

Friends of Creative Economy Meeting 2022



“A network of researchers, policy professionals and practitioners is needed that could focus international attention on the potential of the creative economy.”

-John NEWBIGIN

Image Source: The meeting of the Friends of Creative Economy at the 2022 World Conference on Creative Economy in Bali, Oct. 5-7, 2022. Photography courtesy of WCCE. All rights reserved ©.



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After the World Conference on Creative Economy (WCCE) 2022 in Bali

Many voices around the world expressed the hope that, for all its disastrous impact, the COVID-19 pandemic would offer a chance to reset the global economy. As global recession, international tension, war, food shortages and dramatic manifestations of climate change loom ever larger this begins to look like a vain, even naïve, hope, but it's not the whole story. Indonesia, holding the presidency of the G20 this year, with the slogan 'Recover together, Recover Stronger' recently hosted the third iteration of the World Conference on Creative Economy in Bali and promoted it as an integral part of its G20 presidency, building on the previous two G20 presidencies that have highlighted the importance of culture and creativity as essential elements of any fundamental global reset and recovery. Indonesia has been one of the world leaders in putting cultural and creative industries centre-stage, having launched the WCCE in 2018 and championing 2021 as the UN's "Year of the creative economy's

contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals". The mood in Bali was entirely positive, focusing on the already proven ability of the cultural and creative industries to promote growth that is sustainable, inclusive, a generator of jobs, a driver of innovation, a significant contributor to social cohesion and a source of well-being and cultural pride for countless individuals; in other words, an engine for economic growth that could, indeed, help reset the global economy with the added bonus of contributing to the fulfillment of the SDGs. Is that a real possibility?

Before the pandemic, UN reports identified the creative and cultural industries as one of the fastest growing sectors of the world economy, potentially worth 10% of global GDP by 2030 and, contrary to many assumptions, growing as fast in the Global South as in the North. So, it was noteworthy that the overwhelming majority of the States represented at the Bali conference were Asian and African, including countries that are suffering the worst impacts of climate change and have been amongst the losers from globalization, many of them with economies over-reliant on mineral extraction and cash-crop agriculture. They want to move "from black gold to human gold" as the Minister of one oil-dependent State recently expressed it. With burgeoning youth populations, rapidly spreading e-connectivity and an urgent need to find creative solutions to almost every challenge of public policy from urban intensification to resource depletion and social inequalities, economic strategies that are built on human creativity rather than fossil fuel production not only make

good political and economic sense but are an absolute necessity in the light of the IPCC's sober analysis that the world has less than a decade to avert runaway climate catastrophe.

The WCCE in Bali concluded with the drafting of a 16 point 'roadmap' for creative and sustainable recovery, endorsed by Ministers from more than two dozen countries; but having a map is not the same as undertaking the journey. To reach the goal of a creative, sustainable and inclusive world economy would require radically altered priorities: new ways of working, trading, financing and learning. It would demand creative policy solutions and structures from local and national government that address economic, social, cultural and environmental factors in an integrated way, cutting across the cumbersome siloed processes inherited from the 20th century. As the Mayor of one Brazilian city put it "we have to hit at least two birds with every stone we throw."

The creative economy already manifests many of the positive elements of that potential future. Its innovations and working methods are beginning to spill over into other areas of the economy and society, but it is still easily dismissed as marginal rather than mainstream. At the most basic level, the internationally agreed codes that capture occupational and industrial classifications do not even recognize many of the new skills and specialisms that are being generated by the interaction between creative industries and digital technologies. Because of their fragmented, rapidly evolving and often

informal nature, these emerging creative ecosystems remain seriously under-researched and frequently under-funded. As well as their ability to drive innovation in other parts of the economy, their wider social, cultural and environmental impacts are all underestimated.

To bring the roadmap to life, one of the proposals to emerge from the WCCE in Bali was for a network of researchers, policy professionals and practitioners who could focus international attention on the potential of the creative economy in the same way that the IPCC focuses attention on the accelerating dangers of climate change. To consciously link the two, would bring the creative and cultural industries more into the mainstream of thinking and highlight their role in stimulating a genuinely creative and environmentally sustainable economy.

As an early example of how such a network might operate, an international symposium is about to be held in Istanbul. Istanbul is city that has already set out a vision of how it wants to be in 2050: inclusive, resilient, sustainable and with a good quality of life for all its citizens. The event will bring together entrepreneurs, city mayors, academics and local and national policy officers from Central Asia, Eastern Europe and the West Balkans to share successful policy initiatives and contribute to collaborative networks, both practical steps on a journey towards economies built on a foundation of human creativity rather than fossil fuel extraction or financial game-playing.