



“While intermediaries play a crucial role to take digital creative products and work to market, they lack support, training and development opportunities.”

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Image Source: Construction work and expansion of the campus of O.P. Jindal Global University in Sonapat, Haryana, India. Image by Nicolas J.A. Buchoud, all rights reserved ©.



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Intermediaries - the missing link for Creatives in the African Digital Creative Industries

Support for the Digital Creative Economies in Africa has largely focused on assisting creatives and creative developers as the source and subsequent entry point into global creative value chains. However, there is a clear need for support of key elements in the larger digital creative industries ecosystem. In line with international multilateral organizations, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) suggests the Digital Creative Industries can create jobs that are resilient in the future world of work. The Digital Creative Industries speak to a young workforce entering the African la-

bour market, offering skills and products with high potential for innovation spillover into other sectors. Creativity as such also provides competencies required in an increasingly automated economy.

Despite the digital creative sectors still being small, evidence is clear for its relevance to job contribution and economic growth. In South Africa, it was estimated that annual turnover for the gaming and animation sectors in the 2017/18 financial year was R476 million (SACO, 2019). For this reason, the BMZ has launched a transnational project “Cultural and Creative Industries” that focuses on creative work towards sustainable development. Alongside South Africa, the project is implemented by GIZ and Goethe-Institut in five other countries in Africa and the Middle East.

Early work in South Africa saw German Development supporting projects and organizations that platform, showcase and advocate for this work. This included Fak’ugesi African Digital Innovation Festival (Fak’ugesi), a project informed by its university-led hub partnership; between entrepreneurial incubator Tshimologong Innovation Precinct and the academic research of University of Witwatersrand’s Digital Arts Dept. Fak’ugesi has developed a reputation on the continent as a support pipeline with a focus on digital creativity, innovation, exchange, and market opportunities. Additionally, it provides skills development and other professional supporting activities such as creative residencies and bootcamps as part of its evolving programme.

Through a GIZ-supported bootcamp at Fak’ugesi, intermediaries were identified as significant yet unmet contributors in the Digital Creative Industries, and defined as: publishers, distributors, talent or content aggregators, festivals & expo’s, production incubators, professional training bodies, industry bodies, those leading policy development and advocating for or supporting investment in the industry. The value of this focus on intermediaries is that it allows Fak’ugesi and organizations like it, to engage creatives working in networks across Africa more strategically; identifying important drivers for new work, monetization and supporting the journey to market. It was found that while intermediaries play a crucial role; individuals and organizations acting as intermediaries lack support, training and development opportunities to fill their role in the ecosystem adequately and reap opportunities for the sectors to grow.

Identifying these gaps has solidified an opportunity for Fak’ugesi to work on solutions. Fak’ugesi is currently engaged in GIZ supported research, mapping intermediaries in Africa, and developing the Intermediary Connect interface to be launched at Fak’ugesi 2022. The latter is an online platform solution to support the work of intermediaries by visibly profiling intermediaries; bringing specific focus on how they interact in a larger value chain. Thereby enabling direct network engagement not only for young developing creatives, but also establishing regional and international market channels wanting to work further in Africa.

The dual-headed research on intermediaries (mentioned above) by Wits Digital Arts, runs iteratively to inform the development

of the platform, related industry forums and gaps towards early-stage intermediary training; to negate development hurdles in what is a growing area in the future of work. The mapping process will identify key operating hubs of intermediaries in different sub-sectors. Additionally, it aims to understand their ‘health’ in relation to industry gaps and skills shortages, as well as further identify the extent of government or industry support and key sustainable development indicators associated with those operating as intermediaries.

An outlook: The outlined platform and mapping will be launched at the 2022 Fak’ugesi Festival with a wider regional audience of stakeholders from government, academia and the digital creative sectors. By ensuring input at the festival’s exchange and dialogue formats, the benefits of the research and platform as a tool will be engaged by relevant streams. Roadmap development is planned with identified stakeholders, which will lead to further dissemination and discussion with partner countries. This approach provides potential to broaden networks, align international and national support programmes and allow for a clearer overview of what gaps need to be filled.

The outlined position of Fak’ugesi as a partnership between the University Digital Arts Dept.’s academic backing linked to the enterprise programmes at Tshimologong Precinct provides in itself an ecosystem with potential to be replicated. It promises to initiate development for this sector as it connects and supports a growing network of like-minded organizations on the continent.