

Creative Economy and City: Institutionalisation and the Awareness Problem

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Yaratıcı Ekonomi ve Kent: Kurumsallaşma ve Farkındalık Sorunu

Abstract

The United Nations recognises creative industries as essential for economic growth, employment, social inclusion, and cultural diversity. However, policymakers and local stakeholders often lack awareness of these industries' potential. This study focuses on the Taskışla Design LAB (TDL) project, supported by the İstanbul Development Agency (İSTKA), which aims to promote collaboration among design-based sectors in İstanbul. TDL addresses issues related to institutionalisation, capacity building, and funding, engaging 741 actors, conducting 37 activities, and launching five pilot projects. Findings indicate a lack of institutional awareness, emphasising the need for stronger collaborations, innovative management, and diverse funding sources.

Keywords : Creative Economy, Awareness, Institutional Capacity, Collaborations, Funding, Türkiye.

JEL Classification Codes : H1, H5, O2, R1.

Öz

Birleşmiş Milletler, yaratıcı endüstrileri ekonomik büyüme, istihdam, sosyal kapsayıcılık ve kültürel çeşitlilik için hayati öneme sahip olarak tanımaktadır. Ancak, politika yapıcılar ve yerel aktörlerin bu endüstrilerin potansiyelinin yeterince farkında olmadığı ortaya çıkmaktadır. Bu çalışma, İstanbul Kalkınma Ajansı tarafından desteklenen Taşkılla Design LAB (TDL) projesine odaklanmaktadır. TDL, İstanbul'daki tasarım odaklı endüstriler arasında iş birliğini teşvik etmeyi amaçlamıştır. Proje, kurumsallaşma, kapasite geliştirme ve finansman konularını ele alarak 741 aktörle iletişime geçmiştir. Proje kapsamında, 37 etkinlik düzenlenmiş ve 5 pilot proje yürütülmüştür. Sonuçlar, kurumsal kapasite ve farkındalık eksikliğini ve iş birlikleri, yenilikçi yönetim ve çeşitlendirilmiş finansman kaynaklarına olan ihtiyacı ortaya koymuştur.

Anahtar Sözcükler : Yaratıcı Ekonomi, Farkındalık, Kurumsal Kapasite, İşbirlikleri, Fon Kaynakları, Türkiye.

1. Introduction

Creativity can be seen as an economic concept if the final product generates economic value, as a sociological concept if it relates to the creation of cultural and spiritual values, and as a business concept if it is linked to the product development process of firms or combines all these aspects (UNCTAD, 2021). A recent debate in the creative economy centres on its connection to sustainable economic growth and development. Sectors within the creative economy attract investment and labour because they support economic growth by producing high-value products. These sectors are also highly adaptable and sustainable, driven by intangible resources such as talent and ideas (Florea et al., 2022). Because of their nature, the economic dynamism they bring to urban areas is significant not only for diversifying the urban economy and fostering a sustainable structure but also for creating social and spatial diversity alongside their economic contributions to urban development. In this study, while highlighting the importance of the creative economy in urban areas, a general overview of the İstanbul Design Industry and the TDL project is presented. Institutional structures and related regulations fundamentally support the presence of the creative economy in urban settings. While awareness of the subject is essential for related urban policies, the mechanisms that promote awareness should be explored.

Urban policies develop strategies that nurture cities' cultural and creative potential (Alpan, 2021). Both policies and practices must address the needs of economies at all scales, and the institutions that are fundamental to economies must adapt to change accordingly. However, creating opportunities involves developing advanced urban infrastructure, leveraging human capital and institutional capacity, adopting a flexible, modern management approach at all levels, and establishing sustainable policies. Furthermore, investing in human capital development is essential for transforming institutions. Better institutionalisation and sustainable development require careful planning and long-term capacity building. In creative industries, individual creativity, skills, and knowledge are crucial for economic diversity and sustainability. Therefore, all stakeholders must collaborate and work across disciplines and institutions through networks. The right policies can only originate from the right actions. Incorporating creativity into urban policymaking has been introduced to the planning field previously. However, policies continue to be refined to meet the evolving needs and issues of different periods.

This study investigates issues of awareness and institutionalisation using the TDL project as a tool, within a framework emphasising the importance of the creative economy in urban areas and the need to develop it alongside urban development policies. The activities within the project's scope were designed to assess the state of institutionalisation and awareness. The project's findings provide valuable contributions to this subject. Supported by İSTKA, the TDL project brought together stakeholders from design-oriented industries that support the growth of İstanbul's creative economy and aimed to boost the role of creative industries in the city's economy through collaborative development. The main aim was to establish collaborative structures among researchers, students, entrepreneurs, design industry players, the private sector, policymakers, local authorities, and civil society,

thereby strengthening the design-based industries ecosystem. The project's outcomes are analysed to evaluate levels of awareness and institutionalisation among actors. Institutionalisation is discussed in relation to awareness within the context of institutional capacities, collaborations, organisational capabilities, and funding. The following sections include conceptual discussions, the research background in Türkiye, and the project's findings. It is expected that insights into levels of institutionalisation and awareness will inform future studies.

2. Creative Economy, City and Institutionalisation Debates

One of the most essential requirements for promoting the creative economy in urban areas is the tangible development of this sector, which should be incorporated into urban policies and practices. In this context, the most basic needs are awareness, followed by institutionalisation. While this study aims to add to the existing literature by examining the clarity of these mutual relationships, the number of studies specifically focused on the creative economy in Türkiye remains relatively limited. Therefore, the study's contribution to raising awareness is significant. Within this framework, the literature has been reviewed with a focus on the importance of the creative economy and the necessity of institutionalising and raising awareness of its role in urban development. There is a research gap regarding the factors that influence the development of the creative economy in a specific city. Exploring Türkiye's position, potential, and the necessary steps for the future concerning the creative economy is crucial, especially in light of global development trends (Kerimoğlu, 2024).

2.1. Creative Economy and the City

The immediate effects of economic developments are clearly experienced in urban areas and fast-track environmental, social, and institutional transitions. While urban policies create new forms of urban management, urban planning and policies are constantly debated and amended (Rotmans et al., 2000).

The creative economy is defined as the transformation of creativity and intellectual capital into goods and services (UNCTAD, 2022). The UN-UNCTAD (2021) declared 2021 the 'International Year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development.' The creative economy is a strong force, including the fastest-growing sectors of the global economy in terms of income, employment, and exports (UN, 2019). Its impact spans many areas, including policymaking, economic development, domestic and international investment, technology and communications, arts and culture, tourism, social welfare, and education (UNCTAD, 2008). Therefore, cooperation and the development of tools and models for implementation become vital. Current development models emphasise sustainable urban growth, social and ecological considerations, and the promotion of innovation and creativity. Creativity is an essential element in urban policies for economic progress (Hamdouch et al., 2017; Kerimoğlu, 2017).

Creativity is the primary source of innovation, connecting with accessibility, social life, culture, and knowledge-based business models to promote economic and social development in cities. Creative industries and a creative workforce are especially vital for areas experiencing stagnation, where traditional sectors such as manufacturing and agriculture dominate (Sundbo, 2011; Piergiovanni et al., 2012; cited in Khlystova & Kalyuzhnova, 2023). This indicates that creative industries help build resilience against external threats, risks, and challenges. Research has demonstrated that skill-intensive economic sectors, such as creative industries, contribute to urban and regional development by increasing the skilled workforce (Brakman et al., 2015; Chapain et al., 2010; Duranton & Puga, 2014). UNESCO (2019) recommends that promoting creative industries through policies, support, incentives, and investments, alongside international cooperation and partnerships, can lead to inclusive development (Fazlagic & Szczepankiewicz, 2020). Creative cities aim to nurture open-mindedness, free thinking, and creativity. This, in turn, fosters social and economic progress by creating an environment that attracts new businesses and start-ups. The diverse community enhances the creative atmosphere, boosts creative and knowledge industries, connects into global networks, and spurs new initiatives (Florea, 2015; Hahn, 2010; Kerimoglu, 2024). Urban policies focus on introducing new economic activities in cities, ensuring urban economic sustainability, and developing appropriate intervention strategies, all of which can be achieved only through institutionalisation (Kerimoglu, 2024).

2.2. Raising Awareness and Building Institutional Capacities

Raising awareness and building institutional capacities form the basis for institutionalisation and sustainability. While institutional capacity development supports urban sustainability by fostering local dynamics, it also enables the creation of effective organisational structures that contribute to development (Akin, 2015).

Institutionalisation ensures the effective use of resources by providing a transparent and systematic control loop. To achieve institutionalisation, it is essential to develop institutional capacities, establish collaborations, create and utilise new funding sources, and adopt flexible management models. The level of awareness among local administrations and policymakers directly impacts the sustainability of institutional structures. Sustainable urban development is only possible by integrating global economic changes into urban policymaking processes. Therefore, developing policies for the creative economy cannot be achieved successfully by a single administrative unit alone; it requires the involvement of a broad range of stakeholders concerned with economic development, local and international investment, technology, community, arts, culture, tourism, social welfare, and education (Leitner, 1990). Institutional capacity is necessary not only for crisis management but also for all stages of urban development. A robust, strategic institutional capacity includes the ability to engage in cross-sectoral thinking, flexibility in resource allocation, clarity, and transparency (OECD, 2016).

Capacity building is vital for tackling challenges in urban development, globalisation, localisation, public-private partnerships, and sector-specific trends. In the process of capacity building in urban governance, key elements include financial resources, the role and competence of experts, institutionalisation, and capacity development (Akin, 2015). Establishing collaborations is also a fundamental part of the institutional approach. Collaboration involves sharing resources and managing diverse interests and ideas to find standard solutions to shared problems. A collaborative system institutionalises actor networks with shared governance on a multi-actor platform (Wolfe, 2010; Sorensen & Torfing, 2021, cited in Khlystova & Kalyuzhnova, 2023). Working in partnership with related industries supports infrastructure development, resource utilisation, solution implementation, and adaptation to change. This can benefit industries by providing skilled talent and a supportive local environment (Boschma, 2015; Basilico et al., 2022; Kogler et al., 2023; cited in Khlystova & Kalyuzhnova, 2023). Collaboration among government, civil society, and the private sector can promote job creation and foster networking. The creative economy brings together experts from diverse sectors, fostering cooperation and awareness (Buchoud et al., 2021).

It is crucial to update management approaches and policies to handle changes in an integrated, comprehensive, and flexible way, as economic production systems influence all social, cultural, demographic, and environmental aspects. Public institutions, in particular, may find it challenging to keep pace with developments and deliver effective services during global crises (Emerson & Nabatchi, 2015, cited in Kovanen et al., 2023). Inadequate or insufficient human resources, combined with a lack of organisational and institutional maturity, often lead to the failure of development projects in many developing countries.

3. On the Creative Economy, Institutionalisation and Awareness in Türkiye

The transformation of traditional industries in the developed world has been driven by innovation and creativity, making the positive contribution of creative industries to cities' economic, social, and spatial transformation undeniable. This trend alone underscores the importance of creative industries to Türkiye's economic development. As Türkiye transitions to a knowledge economy, creativity becomes vital in urban areas to develop, transform, and strengthen cities' economic structures, as observed in the developed world. For cities to achieve sustainability, their economic, social, political, administrative, cultural, physical, and spatial frameworks must align with global developments. Innovative and adaptable management approaches, along with the responsibilities assumed by relevant authorities and institutions, are of crucial importance (Kerimoğlu, 2017).

As of 2017, data on the creative economy in Türkiye shows a turnover of 28 billion dollars and an added value of 7 billion dollars. The share of the creative economy in Türkiye's total turnover is 2%, which is relatively low compared to manufacturing (27%) and construction (8%). In 2017, the value added by the creative economy accounted for around 3% of Türkiye's total value added. Again, this figure is very low compared to construction (8%) and manufacturing (35%). In 2015, the top five regions with the highest

creative economy turnover were TR10 (İstanbul, 73.9%), TR51 (Ankara, 9.7%), TR42 (Kocaeli, Sakarya, Düzce, Bolu, Yalova, 3.4%), TR31 (İzmir, 2.6%) and TR61 (Antalya, Isparta, Burdur, 2.5%) (İZKA, 2021).

In Türkiye, the institutions responsible for policymaking and funding in the creative economy are the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the Ministry of Industry and Technology, and the Ministry of Trade. Furthermore, two institutional bodies are the TOBB Creative Industries Council, established in 2017 as part of the Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Türkiye (TOBB), and the Creative Industries Council (YEKON), an umbrella organisation of related professional groups, set up in 2012 on a project basis (with İSTKA support).

The TOBB Creative Industries Council is a sub-organisation representing the creative industries with a public face, including representatives from companies, civil society organisations, and related public institutions. It aims to facilitate communication between the public and private sectors. Conversely, YEKON is a structure that organises professional bodies of the creative industry. Its establishment seeks to propose strategies, policies, and actions for the sector (YEKON, 2023b). YEKON's roles include fostering collaboration, promoting innovation, training industry professionals, facilitating research, and serving as a centre for national and international experience (YEKON, 2023c). The presence of these two institutions is crucial for institutionalising the creative sector; therefore, recognising their active status and contributions is essential to provide a comprehensive overview.

The economic contribution of copyright-based cultural industries in Türkiye was first measured by a study conducted between 2015 and 2018 under the leadership of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, with support and cooperation from the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) (Ministry of Culture and Tourism, 2021). The four key industries of the creative economy are defined as Software, Computer Games and Data Services, Advertising, Books/Press, and Radio and Television. The Ministry of Industry and Technology's 'Competitive Sectors Programme' supports projects under the Creative Industries theme. It is important to note that these supports aim to strengthen the connection between the creative and manufacturing industries (YEKON, 2023b). The Ministry of Trade contributes to the creative economy by incentivising exports.

While preparing Türkiye's 12th Development Plan (2024-2028), a workshop was organised with the participation of sector representatives (YEKON, 2023b). It is essential to discuss how the outputs are reflected in the plan. Concerning the creative economy and institutionalisation, Development Agencies play a vital role in providing financial support to central and local governments, universities, SMEs, entrepreneurs, non-governmental organisations, and others. After the Ministry of Development was dissolved in 2018, its agencies were transferred to the Ministry of Industry and Technology.

Supporting innovative approaches and sectoral contributions in regional plans is crucial for developing these areas (Akin, 2015). Development Agencies already have

strategic plans, projects, and activities aimed at improving institutional capacity, creating a skilled workforce, restructuring institutions, establishing an environment of inter-institutional trust, facilitating effective communication, raising awareness of common inter-regional issues, formulating strategies for economic and social development, generating funding resources, and setting goals that aid regional growth. In addition to building institutional capacity, efforts are underway to foster a collaborative environment in which public institutions, NGOs, and universities contribute to regional development, share knowledge, and exchange experiences.

3.1. Policy Documents and Awareness

BAKKA (Zonguldak, Karabük, Bartın), İZKA (İzmir), İSTKA (İstanbul), and ANKARAKA (Ankara) have planned strategies and actions to develop creative industries within their regional plans for 2024 and 2028. CKA (Adana-Mersin), AHİKA (Kırşehir, Nevşehir, Niğde, Aksaray, Kırıkkale), KUZKA (Kastamonu, Çankırı, Sinop), GMKA (Balıkesir, Çanakkale), and İZKA's 2023 regional plans address activities related to creative industries, creative productions, and fostering a culture of creativity. In the plans of other development agencies, creativity is mentioned in connection with developing tourism alternatives and increasing innovative capacity (digitalisation, innovative models in industrialisation, R&D, clustering, development of information technologies, strengthening the entrepreneurship ecosystem, branding). The 12th Development Plan of Türkiye, covering 2024-2028, prioritises agriculture and food, energy, defence industry, and tourism for development, while information technologies, innovative sectors, and creative industries are not included.

The regional plans prepared by 26 development agencies include objectives, approaches, and general statements about actions to enhance regional economic development and strengthen the economy. However, there is no comprehensive explanation of how to achieve economic sustainability and growth in the regions holistically, including the tools to be used.

3.2. Sources of Funding

Besides development agencies, the institutions funding creative industries include the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the Ministry of Industry and Technology (affiliated with Development Agencies, TÜBİTAK, and KOSGEB), the General Directorate of the Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT), the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Türkiye (TÜBİTAK), the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Organisation (KOSGEB), and the Ministry of Trade (Annex 1).

Agencies other than İSTKA that directly support innovation, technological development, and innovative practices are İZKA and ANKARAKA (Table 1). However, the funds allocated to these agencies are relatively small compared to those assigned to İSTKA (Table 2).

Table: 1
İZKA and ANKARA Funds - Categories and Amounts

| | Categories | Amount (million TL) |
|----------|---|---------------------|
| İZKA | Digital Transformation in the Public Sector | 30 |
| | Transformation into Information Society: Information and Communication Technologies | 15 |
| | Technological Production and Innovation | 14 |
| | The Competitiveness in Tourism and Innovation | 12 |
| ANKARAKA | Innovative Applications | 10 |
| | High-tech Product Commercialisation | 10 |
| | Social Entrepreneurship and Social Innovation | 7 |
| | | |

Source: compiled from development agencies' web pages by the author.

İstanbul Development Agency (İSTKA)

This paper examines the development of the creative economy through the example of the TDL project supported by İSTKA. To provide a comprehensive overview, a summary of İSTKA's support and activities, as the leading entity in developing the creative economy and innovation-related initiatives in Türkiye, will be included, along with a significant funding budget.

Since 2012, İSTKA has run a support programme called 'Creative Industries and Innovative İstanbul.' Between 2012 and 2018, a total of 2,563 projects were submitted. Of these, 898 (35%) were applications for the 'Creative Industries and Innovative İstanbul' programme, and 214 (23.83%) received support. As shown in Table 2, 61 projects were supported in 2021.

Table: 2
İSTKA Funds

| Year | Application Categories | Total Applications | Number of Successful Projects | Amount (million TL) |
|------|---|--------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|
| 2012 | Disaster Readiness | 54 | 15 | |
| | Small-Scale Infrastructure for Social Inclusion | 110 | 19 | |
| | Developing Creative Industries | 97 | 20 | 15 |
| | Information and Communication Technologies | 153 | 54 | 50 |
| 2014 | Disaster Readiness | 57 | 25 | |
| | Efficient and Clean Energy | 102 | 27 | |
| | Innovative İstanbul | 116 | 27 | -- |
| | Children and Youth | 215 | 49 | |
| 2015 | Global Tourism İstanbul | 101 | 16 | |
| | Health Tourism Centre İstanbul | 60 | 27 | |
| | Innovative İstanbul | 149 | 48 | - |
| | Developing Creative Industries | 126 | 26 | 20 |
| 2016 | Increasing Women's Employment | 83 | 19 | |
| | Fighting Addiction | 134 | 31 | |
| | Entrepreneurship | 96 | 17 | |
| | Innovative and Creative İstanbul | 229 | 56 | 50 |
| 2018 | Children and Youth | 216 | 48 | |
| | Entrepreneurship | 52 | 17 | |
| | Innovative and Creative İstanbul | 181 | 37 | 80 |
| | Children and Youth | 232 | 35 | |
| 2021 | Entrepreneurship | - | 12 | |
| | Innovative İstanbul | - | 36 | 80 |
| | Creative Industries | - | 25 | 20 |
| | Children and Youth | - | 74 | |
| 2023 | Feasibility Support | - | 3 | |
| | Talent İstanbul | - | 20 | |

Source: İSTKA, <<https://www.İSTKA.org.tr/projeler/tamamlanan-projeler/>>.

According to the İSTKA Regional Plan 2024-2028, one of the four strategies shaping İstanbul's vision is 'Creativity: Developing creative industries across İstanbul and strengthening the ecosystem globally'. İSTKA (2023) details the key conditions necessary for developing creative industries in İstanbul. This includes diversifying financial resources, integrating with technological advancements, creating data production systems, enhancing the city's focus on creativity, and ensuring the effective utilisation of creative spaces in the town. Industries face significant challenges in accessing financial resources. Small-scale and individual activities are not funded due to strict criteria.

4. The Problem of Institutionalisation and Awareness: Taskisla Design LAB Project Experience

Developing the creative economy, especially in urban areas, cannot be the sole responsibility of policymaking bodies. It requires awareness and suitable capacity from all city actors, including universities, professional chambers, NGOs, various industry associations, civil initiatives, private sector organisations, and the local community.

The TDL project concentrates solely on design-based industries for several reasons. Due to the size of İstanbul and time constraints, it was necessary to limit both the scope of the study and the subject matter. Additionally, the aim was to establish connections with the educational programmes of the İTÜ Faculty of Architecture (including Architecture, Urban and Regional Planning, Landscape Architecture, Interior Architecture, and Industrial Design), all of which are design-related. Finally, since this study assesses an urban area, it focuses on the city and urban stakeholders.

The project aims to strengthen İstanbul's creative industries ecosystem by fostering a supportive environment for the establishment of independent cooperative structures. It also seeks to raise awareness about the creative economy, enhance institutional capacities through developing collaborative frameworks among various stakeholders, and influence urban development policies by creating investment and funding tools to promote sustainability. The project took place from November 2021 to December 2022, focusing mainly on joint activities, collaborations, and building relationships with other actors. Its primary goal was to establish integrated and sustainable cooperation structures.

Various activities were carried out to raise awareness among stakeholders about sectoral development and ecosystem challenges, including product development, knowledge and experience sharing, capacity building, developing human resources, designing transformational approaches, implementing digital transformation, and creating participatory, inclusive, and innovative pathways to enhance the sector's added value. Additionally, issues such as institutional capacity, funding mechanisms, investment, industry-specific expectations, and the relationship between education and the labour force were addressed.

4.1. Methodology

This study assesses the outcomes of the TDL project activities, workshops, and meetings, with an emphasis on institutionalisation and awareness. A total of 741 actors were contacted during the project, of whom 135 participated in the activities. While some actors did not respond, others contacted the project team during the first phase to request information but did not participate in any activities. The individuals and groups contacted included: 50 civil initiatives, 33 graduate entrepreneurs from the İTÜ Faculty of Architecture, 35 professional chambers, 23 publications, 60 award-winning groups from various competitions, 32 fellow project owners (from İstanbul, national, and international levels), 27 laboratories (from İstanbul and nationwide), local governments (İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality, İstanbul District Municipalities, Union of Municipalities of Marmara (MBB), Union of Municipalities of Türkiye (TBB)), 40 academics from outside İTÜ, 241 academics from İTÜ, 50 organisations funding similar projects, 35 representatives of capital groups (umbrella organisations), ministries, 26 development agencies (national), and 20 national and international organisations (see Table 3). The activities listed below thoroughly explored the themes of awareness and institutionalisation within the development of the creative economy across a diverse and extensive platform. The comprehensive evaluation derived from the collective project activities—each designed to enhance understanding of the importance of institutionalisation and awareness—forms the core methodology of this study. The specified activities introduced discussion topics outlined in Table 5, and the meetings were recorded and transcribed under the identified headings.

Table: 3
Actor Groups and Participant Numbers

| Actor Groups | Contacted | Attended |
|--|-----------|----------|
| Civil Initiatives | 50 | 11 |
| Private Sector | 20 | 4 |
| Entrepreneurs of the Faculty of Architecture | 33 | 5 |
| Professional Chamber Organisations | 35 | 2 |
| Publishing Companies | 23 | 2 |
| Awarded Groups | 60 | 6 |
| Similar projects (national/international) | 32 | 4 |
| Similar Labs (National) | 27 | 7 |
| Other Academic Institutions (İstanbul-İzmir-Ankara / Other than İTÜ) | 40 | 15 |
| İTÜ | 241 | 41 |
| Organisations funding similar projects | 50 | |
| Capital Organisations/Ministries | 35 | 2 |
| Local Authorities | 42 | 6 |
| İstanbul GM +District municipalities + MBB+TBB | 26 | 5 |
| Development Agencies (National) | 7 | 7 |
| UNESCO Türkiye Cities | 20 | 18 |

Source: compiled from the TDL Project Activity Reports by the author.

As part of the project, 37 activities and five pilot projects were undertaken. These included introductory meetings, awareness workshops, urban development workshops, pilot projects (both at spatial and product scales), creative development and entrepreneurship seminars, national and international experience-sharing sessions, workshops in İstanbul and Türkiye, as well as the project launch and closing meetings (see Tables 3-4). Six activities

were specifically organised to raise awareness and strengthen the capacity of sectors and institutions. These activities aimed to promote the production of innovative products through interdisciplinary relationships and novel processes, as well as to develop human resources by linking education with the labour market. Policy discussions were held to guide the formulation of accurate and realistic policies. Several workshops were held to foster sectoral development, increase value-added production, and enhance human resource capacity through knowledge and experience sharing. These workshops offered insights into innovative design, production, and product development processes. Additionally, Urban Policy Development Workshops brought together local governments and professional organisations to raise awareness, build institutional capacity, and encourage stakeholder participation. Pilot Projects represented the initiative's implementation phase. They aimed to support collaborative production by facilitating dialogue and shared learning among actors within İstanbul's design industry. The concept was applied at two levels—spatial and product scale. The goal was to provide students with practical work experience and hands-on learning opportunities, while also emphasising the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration and cooperation between the university and design industry stakeholders. The spatial-scale pilot projects lasted 9 months, while the product-scale projects lasted 7 months. Professionals held several seminars and meetings to share knowledge and build expertise. Various workshops and experience-sharing sessions were organised to help participants understand the industry's significance, develop human resources, and identify opportunities to produce and launch innovative products to market.

Table: 4
TDL Activities and Participant Numbers

| Activities | The number of activities | The number of participants | Predominantly Participating Actors |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|---|
| Introduction Meetings | 8 | 41 | Undergraduate/Master's/PhD Students and ITÜ Faculty of Architecture Faculty Members |
| Creative Entrepreneurship seminar | 1 | 12 | Undergraduate Students |
| Creative Development Seminar | 5 | 41 | Undergraduate Students National Labs |
| Awareness Workshops | 6 | 60 | NGOs + Academia + Undergraduate Students |
| Urban Development Workshop | 4 | 25 | National Labs-Local Governments |
| İstanbul Workshop | 1 | 15 | Local Governments-Similar Projects |
| Türkiye Workshop | 1 | 21 | NGOs-Students-National Labs |
| National Experience Sharing | 2 | 13 | Local Governments + Academy |
| International Experience Sharing | 3 | 14 | Academy + Undergraduate Students |
| Pilot Projects | 5 | 100 | Faculty of Architecture Undergraduate Students |
| Project Launch & Closing Meeting | 2 | 60 | ITÜ Faculty of Architecture |

Source: compiled from the TDL Project Activity Reports by the author.

The participation of a broad and diverse group of actors makes the findings more realistic. The project itself functions as the methodology for this study. The findings from its activities offer essential insights into awareness and institutionalisation within the design ecosystem, which plays a significant role in Türkiye's creative economy, particularly in İstanbul. These findings are expected to attract the attention of policymakers and infrastructure developers. Another critical issue to discuss is the level of awareness among policymakers.

4.2. Findings

The project's main achievement is gaining substantial experience in addressing the issues described above. The outcomes are assessed to gauge the level of institutionalisation and awareness among the actors, as well as their access to funding resources and ability to forge collaborations. The TDL Project uncovered a significant lack of institutionalisation and awareness related to the development of the creative economy.

Table: 5
Activity Groups and Events

| Activity Groups | Events | Event Outcome |
|-----------------------------------|---|---------------|
| Introduction Meetings | Introduction Meetings | |
| Creative Entrepreneurship Seminar | Entrepreneurs on Stage | |
| Creative Development Seminar | How to Do It? Building Sustainable Relationships between Designers, Artists and Technologists in the Entrepreneurship Ecosystem | C |
| | The Concept of Intellectual Property Rights and the Role of Technology Transfer Offices for Inventions at Universities | |
| | İTÜ Entrepreneurship Ecosystem on Campus: GİNOVA | |
| | Life Transformed by the Pandemic and the Technological Future Post-Pandemic Digital Society | |
| Awareness Workshops | İTÜ An Technocity Entrepreneurship Ecosystem and İTÜ Magnet Advanced Entrepreneurship Centre | |
| | Urbanized Technologies | |
| | What's new in Istanbul? Is Taşkılla Design Lab a Tool for Urban Creativity and Industrial Development? | IC |
| | Creativity Urban Policy Practices and Tools | IC |
| | Between Mass Production Norms and Everyday Life: The Secret Life of Dining Tables | |
| | Policy Transfer and Funding in the Creative Industries | FS |
| Urban Development Workshop | Awareness and Design Thinking in Social Entrepreneurship | |
| | Where do NGOs and Professional Organisations stand as Stakeholders in Urban Development? | C |
| | Education, Workforce, Funds, Institutionalisation, Actors and Roles. What is Possible and What is Not? | IC -FS |
| | Creative Cities and Stakeholders: The level of awareness in local authorities? Policy Development Tools, Relationships and Networks | C |
| | Creative Cities and Stakeholders: What are the Most Effective Collaboration Models for Creative Cities and Actors | C |
| Istanbul Workshop | Creative Istanbul: The level of awareness of actors | IC -C |
| Türkiye Workshop | Creative Türkiye: Visions and Policies for the Future | IC -C |
| National Experience Sharing | UNESCO Creative Cities and Türkiye's Experience | C |
| | Creative Economy: Design Industries Education - Labour Relationship | IC |
| International Experience Sharing | Trends and Challenges for Planning Knowledge Dialogue and Power | |
| | Culture City Design | |
| | Open Talk Urban Tries, Creative Places/Place Making | |
| Pilot Projects | Rethinking Fatih | IC |
| | Creating Space for Creative Alternatives in İstanbul | |
| | Another Kind of Workshop: Gömeç/Balikesir | |
| | Product Phase I | |
| Project Launch & Closing Meeting | Product Phase II | |
| | Project Launch | |
| | Project Closing Meeting | |

4.2.1. Institutional Capacities (IC)

When assessing institutional capacity, it becomes clear that workforce training is a key issue. Universities lack the flexibility, expertise, and awareness needed to support the industry, and their training programmes and tools are inadequate (Table 5). Furthermore, these programmes cannot be updated to reflect industry changes, and modern training methods and tools are not utilised. Organised workshops by various organisations, including non-governmental organisations, serve as an alternative to vocational training. During

various student activities, participants highlighted the educational value and engaging nature of these events. As part of the project's activities, the 'Rethink: Fatih' workshop selected 50 students from 150 applicants. All participants expressed 100% satisfaction with their learning and skill development. The workshops encouraged collaboration across subjects and attracted many students. Notably, students involved in the project activities reported that learning about models from different perspectives beyond their university studies broadened their outlook. During the İstanbul Workshop titled 'Creative İstanbul Who is Aware of What and How Much?', an interactive survey was conducted with local government and NGO participants, revealing the main challenges faced by the creative economy. These include communication problems, lack of institutional capacity, semi-independent structures, and cohesion among local government bodies. The findings indicate that the creative economy needs attention to institutional capacity, sectoral development, innovative approaches, and sustainable partnerships. Public institutions must focus on capacity building, and local authorities should formalise the development of creative tools and effective collaborations. For the sector's growth and sustainability, policymakers must be involved in this process. Universities also play a crucial role in this regard.

4.2.2. Cooperation (C)

The activities related to cooperation (Table 5) highlight the need for governing institutions to establish efficient and prompt response mechanisms to address new developments. Although rigid legal structures are often seen as the main barriers to growth, it is emphasised that differing understandings of institutions hinder both systemic organisation and sustainability. It appears that institutions' capacities are negatively affected by factors such as a lack of activity, outdated institutional frameworks, insufficient understanding and expertise to manage complex legal situations, ageing staff, and structures that cannot be updated. Furthermore, the lack of knowledge in establishing cooperation structures that align with the institutional vision and in recognising the importance of disciplines, institutions, and international communication often leads to unsatisfactory outcomes. Cities within the UNESCO Creative Cities Network can participate through their local governments and implement the process accordingly. It has been observed that Turkish cities joining the network exhibit different institutional structures during the application and process management phases. Despite being part of an international network, they have developed unique structures and institutional approaches. The fact that these city administrators and stakeholders are visionary and have steered their cities towards international cooperation and global competition is a notable achievement for both the towns and Türkiye.

Many organisations lack an understanding of the importance of corporate responsibilities and roles, which leads to issues in organising, collaborating, and networking. Moreover, many organisations appear unaware of alternative cooperation structures. Specialised NGOs are still struggling to establish relations with the public sector, and inter-organisational relations, sustainable collaborations, and interdisciplinary work are not possible. Additionally, the informality of industries and the lack of unionisation hinder

workforce mobilisation. Therefore, addressing the need for a more legal, measurable, controllable, and auditable production system through alternative systems or different tax regulations is crucial.

4.2.3. Funding Sources (FS)

The study reveals a significant shortage of financial resources across the country, and combined with limited accessibility, it hampers the growth of the creative economy. This is mainly due to a lack of awareness about legal entities and the various types of project support available for funding applications. Additionally, the scarcity of high-impact actors capable of creating economic value makes it difficult to generate, utilise, and access funding sources. Development Agencies tend to favour financially sustainable institutions when providing support, often excluding individual actors in the industry who are not foundations, cooperatives, or companies. While it is recognised that alternative funding mechanisms are limited, bureaucratic obstacles can be overcome with swift decisions that do not require significant structural changes to mobilise resources and provide lower but sufficient funding for individuals. Resource transfer in creative industries primarily flows from traditional sectors to manufacturing and industry, supporting the idea that institutions maintain their traditional structures and that social, cultural, and artistic added value does not receive adequate economic recognition or attention.

4.2.4. Awareness and Evaluation

It has become clear that there are significant weaknesses in institutional capacities, collaborations, and the establishment of an effective communication network between institutions. This situation hampers sector development and restricts internal innovation structures. The issues are being tackled in a fragmented way, with only temporary solutions, which shows inadequate methods for ensuring long-term sustainability. A significant obstacle to the sector's progress is the lack of alignment between academic trends and global developments. For the industry to grow and make a meaningful contribution to the city's economy, educational institutions must recognise the need to adapt their programmes to better prepare graduates for the job market.

İSTKA (2023) has identified several challenges in the creative industry, including a lack of awareness among stakeholders of available funding sources, the inadequacy of current resources, and bureaucratic barriers that obstruct access to these funds.

The policymaking events brought together various stakeholders, including government representatives, academics, district administration officials, leaders of similar projects, NGOs, and business representatives. Specifically, local government representatives from seven cities in Türkiye, all members of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, participated, alongside three representatives from 39 district administrations in İstanbul (including Maltepe-Kadıköy and Fatih municipalities), one Central Government representative from the Ministry of Trade, one representative from the Turkish Industry and

Business Association (TUSIAD), and one from the Turkish Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges (TOBB). However, the İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality (except for two departments), as well as the İstanbul Chamber of Industry (ISO) and the İstanbul Chamber of Commerce (ITO), which are key actors in İstanbul's development, did not participate in the events.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

This study explores the development of İstanbul's creative economy through the İSTKA-funded TDL project, which emphasises institutionalisation and awareness. It is worth noting that this subject has received limited attention, especially from academia, students, and public institutions.

In Türkiye, policies and objectives related to the creative economy are not incorporated into national, regional, or urban planning efforts. Furthermore, awareness about this issue remains limited. Different stakeholder groups tend to operate independently, and collaboration is often neglected because its importance is not fully recognised. Consequently, mechanisms for participation need strengthening. Engagement in project activities, including those of the İTÜ Faculty of Architecture, where the project is being implemented, has been substantially low. Work is carried out in isolation, leading to wasted resources—time, labour, and costs—as similar tasks are redundantly repeated. This reflects that academic institutions lack coordinated action and clear division of responsibilities, and updating training programmes to align with industry needs is often required.

Development agencies are recognised as having a significant influence on future policies and practices. However, it is essential to recognise that institutions supporting the creative economy, including TÜBİTAK and KOSGEB, operate under the Ministry of Industry and Technology. Consequently, the decisions and support provided are centralised in a single body. To facilitate effective policymaking, awareness-raising, and fundraising efforts, it is essential to involve a broader range of stakeholders.

Many NGOs and civic organisations are established and managed by young people who are highly active and aware in their efforts. Their skills and experiences often extend beyond what they have learned at universities. However, despite their efforts to collaborate with public sector entities such as local governments and universities, they are frequently misunderstood or unrecognised by these institutions. Enhancing the institutional capacities of public organisations is vital, and it is necessary to diversify human resources with a range of specialisations and involve younger generations in decision-making processes. Policymakers must update their agendas, stay informed about developments, recognise legal barriers, and work to develop and implement innovative, practical tools for policy development and implementation.

YEKON and the TOBB Creative Industries Council were expected to play essential roles in developing creative sectors. However, despite their promising starts, these

institutions have not been effective in promoting industry growth. The quality of their activities and outputs is not sufficient to support and guide industry development. Modern economic structures require the simultaneous advancement of innovative sectors, their related workforce, and policies at the urban, regional, and national levels. Sadly, there is a lack of awareness about these economic sectors in Türkiye, and traditional economic approaches and sectors continue to dominate development plans and implementations.

To successfully carry out multidimensional transformation processes, institutions of all sizes and responsibilities must develop, adapt, and manage their existing capacities. A key tool for doing so is creating and utilising funding resources. This can be directly supported by increasing awareness and implementing innovative, flexible institutional structures and management practices.

Regarding institutionalisation and awareness, Turkish cities within the UNESCO network serve as positive examples for all the issues discussed.

Institutional capacity involves developing human and intellectual assets, encouraging awareness and collaboration, and deploying innovative, adaptable, and decentralised management models and policies. By leveraging institutional competence, implementations can be executed efficiently, ensuring cooperation between all stakeholders and delivering outcomes that realise the intended benefits.

According to YEKON's (2023a) research on creative industries, the main challenges facing the sector are the lack of financial support, awareness, and consciousness. Despite recent advancements in İstanbul's creative industries, the sector has not yet reached the desired level of maturity. The stagnation of sub-sectors is attributed to insufficient incentives, demand, and training. Implementing educational policies that develop a skilled workforce is essential to meet the increasing demand in creative industries. Clarifying the value of tangible outputs — such as services, products, information, and promotional activities — can help address the serious issue of a lack of awareness across sectors.

Policy-making institutions must continually update their human capital, develop adaptable sub-structures for specialisations, and keep abreast of the latest advances. They should plan funding sources and distribution methods, and explore future alternatives and tools. Additionally, it is vital to develop flexible, realistic policies at various levels, including at the intersection of urban space and sectors. Institutions should also design interventions and concrete tools to mitigate vulnerabilities and establish sustainable cooperation frameworks. Finally, they must offer incentives, mechanisms, and legal regulations to encourage participation from diverse actors and disciplines.

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ANNEX: 1 The Institutions Funding Creative Industries

| Ministry of Culture and Tourism | |
|---|--|
| Events and projects support | Animation film production support |
| Intellectual Property & Cultural Industries support | Documentary film production support |
| Scientific Research Projects support | Post Shooting support |
| Scientific Meetings / Participation in Scientific Events / Excavation Surveys | Distribution & Promotion support |
| Incentive for Writing Domestic Works | Series support |
| Theatre games support | First Feature Fiction Film Production Support |
| Cultural Entrepreneur / Investor Certified Facility Incentives | Short film production support |
| Cultural centre construction supports | Co-Production Support |
| Literary Works Support Project | Project development support |
| Sponsorship Subsidy | Scenario & Dialogue Writing Support |
| Event & Project Support in Cinema | Feature Film Production Support |
| Ministry of Industry and Technology | |
| R&D Centre support | KOSGEB |
| Design Centre support | Business development support |
| Support for software registration projects | Support for International markets |
| Supports for development agencies (26) | Collaboration supports |
| | Support for the development of SMEs |
| | Technology development support for business |
| | R&D for SMEs and innovation programs support |
| General Directorate of Turkish Radio and Television Corporation | |
| Support for the Ministry of Trade | TÜBİTAK |
| Foreign Currency Earning Service Trade Support - IT Sector | Patent Support Programme |
| Foreign Currency Earning Service Trade Support-Design Sector | SME R&D Start-up Support Programme |
| Turquality and Trademark Support Programme | Call for SME Support for Order-Based R&D Projects 2020 |
| | Patent-Based Technology Transfer Support Call Patent Licence |

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