tailoring for local contexts, resulting in the failure of most initiatives. Additionally, Visser (2014) argues that new CCIs can lead to further marginalisation as a result of the urban renewal and subsequent gentrification which often accompanies them.

### **Beyond the globalisation of creative economy research and policy: creative economies**

As with many research projects, our journey started with a long literature review. This process highlighted the realities of studying the African context and a set of countries that are very different from any of the countries we had researched before. Although it is easy for researchers to make assumptions and to take their frameworks on long journeys around the world, after more than ten years of studying creative industries and creative economies across the Global North we were aware of the penchant to export ideas and policy suggestions without proper regard for the diversity of local realities. As a result, very early in our planning and research, we started talking not just about

creative and cultural industries (CCIs) or a monolithic 'creative economy' (UNDP and UNCTAD, 2010), but about creative economies. We wanted to acknowledge that while these different and connected concepts travel across the world and are used in many African countries, it is important to consider that they might have different meanings in different contexts and that those different interpretations – coming both from local policymakers but also from practitioners themselves – are important to identify and understand.

Therefore, we took the definition provided by national and international policy bodies as a starting point. UN and UNCTAD (2008: iiiii) acknowledge that the creative economy is at “the interface among creativity, culture, economics and technology, as expressed in the ability to create and circulate intellectual capital, has the potential to generate income, jobs and export earnings while at the same time promoting social inclusion, cultural diversity and human development”.

Furthermore, UNESCO's framework for cultural statistics (UNDP and UNESCO, 2013) also recognises this as an ecosystem of activities, connected to cultural domains and CCIs but expanding to more sectors of society (for example education, preservation) and relating both to intangible and tangible culture. Therefore, our research builds on the view presented by UNDP and UNESCO (2013: 12) that the “creative economy is not a single superhighway, but a multitude of different local trajectories found in cities and regions in developing countries”.

For this project, we wanted to investigate not just the creative economy as a trade-based or commercial sector but creative economies as an umbrella term that includes a range of creative and cultural activities, which adopt a wide spectrum of business models where activities can stretch from commercial to public and community endeavours. We push this argument further by suggesting that it is crucial to acknowledge that there is not one single creative economy but a multiplicity of creative economies which can feature overlapping and diverging agendas. This accounts for the range of business models and objectives which often extend to the social sphere (Comunian et al., 2020). In many ways, the creative economy as a global discourse has been pointing in a different direction, away from the values that are at the core of creative economies. Recently other researchers (Wilson et al., 2020) have addressed concerns around the prevailing ideas of 'economic success' and 'growth' that surround policy and academic discourses on the creative economy. They have also considered the importance of connecting this research with three other discourses, which have very clear social dimensions: human development, cultural development and care.

We wanted to acknowledge that creative economies generate value – sometimes economic but more often cultural, societal, educational or psychic in the form of personal fulfilment. Such creative economies can hardly be captured by traditional taxonomies as they exist at different scales and involve a diverse range of actors – from leaders in large public institutions or corporations to regional arts councils, local community networks and individual artists. As a result, our research aims to acknowledge the plurality of endeavours and objectives that each actor aims to fulfil with their contribution to their local or national creative economies.

In adopting this definition, we rejected imposing national or super-national definitions which enable and encourage globalisation – from the Global North to the Global South – and homogenisation of creative industry and creative economy concepts. Instead, we tried to use a 'glocalisation' perspective – researching the local adaptation and re-interpretation of the international policy context while trying to collect data that enriches our understanding and highlights the value of both adopting and adapting creative economies perspectives when researching African countries.



## Focus on creative intermediaries

Having studied the creative and cultural industries (CCIs), but not in the context of Africa, we were very mindful that when studying creative economies, a complex understanding of the range of factors and actors working across a range of scales (Comunian, 2019) was needed. At the micro-scale, we had previously looked extensively at dynamics of work (Hauge and Hrac, 2010; Comunian, 2009) and learning practices (England, 2020), as well as markets (Hrac et al., 2013) for creative individuals and their projects and products. We were also very aware of the role of place (Brydges and Hrac, 2019), cities and regions as well as policy frameworks (Chapain and Comunian, 2010) that might support or hinder the development of creative economies. However, given the limitations of the research project (two years) and its resources, we recognised that the most productive approach would be to focus on the meso-level and the role of networks and intermediaries (Hrac, 2015; Comunian, 2011) in creative economies. While this remains a partial investigation of the whole system, it nevertheless gave insights into the activities of creative and cultural practitioners (micro-level) and the high-level policy frameworks in which these intermediaries operated (macro-level). This provides a more integrated perspective on the creative economies which includes the motivations, values and experiences of different institutions, companies and individuals that work towards supporting and developing them.

Within the CCIs, including art, music and fashion, cultural intermediaries are widely acknowledged as key players (Jakob and Van Heur, 2015; Comunian et al., 2022). These individuals share common characteristics, including high levels of cultural capital, and positions within subcultures, scenes, industries and organisations, which contribute to and validate their legitimacy and authority (Maguire and Matthews, 2014). Indeed, beyond individual human actors, intermediaries can be organisations, events, spaces and socio-technical actors, such as music recommender systems (Jansson and Hrac, 2018). The varied motivations of intermediaries have also extended to include education or preservation and to embrace more supporting and enabling roles, rather than purely working at the interface between creatives and markets/audiences. Thus, unlike earlier definitions, cultural intermediaries do not necessarily position themselves between producers and consumers in relation to translating or curating content or defining the cultural value of specific cultural artefacts. Rather, as discussed by Comunian et al. (2022), they tend to locate themselves 'alongside' producers – acting as co-producers and facilitating access to a range of resources and support services – or 'behind' producers providing finance, advice or other forms of initial training.

# THE AFRICAN PUZZLE



We set out to investigate creative economies in Africa, but from the start, we have been very aware of the difficulties of doing research on 'Africa'. In many ways Africa is a geopolitical construction. At times during our fieldwork, Africa emerged as a strong common identity and collaborative framework, connected to hopes for international development. At other times, however, the collective identity became meaningless and unhelpful as a construct that simply bundles together different locations, nationalities and cultures, which often do not connect with or talk to each other. Knowing that our project, limited in scope and duration, could never be representative of Africa as a whole, we decided to focus on three countries – Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa – where our international academic networks would allow us to maximise the value and potential of the research. These were also countries with widespread English-speaking communities, which facilitated our fieldwork – but this also reduced the representativeness of our data and work. We could not even meaningfully cover the vast geography – and the range of cultures and languages – of these three countries and most of our fieldwork remained limited to three large cities within them: Nairobi, Lagos and Cape Town. Yet, even this limited level of engagement produced rich data and convinced us of the value of our approach. It also underscores how much work remains to be done.

In this report, we share findings from the fieldwork in these three African cities and reflect on what we have learned from local partners and research participants. We also compare some of the different approaches and frameworks of the three cities, which have their respective diverse histories and development paths. Rather than proposing definitive 'take-aways', we are more interested in letting the reader reflect on how these findings and case studies can provide potential examples of best practice and opportunities for further development of policy and academic knowledge of the sector. We hope our findings can be beneficial to our research partners and the people that took part in the workshops and activities in all three cities. We also feel that we have personally learned a lot and expect that some of the case studies included in the report will provide valuable inspiration to researchers and practitioners across the Global North and Global South.

## Methodology and research journey

Working in collaboration with local partners, we treated the identified three African cities and their local creative economies as individual case studies. We conducted a week of fieldwork in each location and within that week we engaged in data collection with a shared research focus on the role of creative intermediaries. However, in each location, we also investigated further some topics which we thought were emerging and unique to that context and would provide rich opportunities for learning and reflection. The specific foci were higher education in Lagos; creative mobilities in Cape Town; and the fashion design sector in Nairobi (Table 1)

Table 1: Fieldwork and research foci

Location and date	Common Focus	Specific Focus
<b>Lagos</b> (April 2019)	Intermediaries	Higher Education
<b>Cape Town</b> (June 2019)	Intermediaries	Creative Mobilities
<b>Nairobi</b> (September 2019)	Intermediaries	Fashion Design

Table 2 illustrates the data collected during the fieldwork (25 focus groups; 44 interviews; 145 online surveys) which has been used to inform the findings and case studies included in this report. Column 2 provides an overview of data collected from intermediaries. In each city, we conducted five focus groups with creative intermediaries which allowed us to collect rich and detailed data about beliefs, practices and experiences. The group dynamic also helped us understand the role and perspectives of different stakeholders. The focus group discussions were geared towards topics like the role of policy, the impact of mobility and international networks, and the importance of technology and networks. In addition, we collected responses via online surveys on their profiles and activities and conducted a number of in-depth interviews with 13 intermediaries across the three cities. We also engaged in participant observation by visiting a range of studios, workshops, galleries, venues, cultural events and activities. Column 3 provides further details on the additional data collected on specific themes explored in each context.

Table 2: Fieldwork and data collected

Location and date	Intermediaries	Specific Focus
<b>Lagos</b> (April 2019)	Focus groups (5 respondents)  Interviews (6 respondents)  Online Survey (32 respondents)	Higher Education  Focus groups (4)  Interviews with key informants (2)  Online questionnaire (13)
<b>Cape Town</b> (June 2019)	Focus groups (5 respondents)  Interviews (4 respondents)  Online Survey (25 respondents)	Craft sector  Focus group (1) with crafters  Interviews with key informants (4)  Interviews with craft artists (22)
<b>Nairobi</b> (September 2019)	Focus groups (5 respondents)  Interviews (3 respondents)  Online Survey (28 respondents)	Fashion Design  Focus groups (10)  Interviews with key informants (3)  Online survey (47 respondents)

# CREATIVE ECONOMIES IN AFRICA: THE ROLE OF INTERMEDIARIES IN SUPPORTING DEVELOPMENT

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## Who are creative intermediaries?

We discussed previously the shift from traditional cultural intermediaries to creative intermediaries (Comunian et al., 2022). In this project, we define creative intermediaries as individuals or organisations that facilitate the growth and development of creative individuals, and/or CCIs and projects. They play a vital role in supporting the sector by providing access to information, skills, resources and networks that enable individuals in CCIs to fulfil their mission and creative or business goals, whether this is to stage a play, provide arts education for children or take a new product to market.

We also acknowledge that creative intermediaries come in all shapes and sizes. From passionate individuals with experience in the creative and cultural sector providing training or consultancy, to medium size NGOs supporting arts in the community, or large publicly funded organisations (such as regional and national arts councils) with the remit to distribute funding, training and provide feedback to artists and CCIs. They can range from one-person local freelance businesses to large international organisations. They can adopt a range of business/organisational models, reflecting the range of organisations active in the creative economy: for-profit, public-sector organisation, charities or not-for-profit organisations, cooperatives and community of interest companies or informal networks.

## Africa: A fertile ground for creative intermediaries

There has been increasing policy attention on the role that creative economies might play in local development (UNDP and UNESCO, 2013). However, less attention has been placed on the role of intermediaries in facilitating pathways towards creative development. In this report, we argue that their role is specifically important within the context of Africa for several reasons. Firstly, African countries sometimes lack formal cultural policy frameworks and institutions, and when policies do exist they often have limited capacity and funding to implement lasting changes and contribute to creative development (Steedman, 2022). Many of the formal institutions seem to be strongly anchored to traditional sectors of the economy (extraction, agriculture, manufacturing) and are less concerned with emerging sectors. This leaves an important gap for intermediaries to intervene and shape patterns of development (Njuguna et al., 2022). Despite the lack of formal investment and formal support for creative economies, the economic impact of the sector is often staggering and has been considered key to economic development by many international organisations. This has also been linked to the quick expansion of digital (mainly mobile) technologies, with many young people leapfrogging analogue and traditional platforms for cultural consumption to move directly to the digital. The centrality of technology and its important connections with key demographics

of many African nations and highlights that there is a role for intermediaries to grow and connect through new technologies. Finally, and most importantly, many authors studying creative economies in Africa highlight the role of informality and networks in the industry structure (Drummond and Snowball, 2022; Burton et al., 2022). These issues suggest that intermediaries can broker relations and support CCI, playing a vital role in the development of the sector.

## What creative intermediaries do

In our project, we discovered that creative intermediaries can operate in a range of sectors, providing a variety of services or specialising in just one. They can provide access to information and networks (soft infrastructure) as well as physical or structural resources (hard infrastructure). In fact, from data collected through our online survey (85 respondents) with creative intermediaries across Lagos, Cape Town and Nairobi (figure 1) we have identified the areas where they support the development of CCIs. Our findings suggest that in most cases intermediaries offered support in more than one area:

- 53% of the respondents provided space and equipment including office space, making space, co-working, business incubation as well as rehearsal/studio or performing spaces, including access to specialised equipment and IT infrastructure;
- 40% provided finance including distribution of public funding or from trusts; repayable and non-repayable loans; finance/investment brokering; crowdfunding;
- 71% provided networking and partnership opportunities including organising events, matching and brokering partnerships and collaboration, festivals, tradeshow as well as specialised networking opportunities or brokering;
- 75% provided training and skills including specialised business training or creative training; professional development opportunities and mentoring;
- 72% provided business guidance and advice including guidance on start-up, finance, growth as well as export and internationalisation, IP and access to the market.



Figure 1: Creative intermediaries and their areas of work

# CREATIVE ECONOMIES IN AFRICA: SHOWCASING THE WORK OF INTERMEDIARIES

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During the project, we had the opportunity to meet and interview a range of intermediaries and we would like to use this report to present some case studies that highlight their significant contribution to the development of creative economies in Africa. We have brought them together here under four headings that classify their work across four areas:

- **Creative intermediaries and the role of higher education**
- **Creative intermediaries and creative workforce development in action**
- **Creative intermediaries, co-working, finance and networks**
- **Creative intermediaries, communities and development agendas**

## Creative intermediaries and the role of higher education

Our project involved collaborations with three higher education partners in Nigeria, South Africa and Kenya – University of Lagos, Rhodes University and University of Nairobi respectively. All of them showcased a range of collaborations and involvements with the local and national creative economies. During our visits and meetings with academics in the three countries, we had the chance to explore what roles universities play in the creative economies in Africa. We explore these ideas in greater detail in our book “Higher Education and Policy for Creative Economies in Africa: Developing Creative Economies” (Comunian et al. 2021).

In Lagos, we conducted a focus group involving 15 academics in the Department of Creative Arts and the wider Arts faculty. The discussion highlighted best practices in engagement between academics and the local CCIs and a strong agenda to provide employability in countries where youth often experience high levels of unemployment. We provide an illustrative example of this with the case study of the University’s Lagoon Gallery. Similarly, members of faculty at the University of Nairobi underscored the importance of bridging theoretical training with practical and entrepreneurial skills. They also emphasised how this allowed students to enter the world of work – in this case fashion – prepared to undertake more than simply design work. Discussions with faculty members from Rhodes University highlighted the role of higher education, with its research and development practices, in collecting data and developing recommendations which contribute to policy, help shape the creative economy and provide accessible public information. As discussed further in the case study, the South African Cultural Observatory (SACO), in which Rhodes University is a partner, is a world-leading example of collaboration between academic research and national cultural policy.

In all our discussions, there was an emphasis on the importance of developing an understanding of the need to foster and hone creativity aimed at achieving internationally recognised quality and excellence. However, while we identified a number of programmes and platforms in each country and local context which are working towards this, our discussions pointed to a lack of formal frameworks and transparent incentives to support collaborations. We also noted the under-recognition of CCIs as an essential economic, cultural and development partner for higher education.

Across the three locations of our research, we saw that skills and education were in demand (Obia et al., 2021), and had the capacity to give the creative economy a voice both locally and internationally, contributing to both economic development and the dissemination of national culture. There were, however, some limitations identified in reference to a lack of recognition of creative subjects within university investment priorities and as sound career choices, and sometimes a lack of access and opportunities for all. Alongside broader issues around access and equality in higher education, many young creatives choose to 'study abroad' as a pathway into the creative economy or to study other subjects and enter creative careers in their spare time through self-taught opportunities or networking. While this is valuable for the individual and can introduce innovative and diverse ideas into the local creative ecosystem, it often exacerbates a system of inequality where it is not the most talented or deserving who emerge, but merely those who can afford specific opportunities and advantages. This has the potential to create and reinforce patterns of inequality in creative careers (Booyens, 2012). By developing domestic higher education infrastructure and course provision for the creative economy, African nations can provide opportunities for a more diverse range of young people; this will, in turn, add to the diversity and creativity of the creative economy.

The two case studies presented here illustrate how higher education supports professional development opportunities for creative students and staff and how higher education research can contribute to policy and the wider understanding and development of the creative economy in Africa.

## Lagoon Gallery at the University of Lagos (Nigeria)



“ *The focus of the Department of Creative Arts was firmly grounded from inception to produce graduates in the performing and plastic arts that not only have a good understanding of their own artistic traditions but are also articulate in an international sense of the world* ”

**Prof. Duro Oni**, Head of Department of Creative Arts, University of Lagos (2006-2009)

In 2019 the Creative Arts Department, University of Lagos (UniLag) inaugurated their very own art gallery, the Lagoon Gallery, with an exhibition of 20 works. The idea of the Lagoon Gallery was an offshoot from the Creative-Arts in-Town project established in 2007, which crystallised through the opening of the Visual Arts Gallery at the old site of the Department during the tenure of Professor Tolu Odugbemi as Vice-Chancellor (2007-2010).

While the project was led by the Head of Department and Professor of Art History, Peju Layiwola, it was also met with great support from the Faculty and University. They all recognised the important effort of the Department in supporting and exhibiting the talent that the Department developed within their courses.

The Department took the initiative to redevelop an unused space, turning it into a welcoming space, where artworks of both students and lecturers could be displayed. Professor Layiwola highlighted how the Department was able to catalyse energy from students and staff towards making something important with few resources. She recalls “it is very important that we created this from nothing, without major resources, we raised over 4 million naira to renovate the space”.

The art gallery is not simply an exhibition space. As Professor Layiwola reflected during our visit, the art gallery “serves as a laboratory for teaching and the students are going to have the opportunity of creating their own shows”. The space, therefore, becomes an opportunity to expand the curriculum and give students valuable experiences. She added, “we are not just teaching them how to be painters or sculptors, but also teaching them how to put together an art exhibition”. It is an opportunity to help students develop with a better awareness of the art sector and its workings: “Students have the opportunity to see what we teach them in class [...] that learning goes on outside of the classroom, in the gallery spaces and other spaces as well. It is also for them to know that this is the standard that is expected.”

Beyond teaching, the Lagoon Gallery offers also a valuable platform for the Department to engage with the arts sector in Lagos and beyond. The gallery also creates opportunities for other artists from outside the Department to exhibit their work on campus, creating a collaborative environment where students can interact and exchange ideas with established artists. It is also a place where visitors to the University can view artwork and also engage with Department’s artistic practice and research. It equally facilitates opportunities to talk to international visitors and shape their views on the University of Lagos. Ultimately, it is also a place for UniLag to reflect on its contribution – through the creative human capital that it hosts and fosters – to the local creative economy and its vision for the future.

## The South African Cultural Observatory (South Africa)



“*Ultimately the CCIs and Arts & Culture industry really is about social cohesion and helping us see the world from different points of view [...] The research needs of the sectors and industries are significant and there is so much that we need to know and learn to better support the industry*”

**Unathi Lutshaba**, Executive Director, South African Cultural Observatory

The South African Cultural Observatory (SACO) provides an illustrative example of how universities can shape and support the creative economy. Launched in 2014 and funded by the Department of Arts and Culture, SACO is hosted by the Nelson Mandela University in Port Elizabeth and supported in partnership by Rhodes University, the University of KwaZulu-Natal and the University of Fort Hare. SACO's main purpose is to provide policy and industry relevant information on the CCIs in South Africa. The focus is national, and their work aims to develop a comprehensive cultural information system, which continuously captures cultural data and monitors and evaluates government initiative. Their work engages with:

- Developing and supporting the collection and analysis of evidence by being South Africa's primary source of cultural economic statistics, and developing key indicators to assess the value of the sector and track changes over time;
- Influencing policy by analysing trends to inform future policy and resource allocation decisions; and measure the performance of the sector to allow global comparability;
- Sharing insight by providing accessible knowledge and information; playing a catalytic role in new and innovative research projects, and establishing substantive research networks;
- Building intellectual capacity (current and future social capital) across the arts, culture and heritage sectors. SACO does all this across the breadth of the cultural domains including the arts, heritage, tourism, museums, libraries, archives and creative industries.

As SACO's Chief Research Strategist Jeanette Snowball explained "if you want to have effective policy, then you've got to have something to base it off...If you don't have information about something (cultural industries), then it doesn't exist and you don't know how to support it...But hopefully, if you have evidence-based policy, it gives you a better idea of where to spend your limited resources."

Drawing on the skills, knowledge and experience of academics within the affiliated universities, SACO uses a range of innovative statistical methodologies, audits and research tools to understand South Africa's creative economy. In so doing, SACO aims to influence cultural policy and share insights with a wide range of users and groups by creating an accessible and interactive database. For SACO it is very important to work with key stakeholders in the cultural and creative industries, providing support to the industry itself through workshops, sharing research in industry-relevant and accessible formats, and providing short training sessions on areas like copyright and valuation frameworks. Another key objective is to generate greater trust and confidence in cultural indicators and acceptance of public statistics. Academics and universities bring rigour to research and data collection as well as an ability to serve as intermediaries who connect and translate between stakeholders including policymakers, funders, practitioners and audiences (Hracs 2015). Cultural mapping has emerged as a particularly effective way to bring people together. As SACO's Chief Research Strategist Jeanette Snowball described: "[using maps] you say, 'here's an interesting question, let's dig into it further.' You get people interested and suddenly they want to be part of the conversation...maps give you something interesting and it stimulates a lot of questions and discussion."

However, an important challenge facing university-based researchers involved in these activities is the need to adapt to time frameworks and demands that can be very different from academia. For example, while academic articles and books can take years to complete, feeding into policy development can require data to be collected and think pieces to be produced in months. This requires flexibility and new ways of working including collaborative approaches.

By all accounts, SACO is working in the South African context but it is also gaining international recognition. Indeed, a 2019 report entitled 'Creative Economy Outlook' by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) recognised the work and contribution of SACO since 2014. Other African countries are taking notice too and have asked SACO to advise them on setting up their own cultural observatories. Yet, our research suggests that it is imperative that

any new institutions reflect and align with the diverse mandates and structures of the creative economies and policy landscapes in countries such as Kenya and Nigeria. Indeed, everything from the objectives, set up, lifespan, funding arrangements, governance and involvement of academics and universities needs to be carefully considered and tailored to the unique needs and context of specific countries.

## Creative intermediaries and creative workforce development in action

Our project involved focus group discussions with creatives and creative intermediaries working across diverse CCIs sectors, and additional discussions with sector specific actors in higher education, craft and fashion. This provided a range of perspectives from which to explore the experiences of the creative workforce and the individuals and organisations that support their development.

While there were sector and location specific issues related to politics, infrastructure and market dynamics, our discussions with creatives indicate a number of common challenges they faced in developing their careers. Commonalities included limited access to formal and consistent funding, a lack of networks to support the exchange of ideas, knowledge and resources, limited social support for pursuing a creative career, and a lack of policy support (Burton et al., 2022; Comunian and Kimera, 2021). There was an overall sense that the CCIs have not been prioritised and adequately recognised for their potential for economic, social and cultural development. Nevertheless, the diverse and inventive ways in which creatives in each setting had built their careers, and the organisations that supported them also emerged.

Despite the importance of the higher education sector discussed above, it is important to acknowledge that the development of a creative workforce is not only the remit of higher education. During our fieldwork, we identified and engaged with a range of intermediaries who were supporting the development of Africa's creative workforce, two of which we discuss further in case studies here. These ranged from passionate individuals with experience in the CCIs who provided training and mentorship, to large publicly-funded (national and international) organisations with the remit to distribute funding and provide feedback to artists.

Through the focus groups and additional interviews, we discovered that these intermediaries played a vital role in supporting the development of the creative workforce by providing access to information, skills, resources and networks that enabled creatives to fulfil their creative or business goals. They provided access to information and networks as well as physical or structural resources and most intermediaries were supporting workforce development in multiple ways (Comunian et al., 2022).

Many of the creative intermediaries we spoke with saw international collaboration, partnership building and networking with other intermediaries as a very important focus for their work in order to continue lobbying for the overall role of the creative economies in the potential development of their countries. In addition to the academic network formed through the research, the focus groups with intermediaries in each location enabled networking between these local actors.

The intermediaries considered the weakness of policy frameworks and lack of investment as a huge barrier to future developments in the sector. However, this is not just a policy issue; a general distrust of the possibilities that the creative economy can offer in reference to education and employment was often seen as the main barrier. The need for creative intermediaries to work and lobby together for the importance of the sector was also recognised.

Despite some place-based or sector specific issues, we found that many of the challenges were shared by the respondents from the different cities. These challenges had to do not only with the lack of policy engagement and recognition for the sector and its importance but also the sector's inability to share common goals and come together for a shared agenda. Local specificity and context are nevertheless important and can create or exacerbate such challenges.

The case studies presented here illustrate two models for creative workforce development in action that we observed during our research.

## Angels and Muse: nurturing talent in Lagos (Nigeria)



“

*Angels and Muse is a creative hub for nurturing and empowering artistic talent [... providing] support system for expression, productivity and education for the best creative hands and minds in Nigeria and around the world ”*

**Victor Ehikhamenor,**  
Artist and Writer, Founder of Angels  
and Muse

During our visit to Lagos, we discovered an interesting development space and co-working space named Angels and Muse. The project is the initiative of the renowned artist and writer Victor Ehikhamenor. The space, founded in January 2018, is conceived as being flexible and multi-functional and for the development of artists and the future creative workforce. The space has multiple functions that also allow for it to be run as a business capable of becoming a co-working space as well as an exhibition space and venue rented out for workshops, training and events. It provides a place for both the work and residency of artists, including beautifully designed accommodation for visitors, which are also rented out through Airbnb.

Beyond this practical layout, according to the founder, the space has the mission to be “a creative hub for nurturing and empowering artistic talent” and providing a “support system for expression, productivity and education for the best creative hands and minds in Nigeria and around the world”. Ehikhamenor also sees this project as a chance to give back to the artistic community in Lagos. Furthermore, through its philanthropic arm called BookArtArea, it hosts cross-disciplinary events on art, literature and culture and invites some of Nigeria's most thoughtful, influential and provocative artists, writers, curators, and collectors to give talks and deliver masterclasses for young artists.

The activities are aimed at developing creative processes and thought. As Ehikhamenor highlights “it is a space where like-minded people in the creative industry, both local and international can come together to rub minds, as well as give back to the community in which I operate as an artist. It is also a place where young artists and creatives that don't have the opportunities to show their work can come”.

The particular focus of Angels and Muse – through BookArtArea – is training young people in the art industry. As Naomi Edobor, Curator and Programs manager for the space states “for Angels and Muse it is important to provide support for creatives because there is a gap in training and development. In Nigeria’s formal education sector, there is no continuity and sustainability for artist’s who have graduated from art school. We have no formal curatorial school or formal education for cultural workers. Here at Angels and Muse we organise workshops for writers, artists and cultural workers in our ecosystem. We are trying to fill the gap”.

The space and any income that comes from events or accommodation contribute to the not-for-profit agenda of Angels and Muse. The organisation has been very well received and young people travel from beyond Lagos to take part in their programs. Because they are not a gallery, they do not sell works directly or represent artists, instead, they help artist better their work, grow and thrive through their diverse programmes.

For Angels and Muse, the main challenge remains funding and the lack of structure within the Art industry. Most of the artists who are part of their growing community did not go to school to become artists. The writers who attend their workshops did not study creative writing in school, they just know how to write. Overall, Angels and Muse intervenes in professionalising and developing this young creative workforce but there should be more scope and profile for creative work and creative careers to be important contributors economically and culturally to the Nigerian society.

## Spier Arts Academy: mosaic and ceramic apprenticeship (South Africa)



“

*The Academy develops the practical and technical expertise and creative spirit of participants. The programme is designed to create a local industry of skilled artisans*

”

**Marisca Erasmus**, Human Capital Executive at Spier Arts Academy

The Spier Arts Academy is a vibrant mosaic and ceramics apprenticeship programme in central Cape Town. It aims to contribute to South Africa’s creative economy as well as broader initiatives connected to social transformation and uplift. It facilitates successful and sustainable arts-related careers through funding, training, networking and work experience. Over the course of three years, each apprentice receives quality, full-time training that empowers them with the necessary artistic and business skills and knowledge to run their own businesses successfully after graduation.

There are up to 750 applications to the Academy annually with a maximum of 25 invited to enrol after a rigorous selection process. Crucially, the academy recruits widely and tries to ‘level the playing field’, especially for young people. The majority of learners come from disadvantaged backgrounds who do not have the means to study at universities or other programmes and who face limited economic opportunities.

Much like university programmes, there is a clear focus on art history and design theory but developing business skills is also key. The applied approach is also very effective. Trainees work within professional studios and operate with real-world production deadlines and codes of conduct. Also, formal career readiness tests before the managing council and everyday exchanges with teachers help to ensure that trainees know how to dress and act in the workplace, how to manage others and what not to do. There is a monetary bonus scheme that incentivises and rewards good practice such as being on time and prepared for work.

After 11 years, the model clearly works with examples of graduates starting their own businesses and studios. Many still work with the academy and higher graduates as their operations grow. This virtuous cycle helps to develop and sustain the local creative workforce. One thing that struck us during our research was the sustainability of their 'not-for-profit' funding model. Although the academy has a strong patron network, which provides some initial funding and commissions artistic projects for the trainees to work on, it funds its operations- including stipends and equipment for trainees - by engaging in the global marketplace and by producing and selling high quality ceramics and mosaics around the world. As Marisca Erasmus, Human Capital Executive at Spier Art Academy explains "This week we're installing a large fountain in Stellenbosch. That was bought and paid for but we made it, we are installing it, everything gets made here [...] Three weeks ago we installed a large [mosaic] facade at the Notting Hill Gate Nando's in London. They pay for it... and that's how the rest of the program has been supported".

Yet, this requires a commitment to excellence and strict operating conditions, which pose challenges. As she adds "We have a high attrition rate because this is tough. It's nine to five, Monday to Friday for years." Moreover, there are concerns about how many graduates can responsibly be added to the marketplace as competition is fierce in all creative economies and establishing a sustainable business is a key challenge for all creatives (Burton et al., 2022; Brydges and Hracz, 2019). This case demonstrates the importance and potential of creative workforce development initiatives that operate at different scales for more diverse groups and use different models of education, funding and governance from large institutions such as universities and colleges.

## Creative intermediaries, co-working, finance and networks

Access to space, finance and networks are key to the work of creatives and the intermediaries that support them. Across the three cities, we noted the varied activities conducted within their coworking spaces and creative hubs, which we discuss in greater detail in our book "Developing Creative Economies in Africa: Spaces and Working Practices" (Hracz et al., 2022). Here, creatives could produce work, conduct client meetings and meet with other creatives in a professional environment. These spaces catered to diverse communities and localities in inner-city areas and their outskirts. Through our interactions with the wider network, we also learnt about rural creative clusters. These spaces respond to a growing demand for flexible and professional working environments, informal learning settings and activities that provide entrepreneurial development. In this way, we can see coworking spaces as a response to a gap in policy provision, providing the social infrastructure for network building and collaborations between people, ideas and places (Merkel, 2015). Creative co-working spaces often go beyond the provision of infrastructure that supports the professional networking, training and development activities commonly associated with such spaces (Gandini, 2015); their work also emphasises heritage and community development and supports the establishment of a critical mass of local actors who can also facilitate tourism and activism. As such, we present Africa's creative coworking spaces as multifunctional and multi-agenda spaces for creative economy development. This is illustrated through the case study of Tribe XX Lab, a female-orientated co-working space in Lagos (England et al., 2022).

The wider international literature highlights how CCIs financing is currently evolving as traditional financing institutions do not offer enough tailor-made solutions (Monclus, 2015). Through our research, we noted the challenges of accessing affordable, consistent and appropriate formal funding (grants, loans, investment etc.). However, we also identified examples of new intermediaries who are contributing to the innovative development and provision of funding for CCIs in Africa. This shows how innovative approaches and best practices can develop in relatively short periods, through both international collaborations and the work of local intermediaries (Comunian et al. 2022). In Nairobi, this included HEVA Fund (Njuguna et al., 2022) whose work we outline in a case study in this report. In Lagos we also worked with HATCH Africa, a UK-based consultancy focused on enterprise growth and sustainability in Africa, whose work highlights the diversity of creative activities and business models across the continent, and the importance of educating creatives on the financial realities of creative entrepreneurship and the funding environment as well as developing investment models suited to their needs and business models (Mokuolu et al., 2021).

Creative intermediaries also supported the establishment and maintenance of networks of different types and with varied purposes, both formal and informal and across local, national and international contexts. For creatives, participation in networks supported both their professional activities and creative process, acting as key learning and ideas generating opportunities within an ever-growing creative community. Higher education institutions, coworking spaces, creative hubs and community organisations all acted as network facilitators, and while there were crossovers in their interests and objectives, there was not always an interaction between them. In addition to the research network formed through this project, the focus groups also provided valuable spaces in which creatives and intermediaries could engage with each other, connect across different networks and continue conversations after the events. We also noted key opportunities for regional and continental network development and knowledge sharing, where examples of best practice in one African country could potentially provide a more appropriate framework for creative economy development in other African countries, rather than drawing from examples in the global North or those driven by non-African agencies.

## HEVA Fund: creative finance (Kenya)



“

*Alongside finance, we have learnt that businesses benefit from enterprise and skills building interventions, HEVA has designed products that offer patient capital and whose purpose is not to cannibalise the businesses' revenues but to support its growth plan ”*

**Wakiuru Njuguna,**  
Investment Manager, HEVA Fund

Many acknowledge that while some form of business support is available to creative and cultural entrepreneurs in Africa, finance for CCIs across the continent is still at its first stages of development (Mokuolu et al. 2021). However, in our fieldwork the case study of HEVA Fund stood out as a ground-breaking international initiative, showcasing not only the importance of developing specific financing models for CCIs but also the role that creative intermediaries can play in this space.

HEVA Fund grew as a spin-off from the work of Nairobi-based Nest Collective, a multidisciplinary arts organisation. The Nest had taken an interest and started reflecting on artistic livelihoods, and what would need to be done to ensure that artists were able to live sustainably from their art. In 2013, supported by HIVOS East Africa, they commissioned a feasibility study on the creative economy in East Africa. As Njuguna et al. (2022) reflect, at that time there was existing research but it did not address questions surrounding finance including viable and sustainable solutions to fund creative entrepreneurs through investment tools such as loans and equity. “The Nest had proposed a debt guarantee fund for the creative sector and this study would determine whether or not a guarantee fund was the best solution to address the challenges creative entrepreneurs face when seeking financing” (Njuguna et al. 2022: 47). Discussions with financial institutions showed they had not sufficiently engaged with the CCIIs because they considered them to be a high-risk sector due to the intangible and volatile nature of cultural products. The key findings highlighted a lack of public appreciation for art; inadequate business skills; lack of market access; and a lack of exhibition spaces, financing and expensive equipment.

The initial work showed that a new input on the financial investment front was needed and there was a clear gap, where neither policy actors nor financial sector was intervening.

As a result, HEVA Fund was created in 2013 to bring together an accelerator programme, an online portal and an equity guarantee fund that would offer a holistic approach towards finance and support for CCIIs in Kenya and East Africa.

Since then HEVA Fund has taken on the role of a creative intermediary, bringing together finance and CCIIs. They help financing institutions understand how the creative sector works and can be funded, opening up channels, involving the banking sector and providing easy access to loans and equities.

Since 2013, HEVA has actively made investments in 50 businesses from various sub-sectors in CCIIs, worked to publish data and several reports and trained more than 8,000 entrepreneurs in business and technical skills. HEVA also influenced policy conversations around ease of doing business for CCIIs.

Today the activities of HEVA Fund can be articulated under three main areas: HEVA Capital consists of the funds designed to catalyse the growth strategies of early-stage CCIIs; HEVA Forum curates a dynamic mix of tailored one-on-one consulting opportunities and specialised skills-building workshops along with peer learning opportunities; HEVA Insights includes data collection and publishing of reports that go deeper into CCIIs value chains, ease of doing business and engaging with government and policymakers to ensure the sector’s needs are well presented.

The work of HEVA offers numerous insights on the development of Africa’s creative economies and the role of finance and creative intermediaries. Effective financing for the CCIIs requires specific knowledge and understanding of CCIIs; only intermediaries operating within the sector – and working alongside policy – can support and facilitate the growth of a finance sector able to understand CCIIs. Within the sector, it is important to consider the importance of finance, but this also needs to be delivered alongside skills development. Finally, for the work of intermediaries to have a meaningful long-term impact it needs to also shape and grow with policy frameworks and national and international financial institutions and partners. In the future, HEVA is planning to expand its work beyond East Africa. It is doing so with careful consideration of the different cultural and business differences across the continent, but it is also driven by the increased need of creatives across Africa to access finance that is attentive to their business goals and models.

## Tribe XX Lab: Lagos female co-working (Nigeria)



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*Tribe XX exists to help businesses created and led by women grow by solving their problems through training, capacity building, access to funding, office space and a rich network of professionals all committed to the total economic empowerment of women in Nigeria* ”

**Emalohi L. Iruobe Esq,**  
Co-founder Tribe XX

During our Lagos fieldwork, we visited a range of co-working spaces. Recently, there has been a growing interest in co-working across Africa (Adegoke and Comunian, 2022) and Nigeria has over 136 according to the global listing website Coworker.com. One of the spaces included in the research was Tribe XX Lab, a female-focused co-working and wellness space, which opened its doors on International Women’s Day in 2018 and has since received support from local, national and international organisations including She Leads Africa. The co-founder Emalohi L. Iruobe Esq said in our meeting “over 70% of the female population in Nigeria engages in some form of entrepreneurship either via petty trading, side gigs, creative hustles or as full-time entrepreneurs”. However, opportunities for women to establish businesses are very few, partly because of the patriarchy and nepotism in Nigerian society, which makes it very difficult for female entrepreneurs in Nigeria to emerge and develop. Women are still discriminated against by banks for good loans, by landlords for rental space and by the Nigerian government that did not pass the Gender Equality Bill put forward in March 2016 that would have made discrimination against women illegal.

In addition to providing a collective working environment and wellbeing support for female entrepreneurs, Tribe XX Lab and its community are active in supporting women’s rights and activism in Nigeria and across Africa. Tribe XX mission is “to help businesses created and led by women grow by solving their problems through training, capacity building, access to funding, office space and a rich network of professionals all committed to the total economic empowerment of women in Nigeria”. They believe that empowering women means uplifting the economic health and wellbeing of a nation. Tribe XX currently incubates female-led tech start-ups, female creative entrepreneurs, visual artists and film-makers. Tribe XX supports 17 different female owned organic skincare and hair care brands in their in-house retail store which put these businesses directly in front of their target market.

Tribe XX Lab engages with some of the challenges faced by female entrepreneurs in Nigeria, including limited access to funding, a lack of mentors to provide guidance, stereotypes that prevent women from being accepted as experts and supervisors, self-limiting factors that discourage self-confidence and innovation, and social norms that continue to support male dominance in economic affairs. These issues are explored also by Steedman (2022) in relation to the Kenyan film industry. While acknowledging the prominence of such barriers to female entrepreneurship, through our research and discussions with co-founder, Emalohi L. Iruobe Esq., we recognise the potential for co-working and collectives to act as a developmental tool to support gender equality and women’s economic empowerment in developing economies (England et al. 2022). Relatively simple interventions such as the Tribe XX Lab Accelerator for women – which equips participants with funding, training and access to an investor network – can make a huge difference in boosting economic growth and has the potential to lift people out of poverty.

Our research exposes the convergence of cultural, social and economic development agendas within the work of creatives and intermediaries across Africa's coworking spaces, creative hubs and clusters. This includes contributing to national and local economic development, working with large scale continental and international development agencies and initiatives to boost skills and expand domestic and export markets.

The spaces and organisations we engaged with through the research and the wider network not only enabled the social learning process that can support creativity, efficiency, idea generation, and social networking which can boost economic performance but also facilitated societal changes that might have a broader impact (Akanle and Omotayo, 2020). Africa's creative spaces and clusters, and the work of intermediaries, can therefore be seen as operating at the intersection of cultural, economic and social development. This includes supporting particular groups in society who may otherwise be excluded from business development opportunities, such as women (Steedman, 2022; England et al., 2022) and marginalised rural communities (Abisuga-Oyekunle et al., 2021; Drummond and Snowball, 2022).

In Nairobi, we identified efforts to regenerate domestic textiles industries, including developing new, sustainable material supply chains which also provide employment opportunities for rural women and farmers, as illustrated through the case of Tosheka Textiles. Focus group discussions with intermediaries in Cape Town emphasised the importance of working with and learning from communities, particularly rural and marginalised groups, in order to change the narrative (particularly in relation to tourism and perceptions of poverty) and drive change by giving them the tools to empower themselves. Here the need to respond to community rather than organisational needs was critical. As presented in the case study, the Guga S'thebe Cultural Centre in Langa, a township of Cape Town, exemplified how social embeddedness and entrepreneurship was supported by a range of individuals and intermediaries but was driven and sustained by a grassroots community and a critical mass of local creative workers (Booyens et al., 2022).

It is important to note that creative economy development initiatives are place specific and not limited to urban areas. Rural areas and places on the outskirts of large cities may lack the breadth of infrastructure and human capital to develop a diverse range of CCIs and also have specific dynamics which must be taken into account (Drummond and Snowball, 2022). While presenting some challenges, there are also opportunities for developing competitive advantage and driving development through tourism by building on existing local creative clusters and their extant specialist skills and knowledge.

From our investigations into the role of education, networks and policy for supporting the development of sustainable creative economies in Africa, the work of women in Africa's creative economy emerged. Sectors of the CCIs with low barriers to entry (such as Visual Arts and Crafts) are already recognised for their potential to create jobs and income for previously disadvantaged and marginalized people, many of whom are women (Abisuga-Oyekunle et al., 2021). Our research identified potentially higher-barrier (in terms of educational, equipment and capital requirements) areas in which women are thriving and driving development despite entrepreneurial barriers, although as found internationally, certain sectors are still dominated by men (media and digital) and women (fashion and craft). We nevertheless identified a number of formal and informal platforms – including Tribe XX Lab in Lagos – that were enabling women to thrive and drive development, and to engage in traditionally male-dominated, technology-heavy sectors. In developing creative economies and expanding international engagement with African creative and cultural product, it will be important to encourage women entrepreneurs and the platforms that support them, but also to ensure that growth and internationalisation do not make it harder for women to climb the ladder.

## GugaS'thebe: Craft and creativity in/for the community (South Africa)



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*There was a sense of a family [...] that they would like the space to move in a certain direction. It's a lot of being in the sentiment, how do we ensure that we listen and work with this community, this family [...] we have changed operating hours to serve the needs of the people inside, but also the needs of the community [...] we haven't had any major issues or major problems because there is ownership, during the weekend, the space gets cleaned, miraculously, the space gets utilised by the community.*

”

**Marco Morgan**, former Centre Manager of Guga S'thebe

During our research fieldwork in Cape Town, we had the opportunity to visit GugaS'thebe, which was built in 1999 as a self-initiated, community-driven project focused on the cultural heritage of the Southern Nguni Xhosa people. The community space is a multi-purpose cultural venue at the heart of the Langa township (est 1927), on the periphery of Cape Town. As Booyne and Rogerson explain, townships are: “marginalised areas on city or town fringes which emerged historically as a result of the segregation policies of South Africa’s colonial and apartheid past” (2019: 257).

The authors highlight the role that these facilities can play in the development of local creative tourism and development. This is central as townships are recognised as places of hardship where economic and social development lag compared to the possibilities offered by larger urban centres but also as places of cultural resistance. During our visit, we were intrigued by the role the craft and creativity played in the local context as an opportunity for personal and community development. The cultural centre is a public space where communities can come together and enjoy art, design and performance. The centre has six active and tenanted studio spaces, a gathering space, an amphitheatre, an arts and craft shop and a multipurpose theatre. The multipurpose theatre was added to the centre in 2015 through shared partnerships, community participation, and social integration. The theatre represents innovative and sustainable design, as it is built out of old shipping containers, recycled wooden fruit crates and locally available building materials like straw and clay.

The space currently accommodates a range of creative endeavours including mosaic art, ceramics, painting, textiles (sewing), beading and weaving, performance art (dancing, drumming, theatre), and wire craft. This coworking space caters to a diverse group of crafters, artists and designers who share workshops or studios for the production of creative goods. Beyond being a site of cultural production, the centre provides a platform for selling, cultural exchange, coworking and learning. A number of community-based organisations and Non-Profit Organisations like the Guga S'thebe Crafters Association, the Langa Arts Association, the Langa Heritage Foundation, Ombonwethu and Our Workshop are involved. These constitute a collective of creatives and social entrepreneurs who act as intermediaries for artists and crafters alike.

While there are initiatives focused on skills development and training for youth, the space is intergenerational. The diversity of the occupants creates a meaningful interaction and collaboration between artists and crafters. While many young creatives prefer to stay as permanent tenants rather than 'incubatees', others who participated in our focus group expressed ambitions to grow their own businesses and to move their operations to larger markets, including Cape Town. GugaS'thebe accordingly is a 'stepping stone' for them. Conversely, older crafters see themselves as mentors for up-and-coming young entrepreneurs. This suggests that the 'incubation' observed at GugaS'thebe is a socially embedded and community-based process driven from below rather than from the top.

Taken together, there is a strong sense of ownership among the creatives and this contributes to the stability and sustainability of the initiatives and governance. The collaborative nature of GugaS'thebe also enables important tourism opportunities. While many creatives at GugaS'thebe sell their goods to tourists at mainstream markets within Cape Town, this is seasonal. As a result, attracting visitors year-round to GugaS'thebe for culture-based and participatory experiences is helpful. Examples include staying in Langa through Airbnb, street-art walking tours, visiting the Langa Pass Office Museum with a local who provides historical context, making a pair of earrings instead of simply buying them and participating in drumming sessions.

As Booyens et al. (2022) argue, GugaS'thebe is a transformative space that not only serves as a space of cultural production and social development but also highlights how a sense of ownership and pride can be generated through the sustained grassroots involvement of local community members. Indeed, unlike typical incubators where young entrepreneurs come up and move out, there is a critical mass of local creative workers who are permanently involved and who keep it all together. This model differs from top-down creative planning interventions which more often than not fail in the long run.

## Tosheka Textiles: community empowerment through textile (Kenya)



“

*We produce textiles that empower communities through trade. Create recycled treasures, utilize natural dyes and environmental processes to protect our environment. Preserve traditional skills, transfer knowledge and work with designers to make contemporary products*

”

**Lucy Bigham**, Founder of Tosheka Textiles

Tosheka is a Kiswahili word that means 'satisfaction' and it is a brand and social enterprise started in 2011 by Lucy Bigham in partnership with her husband Herman Bigham, specialising in 'green textile' production. Lucy is a native of Makueni County in Kenya. She is a textile surface designer with a BA in Design from the University of Nairobi and an MA in International Business Analysis from the University of Northampton. She has been building a textile industry from scratch by training local rural women to rear silkworms.

The Kenyan textile industry was an essential sector for the country's industrial development in the 1990s. However, in recent decades, with the impact of globalisation and the rise of Asian production and exports, its role and production volumes have radically declined (England et al., 2021). Hearing from fashion designers in Nairobi during one of our focus groups, it became apparent that even designers wanting to source Kenyan-made materials struggle to source enough or have enough choice for their work. This of course also had a great impact on the textile making skills and resources in the country. The case study of Tosheka is interesting not only for its creative and innovative value but also for how it is connected with ecological and ethical objectives which create positive impacts across a rural Akamba community in Makueni County located in Eastern Kenya. The company offers fair labour practices in order to give farmers and artisans a sustainable income, as well as using techniques that preserve culture such as traditional Kenyan weaving, knitting, and crochet techniques.

Tosheka has now introduced Eri Silk as a new fibre for the production of hand-spun yarn and hand-woven fabrics and rugs. The introduction of this new fibre is also an alternative to the rain fed cotton, which has not been very beneficial to the communities involved. Eri Silk has the potential to address the poverty levels in the community. Tosheka is targeting 3,000 households who will increase their income 30 times. Cotton provides a meagre annual income to the farmers, whereas Eri Silk will provide monthly revenue that is more sustainable. Tosheka Textiles currently has the only and first permit to commercialise the Eri silkworm production in Kenya. Unlike the mulberry silk, which is more susceptible to diseases and a monophlament, the Eri silkworm allows the butterfly to emerge from the pupae inside the silk cocoon. This process is why the Eri is considered a peace silk. Very little water is used to produce the Eri silk, and it has zero waste. Because its food source needs very little water to cultivate, and the plants can survive drought, it can be practised and sustained in dry lands. The end product of the Eri Silk fabric has excellent thermal properties. It keeps you cool in the hot season and keeps you warm in cold weather.

The activities of Tosheka support the community from a range of perspectives; they do not substitute the community farming work but are integrated into the local seasonal work of the farming community, and the spinning and weaving activities are planned around their agricultural activities. Therefore, the income becomes additional and allows for diversification. The company provides training opportunities but also relies on local community knowledge and its creativity. The Akamba people are known for their traditional basket weaving and wood carving skills. Tosheka has utilised these skills and knowledge. As Lucy Bigham states "society tends to think that its only interaction with them is one-sided when they are helping them. But they forget that many of the people we call poor aren't poor. That, in fact, we can learn a lot from them too by working with them. There is a richness in the fulfilment you get from just making a change in the community. Many of our successes have come from a collective thinking, which is a perfect think tank. In fact, one of the things I'm really looking forward to is taking the collective culture and engaging with local designers because I think there are so many people who have great ideas."

# CONCLUDING REMARKS

This report has brought together a range of perspectives and reflections on the development of creative economies in Africa. We conclude with some broader themes which emerged, before presenting policy recommendations.

## The central role of higher education

Our research highlighted the importance of the development of skills and education opportunities regarding the creative economies in Africa. Education allows students and practitioners to learn from each other and contribute to the broader knowledge and expertise within the sector. Higher education, with its research and development practices, can also cause a shift in the perspective of Africa's creative economy from being based on heritage and the richness of traditions to one that supports the need for creativity to be fostered and honed towards achieving internationally recognised quality and excellence. Higher education plays a specific and unique role as a valuable intermediary, coordinating and facilitating creative economies and working with a wide range of stakeholders and agendas (figure 2). Higher education institutions and their workforce can translate policies, engage with industry needs, connect with young people who aspire to enter the CCIs and disseminate culture. We, therefore, position higher education as operating at the intersection of policy initiatives (from economic development to community engagement), with the potential to make significant contributions through enhanced connections across local, national and international creative economies.

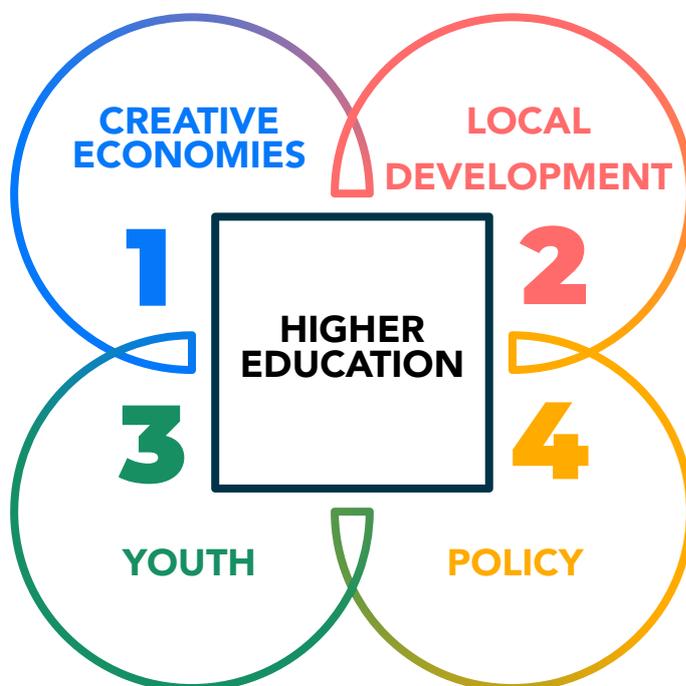


Figure 2: Higher Education at the intersection between creative economies, policy, youth and local development.

## Networks and spaces for creative work

Beyond higher education, our activities highlighted the varied working practices and experiences of creatives, which reflects the diversity of the CCIs and the specific national and local contexts in which they operate. In many ways, these spaces can be seen as operating outside of, or indeed in place of, formal policy frameworks, addressing the growing demand for flexible learning and creative production spaces, networking and entrepreneurial development (Hracs et al., 2022). What emerged across the locations of our research was the important multi-functionality of higher education providers, coworking spaces and creative hubs with respect to how they contribute to multiple and overlapping agendas such as cultural production, economic development, community cohesion, equality, sustainability, tourism, heritage preservation and education. The range of spaces is significantly connected to the flourishing of creative-social economies (Comunian et al. 2020), bridging economic, social and cultural agendas.

## Intermediaries: connecting development agendas

While the potential for economic development is the prominent rationale for creative economy development (across the continent and internationally), in studying creative economies in Africa we noted the merging of economic, social and cultural development agendas. This includes the role of higher education at the intersection of communities, policy and industry, the multi-functionality of creative coworking spaces and hubs, and the diverse practices and motivations of creative intermediaries, from preserving cultural heritage and empowering marginalised groups, to developing international markets that drive economic growth and enhance international perceptions of Africa's creative products. This crossover in development agendas within creative economies is important in the development of initiatives and spaces to support cultural expression as well as economic development, and that empower society at large rather than preserving benefits for the few. In this report we argue that intermediaries play a key role in connecting these agendas and acting as brokers and facilitators, often making connections across diverging sectors or parts of societies and making visible common objectives and the potential of collaboration (figure 3). Furthermore, their work helps to identify the needs of the sector, those working in it, and the need in general for more recognition and visibility of creative economies and their values.



Figure 3: The centrality of creative intermediaries

# POLICIES FOR THRIVING CREATIVE ECONOMIES

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Our research highlighted a perceived lack of prioritisation of CCIs within the national policies of many African countries. Nevertheless, there is clear potential for policy to embrace the potential of creative economies and develop supporting infrastructure in partnership with intermediaries and across the private sector and community organisations. In implementing policies that will effectively support the development of creative economies in Africa, it is important to bring creative entrepreneurs, intermediaries and policymakers together. Here, creatives have a role to play in educating the government about what support they need and in demonstrating best practice from within the sector. When looking at policy for creative economies in Africa it is also important to take a historical and systematic approach, looking at both top-down and bottom-up policy initiatives which can empower creatives and supporting organisations. The development of policies and programmes to support creative production for its wider social and cultural benefits is also integral to encouraging a wider creative ecosystem and community alongside potential economic development agendas. The people who attended our workshops and focus groups were very keen to collaborate with each other and international partners. They specifically mentioned how important it was to connect with us and for local contexts to inform our knowledge. They also reported that it was valuable for them to be recognised as important actors within this global arena. Therefore, as representatives of UK universities, we feel international organisations can play a role in lobbying for the overall value of culture and creative economies but also offering recognition to the role of intermediaries and their work in supporting local creative ecosystems (de Bernard et al., 2021).

Here we highlight five cornerstones (figure 4) for future development that policy needs to consider to allow creative economies to thrive:

1. Recognise the value that creative economies bring to communities, society and the economy. This value can only be realised if all individuals in society are empowered to contribute and benefit from it.
2. Recognise the role of creative intermediaries in bringing together policymakers, communities and entrepreneurs to develop experience-based creative economies strategies and policies. Develop partnership models and multi-stakeholder collaborations across public, private and community organisations to support sustainable initiatives and infrastructure.
3. Invest in higher education collaborations and partnerships to support a talent pipeline and add value to creative economies through research, development and human capital, maximising the impact of local creative economies and boosting international recognition.
4. Strengthen continental and international collaborations through research and network building to support knowledge sharing and creative economies development across Africa.
5. Create accessible and inclusive infrastructure to support creative economies in both urban and rural contexts, ensuring that creative educational and entrepreneurial opportunities are open to everyone and that they represent the diversity of each nation or region.



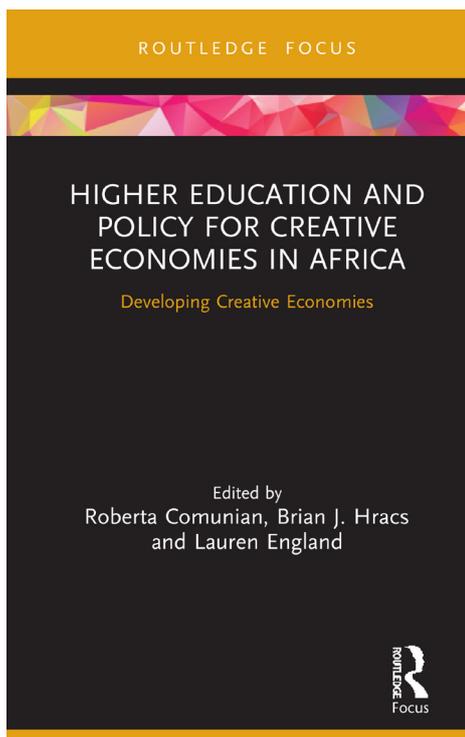
Figure 4: Policies for thriving creative economies

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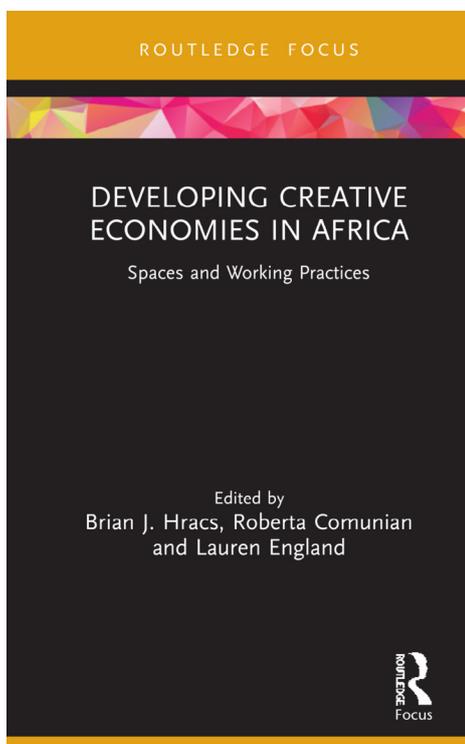
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