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# The Politics of Economization of Cultural Policy

*The institutional changes in the creative economy discourse and entrepreneurial artists in Finnish cultural policy*

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## Abstract

While the once welfare-oriented Finnish cultural policy system has gradually shifted its focus toward policies driven by austerity and competition, numerous official cultural policy documents promoting the economization of culture and the entrepreneurialization of cultural work have emerged since the turn of the millennium. While most changes have been largely discursive and schematic, there have also been structural and institutional shifts. The Ministry of Education and Culture, through the Arts Promotion Centre Finland, wields more directive power. Additionally, other ministries, such as the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, have gained influence in cultural policy. Regional and local governance of culture is now closely tied to economic strategies. The number of cultural field entrepreneurs and freelancers has significantly increased, reflecting a “hybridization” of labor market positions. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic intensified discussions about the roles of cultural workers and entrepreneurs within cultural production networks. This article explores the current economic rationale in Finnish cultural policy, encompassing institutions, practices, and discourses. The analysis draws from policy documents produced by ministries, agencies, and art organizations, as well as documents related to COVID-19 support and post-pandemic events. We examine these manifestations through four recent “events” in cultural life and policy: (i) the emergence of creative economy discourses and practices since the early 2000s, (ii) the rise of self-employment and entrepreneurship, (iii) the strategicization of institutional policies and the weakening of their autonomy, and (iv) the enterprise-focused crisis support and post-pandemic actions. This transformation has not only economized cultural policies but also revitalized cultural politics, injecting new vitality into the somewhat stagnant Finnish cultural policy.

## Keywords

creative economy, entrepreneurship, economization, discursive institutionalism, Finland, politization

## Introduction

Like in all the Nordic countries, in Finland too, arts and culture were included in the welfare state model since the latter part of the 20th century. Cultural policy and its institutional arrangements aimed at improving conditions for professional artists in terms of both

income and social security (Sokka & Johannisson 2022). Public support for artistic work was also generally understood as notably different from cultural industries and market income (Røyseng 2019). It was even necessary for certain areas of artistic activities to “prove themselves financially unprofitable” to be entitled to receive public support (Kangas 2004: 26). The financial support for individual artists and cultural workers has traditionally been based on comprehensive national public subsidies supplemented by smaller grants from municipalities and Finnish private and third sector foundations. The arm’s length principle of the system has enabled professional artists and their organizations to have a relatively strong and influential position in cultural governance (Kangas 2003; Häyrynen 2018). Lately, these traditions have been challenged by:

- *The creative economy discourse* in cultural policy which emphasizes the economic importance of culture and dispels the traditional opposition between public cultural policy and cultural industries. In national strategies, reports, and programs, cultural activities have been increasingly considered from the perspective of employment, business, and economic growth policy in the past 20 years (Häyrynen 2018; Jakonen 2017; Kangas 2004).
- *The entrepreneurialization of cultural work and its subjects*. Some policy documents, and creative economy projects and arts and culture education, have promoted entrepreneurship and an entrepreneurial ethos in arts and culture. The tradition of self-employment and the increase of the related modes of freelancership and entrepreneurship in the cultural labor markets have lubricated this change (Pyykkönen & Stavrum 2018; Pyykkönen et al. 2022).
- *Institutional arrangements* that diminish the autonomy of arts councils and centralize power within bureaucratic cultural policy structures to enhance strategic governance. The background rationale is economic in two senses: firstly, it aims at cuts in public expenditure, and secondly, it helps to push central sociopolitical ideologies such as competition into the field of arts and culture through funding, programs, and other institutional restructurations (Jakonen 2020; 2022; Sevänen & Häyrynen 2018).
- *The crisis management of the COVID-19 pandemic* highlighted the entrepreneurial and business side of cultural work within cultural production networks. In various and complex ways, this has further intensified the aforementioned developments and is linked with new institutional arrangement plans (Jakonen & Renko 2023; Luonila et al. 2022).

Recent studies (Pyykkönen & Stavrum 2018; Saukkonen 2014) have indicated that these changes and developments have influenced the general discourses and themes of national and regional cultural policies, but the impacts on bureaucratic institutions, structures, and actual practices have been milder or even miniscule (cf. Rius-Ulldemolins & Rubio-Arostegui 2022). However, our article reveals that institutional and strategic changes are also emerging in the conduct and power relations of institutions, and that they partly intertwine with the economization of culture. In line with some recent studies (e.g., Hylland et al. 2022; Luonila et al. 2022), we also claim that the implementation of the economy-oriented COVID-19 support for culture has both directly and indirectly increased this economization. Consequently, we will also contemplate the current, post-pandemic aspirations for institutional restructurations of creative economy policy (Jakonen & Renko 2023).

The decrease of politics, along with the rise of “technocratization” (e.g., Caramani 2017), has been discussed for some time in Finnish cultural policy studies (e.g., Jakonen & Sokka

2021; Jakonen 2020; Häyrynen 2015; Rautiainen 2015).<sup>1</sup> *Firstly*, it signifies transformations in institutional practices where the power and participation of artists and their organizations are diminished in favor of more formal policies relying on indicators and bureaucratic criteria. *Secondly*, it refers to the strategization of policies. The broad principles and lines of policies are increasingly decided in advance by high-profile officials or ministerial working groups, and the debates and dialogical decision-making only concern limited or practical issues. *Thirdly*, it sometimes means the “discursive naturalization” and hegemonization of certain topics, issues, and perspectives: for instance, the discourse on the economic significance of culture tends to emerge as a matter of course and is difficult to dispute. However, we align with researchers such as Barberio (2014) in recognizing that these forms of depoliticizing displacements pave the way for the politicization of new issues and novel forms of politicization of existing ones.

Our research task in this article is to analyze how the economization of culture is understood, explained, and described in official national cultural policy documents, and how it is manifested in institutional arrangements and funding practices. The main research questions of the article are: *What is the rationale and ideological basis for these changes toward economization in Finnish cultural policy? What are the isomorphic economic and governmental pressures pushing the change? How are the impacts of the economization on the cultural policy system itself described in the documents, and what actually happens in the institutions and policy practices such as funding? What kinds of new horizons and spaces of politics do these tendencies open?*

## From cultural industries to creative industries and economy

The notion of cultural industry as a phenomenon beneficial to economy and society emerged in many European countries (e.g., Bilton 2007) and international cultural policy (e.g., Garner & O’Connor 2019) at the end of the 1980s. The idea and discourse reached Finland some five to ten years later (Heiskanen 2015)<sup>2</sup>. The simple basic definition of cultural industry is that it comprises the cultural goods and services that are produced for sale to consumers. What, then, makes goods and services cultural? There is no obvious definition for these goods and services, but well-known sources recognize at least the following general criteria:

- 1) their production requires creativity;
- 2) they involve symbolic meanings or messages through their cultural content; and
- 3) they at least potentially include elements of intellectual property

(Throsby 2002: 1–6; Towse 2010: 5–193).

A somewhat more nuanced notion of cultural industry refers to those forms of text, music, film, broadcasting, publishing, crafts, design, architecture, visual arts, performing arts, and cultural heritage activities that produce economic (surplus) value for individuals, organizations, and communities/societies. In essence, the cultural industry encompasses market-

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1. As for politics, technocratization has meant, for example, that the ideological question of making actual “political” cultural policy (“value choices”) has been gradually translated into more technical (“neutral”) issues of strategic steering, subsidy criteria, impact assessment, and evaluation methodologies.
  2. Of course, these phenomena have existed in the real world before they were labeled “cultural” or “creative” industries in the present sense. Cultural industries were recognized in Finnish discourses already in the 1980s but mainly as an entity separate from the publicly subsidized culture which was regarded as a counterforce to the pernicious commercial cultural contents (e.g., Sokka et al. 2022). However, certain parts of the cultural industries (film, photography, comics, rock music) became included in cultural policy strategies and thus defined as “arts” (Kangas 2004: 26–27).

based arts and cultural activities that generate economic value and measurable impacts such as wages and employment. (Hesmondhalgh 2013: 1–32, 216–219; Throsby 2002: 110–136).

In recent years, this rather uncritical and positive view of the cultural industry has spread in research and policies with the increasingly prevalent talk about the “creative industries.”<sup>3</sup> The term “creative industries” emphasizes the novelty of ideas and products and places creativity in a context of individual talent, innovation, and productivity (Bilton 2007: 164). It refers to all industries in which creativity plays a recognizable and significant role. The reasons for this displacement are manifold. Above all, researchers have explained it by the development through which cultural work and expressions have begun to resonate more and more with societies’ broader economic interests and goals (Kong 2014) and the sectoral needs of enhancing the significance of cultural work. Knowledge, ideas, and intangible value creation are regarded as key materials of “creative capitalism” (Jakonen 2017; see also Raunig et al. 2011). This displacement from cultural industries to the creative industry and economy is not accidental or natural but rather the result of intentional political maneuvers (Alasuutari 2016; Throsby 2010; Schlesinger 2005).

[I]t was the greater economic significance of the “creative industries” that gave the discourse its broad appeal across policy domains. This is what has allowed for an ever-expanding definition and demarcation of the creative economy (De Beukelaer & Spence 2019: 4).

The first policy document about the systematic development of cultural industries in Finland was the final report of the working group for cultural industries published by the Ministry of Education<sup>4</sup> in 1999. It introduced the ideas about the necessity of the economization of culture to the Finnish cultural policy. The working group inspired several new projects, seminars, and publications. Among the most influential ones was the project called *Kulttuuriosaamisen merkitys kansalliselle kilpailukyvyllä* (The significance of cultural know-how for national competitiveness) carried out by Turku School of Economics and funded by SITRA (Wilenius 2004). The cultural policy administrators and researchers with whom we have discussed the issue consider this project and its seminars as the “ultimate opening shot” for the promotion of creative industries and the economization of culture in Finland, which also rooted the concept of creative economy. It also replaced the concept of cultural industry/ies with that of creative industries and defined them as a positive factor for both the economy and culture per se. The discourse of creative industry and economy has changed relatively little since then while an increasing emphasis has been placed on the significance of creativity for the national economy.

However, different parties use and have used different concepts, and their use varies by context. The institutional framework supporting creative economy policies at the national level consists of two key ministries that approach creative economy from different perspectives and with different aims. While the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) and the agencies working under it speak mostly about “culture,” “cultural sector,” and “cultural sector/industries,” the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment (MEAE), responsible for national economic and business policy, prefers “creativity,” “creative industries,” and “creative economy” because it wishes to emphasize the strong economic connections.

3. Currently the term *cultural and creative sectors (CCS)* is gaining ground in international discussions and statistical work. This concept tries to a) overcome the problem of referring solely to “industries” and thus acknowledges the significant contribution of not-for-profits and publicly funded organizations to the ecosystem of creative work and b) reflect the integrated nature of these sectors into other industry spaces (outside the so-called cultural sector) (see OECD 2022).

4. The name was changed to the Ministry of Education and Culture in 2012.

As we will later show, the creative economy discourse and recent COVID-19 policies have enabled the MEAE to have more hold on cultural policies in Finland. Its discourse framing these concepts aims to draw attention to the value increase that creative industries can bring to employment and GDP, but also to the economy of (a) a certain cultural and creative industry (CCI), (b) its part, or (c) the creative actions in all contexts of economic production. The most important aspects raised in the policy discourse are an emphasis on the macroeconomic dimension of arts and cultural heritage, and a mixed role of individual creativity and business intelligence, which is often referred to as cultural entrepreneurship.

As Heiskanen (2015) and Pyykkönen (2014: 70–92), for example, have shown in their studies, the hegemonization of the creative economy ideology and entrepreneurship as its ideal subject results from an active discursive machination through policy documents, programs, funding scheme definitions, and education. A similar kind of “discursive ideologization” has also happened in UK cultural policy, for instance (Harvie 2013: 67–74; McGuigan 2016; McRobbie 2016).

Bilton (2012: 6; see also McRobbie 2016) has argued that in the aforementioned development, the entrepreneur has become a dominant discursive figure of cultural production. In cultural and creative sector research, entrepreneurialization has often been discussed using the concept of “artpreneur,” basically meaning an entrepreneurial creative worker and subject (Harvie 2013; Pyykkönen et al. 2022). The term refers not only to actual entrepreneurs but also to other workers in a similar employment position and conditions – freelancers and self-employers. In Finland, the COVID-19 pandemic policies drew attention to the general precarity of cultural labor and intensified discussions on the institutionalized creative economy structures (Luonila et al. 2022; also Hylland et al. 2022). Currently, further plans are being developed to restructure that institutional framework as well as the social and unemployment security of cultural labor (Finnish Government 2023).

While Finnish art worlds are still in many ways largely dependent on the state and the rest of the public sector, cultural policy has simultaneously adopted more market-oriented and managerialist tendencies (Sevänen & Häyrynen 2018: 16–17). During the recent decades, the neoliberal modification of the institutional structures of the nominal Finnish cultural policy upheld by the MEC has contributed to the “artpreneur” phenomena. An example of this precarization of the cultural field is the increased use of freelancers instead of permanent artistic staff: for example, publicly funded performing arts institutions have relied increasingly on self-employed artists during the past decades (e.g., TINFO 2023). As more and more creative workers drift into entrepreneurship, a larger share of them must also struggle with short-term contracts and projects, wildly changing daily working hours, unemployment terms without unemployment benefits, and buyers’ pricing policies. On the one hand, the increased diversity of creative jobs and positions fragments and hybridizes creative work and makes the politics in terms of defending interests difficult because common interests are harder to recognize and formulate. On the other hand, this diversity opens the door for new politics concerning creative work.

## **Studying changes in cultural policy using critical discourse analysis and discursive institutionalism**

### **Method**

Our focus in this article is on the discursive and practical changes in cultural policy and its institutional arrangements: how the discourses formulated in policy documents intertwine

with the institutional practices (see Kangas & Vestheim 2010; Peter 2014; Rius-Uldemolins & Rubio-Arostegui 2022; Schmidt 2011).<sup>5</sup> We therefore contemplate the discursive processes by which various contending discourses by different administrative institutions are brought together to form a complex of Finnish creative industries policy.

The methodological framework of the article consists of a combination of *critical discourse analysis* and *discursive institutionalism*. Using critical discourse analysis (Fairclough 1992: 70–81; see also Rear & Jones 2013), we study the more or less conscious political use of language and its institutional implications in this social context of cultural policies which make certain issues, meanings, and actors hegemonic in the institutional context. This *hegemonization* is indeed mostly produced or reproduced through persuasion, convincing, and identifications taking place in knowledge and truth making, that is, *ideologization*, but also through institutional practices such as funding and participatory governance. Although we study the practical side mainly through discourses constituted in policy documents, these discursive ideological and hegemonic processes always have material reflections and consequences (Fairclough 2003: 2).

Institutional practices are also important in our analysis because, as Foucault (1972: 21–70) and Fairclough (2003: 23–24), among others, have argued, sociocultural practices, including institutional ones, and their relation to existing social structures strongly influence the modalities, forms, and orders of discourses. They create the conditions and regularities of what truth is (epistemic modality), and what is needed, possible, desirable, and good (deontic modality). Institutional practices and rules impact what can be said and how, and why certain ways of problematizing existing conditions, truth statements, and desired goals are used in certain contexts such as cultural policy documents about cultural work and its economic impacts. Discourses then reflect the social (and institutional) practices in which they are formulated. This is why economization and marketization cannot simply replace the traditional cultural policy discourses of the freedom of arts or the cultural rights of different social groups, especially in the case of MEC policy documents, and why the MEAE emphasizes the economic side of creative and cultural work: more market-oriented practices are needed to meet the wider economic goals and current guiding principles of the labor markets. The social and institutional practices thus create and stabilize the regularities of the specific discourse but also regulate its interdiscursivity.

To analyze the institutionalized politics of the creative economy, we combine discursive analysis with institutionalism by deploying the discursive model of institutionalism (see Peters 2014; Schmidt 2011). In short, here institutionalism “underlines the importance of considering both ideas and discourse in institutional context” (Schmidt 2011: 107). We contemplate how discursive institutionalism might represent a fruitful way to grasp the complex politics of the creative economy, linking (conflicting) discourses to the actual cultural policy implementation structures and institutional contexts. As creative sectors are diverse (e.g., OECD 2022), we argue that the participants of Finnish creative industries policy enter the implementation interactions with rather different perspectives and “contending” sets of institutionally bound creative economy discourses (cf. Haugsevje 2022). As multiple participants have different policy goals, achieving an integrated perspective on

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5. When approaching cultural policy making as an “institution,” we refer to an organized pattern for establishing and implementing public policy in the cultural field (Kangas & Vestheim 2010). In Finland, from an institutional perspective, this “nominal” or “explicit” cultural policy refers to the area of the MEC, responsible for legislation, central government financing, strategic steering, and providing prerequisites for artistic and cultural activities. Arts and culture are, of course, supported and steered by other policy sectors as well. See <https://okm.fi/en/culture> (accessed 31 August 2023).

implementation is difficult. “Coordinative discourses” are also used within the policy implementation structures to attempt to develop common understandings (cf. Finnish Government 2023; MEAE 2020; MEC 2022). However, it is not self-evident that common discourses are sufficiently powerful to overcome the participants’ more particularistic discourses (see Schmidt 2011: 121–122).

In the actual analysis, we focused on the following dimensions of Faircloughian discourse analysis:

- The sociocultural and institutional practices underpinning or represented in the policy texts. On the one hand, this meant analyzing the political, social, and institutional positions of the actors who produce these documents and speak in them. On the other hand, we analyzed what kinds of societal problems the documents describe, and which key subjects and practices are named to tackle these problems.
- The discursive practices of the documents: the type of the document, its significance in the field it tries to influence, and its relation to other economic and political “metatexts” of today, such as ideological discourses on market liberty and austerity. In Fairclough’s (2003) vocabulary, this meant the analysis of interdiscursivity and intertextuality and assumptions/presuppositions, as well as the recontextualizations of culture and cultural work.
- The textual practices such as the key words and topics, themes, statements and words, subjects, and the ways of convincing through rhetorical argumentation (e.g., justifying the economization of culture by truth, necessity, or desirability; epistemic and deontic modality). We also studied how the texts “problematize” (Foucault 1986: 11–12) old or existing principles and practices of cultural policy to make way for new and “better” or more “current” ones. We also paid attention to the explicit presuppositions/assumptions made in the texts: existential assumptions (what exists), propositional assumptions (what the case/improvement at hand is), and value assumptions (what is good and desirable) (Fairclough 2003: 55–61).

## Data

The data covers national public policy documents published between 1999 and today in which arts and culture are discussed together with economic and entrepreneurial goals. After reviewing some 50 cultural policy documents presumably dealing with the economization of culture, we selected 18 documents as the final data of the article. They are listed at the end of the paper before the references. The analyzed documents were searched and selected from the ministries’ publication lists by using the keywords of the article. We also studied the documentation (websites, publications, reports) of some national and regional projects carried out to achieve the principles and goals of the aforementioned policy documents. The observations about the strategization of cultural governance are mainly based on the research by the article’s corresponding author (see Jakonen 2020; 2022). For the COVID-19 analysis, we relied on a recent research paper analyzing the crisis funding for culture and creative industries in Finland (Sokka et al. 2022). We also used our in-depth review of the latest Finnish government program (Jakonen & Renko 2023).

## Creative economy discourse and central institutions in Finland

Studies such as Jakonen (2017) and Heiskanen (2015) have shown how the creative economy, as a new cultural policy discourse developed since the late 1990s, has created institutional and discursive political conflicts between the MEC and MEAE. This has resulted in



the establishment of a distinct subdomain known as the "creative economy" within Finnish cultural policy, overseen by the MEC and MEAE. This subdomain supports product and service development, creative expertise, exports, market entries, tourism, and businesses focused on generating new value through creative expertise and creative industries.<sup>6</sup> However, it cannot be argued that the emergence of new creative economy discourse alone neoliberalized or changed decisively the actual Finnish cultural policy (cf. Lindqvist 2013: 6). The longstanding tradition of preserving the autonomy of the arts and cultural sectors remains robust, evident in the legal framework, institutional structures of cultural organizations, and the peer-review processes employed in funding decisions.

In fact, what can be called the "neoliberal turn" in cultural policy (McGuigan 2016) has politicized the discourse of cultural policy within the creative economy framework as it has reversed the traditional opposition between the public and the private: "it is now argued [...] that private funding and market orientation are important ways of securing not only the possibility for artists to make a living, but also their artistic freedom" (Røyseng 2019: 155; cf. Bourdieu 1983; Kangas 2004).

During the past three government terms, the MEAE has strongly engaged in the issue by coordinating a planning committee on the futures of the creative economy and cultural entrepreneurship and publishing programs and statements (e.g., MEAE 2015; 2020). The collaboration of the two ministries in enhancing creative work and economy started at the end of 1990s and has intensified ever since, the latest manifestation being the *Roadmap to the creative economy* (MEAE 2020; see also Pyykkönen & Stavrum 2018; Jakonen 2017).<sup>7</sup>

The visions of both ministries are based on the belief that by following examples from abroad, Finland too can develop the cultural sector into an important field and success factor in terms of employment, national competitiveness, and economic growth in the future. This will be possible through the increase of cultural exports (e.g., design and music), creative industry innovations, and the improvement of Finland's brand (see e.g. Jakonen 2017).

With "the right choices" now and in the future, the potential of creative industries can be turned into success. Public orchestration and coordination – with funding, programs, and so on – is necessary to establish and drive the economization of the cultural field, including marketization<sup>8</sup> as its practical manifestation. However, this should not be done in any "laissez-faire way" but in a way that will create new jobs and economic growth (see, e.g., MEAE 2007; 2020; MEC 2017b).

6. See the promotion of "creative economy" by MEC and MEAE: <https://okm.fi/en/creative-economy>; <https://tem.fi/en/creative-economy> (accessed 13 October 2023) .

7. Despite the joint endeavors and goals and numerous reports and policies, a common, precise, and established definition of creative sector is missing, and it can be understood in multiple ways. The MEC (2017a: 10) notes in its *Strategy for Cultural Policy 2025* that "[t]here is no well-established definition of creative sectors", and the MEAE (2020:12) points out that "it is difficult to define creative sectors precisely because they constantly change and develop." This is visible in state subsidy policies. The support for creative industries is not coordinated based on a common conceptual framework. Subsidy providers have their own practices and perceptions of how, why, and to whom subsidies are distributed. The distribution of crisis funding seems to have strengthened the contending discourses rooted in different institutions, in which creative industries are understood in different ways (Sokka et al. 2022).

8. We regard economization as the main framework for this current development of cultural policy and marketization as one of its manifestations. By the marketization of cultural work in cultural policy, we mean all those initiatives and mechanisms used to promote public or semi-public cultural institutions' enterprise-like operation, including the restructuring of their management and demands for greater profit making, as well as those encouraging individual cultural workers to become entrepreneurs. Other manifestations of the economization of cultural policy include programs supporting the recognition of the broader economic significance of creative and cultural work, an emphasis on the creative and cultural industries that produce the most profits with less public support (such as the design and game industries), and the results-based management of public cultural organizations. (See, e.g., Çalışkan & Callon 2009).

The traditional arts are viewed as the core of the creative industry, the sphere where the most imaginative innovations are generated through experimenting. As in Throsby's (2012) model referred to above, this "core" is surrounded by the layer of the creative industry and technology, which includes the film, music, game, design, and media industries. Regardless of the common discursive tone, notable differences – and even political tensions – also exist in the ways the two ministries approach the creative economy. While the MEAE concentrates on the outer levels and a broad understanding of creative industries, with the desire to make culture more economically productive, the MEC focuses on the core cultural industries and also pays attention to the intrinsic and social value of culture along with the market value (MEAE 2020; MEC 2017a: 41–42; 2017b:17–18.)

Until quite recently, traditional arts promotion institutions such as the Arts Promotion Centre Finland (Taika) and interest organizations such as the Artists' Association of Finland played a minor role in the discursive economization of the Finnish cultural and creative sector. They have not been at the forefront of promoting it although this has been the wish of policymakers (e.g., MEC 2017b: 31). Recently, they have gained a more significant role in producing significations of the creative economy from the perspective of arts and cultural workers. However, their approach differs from those of the MEAE and Business Finland<sup>9</sup> in particular. Although they organize seminars about how to promote commercial practices in the sector (e.g., TAKU 2023a), they also debate about how the economization and business practices actually impact the realities of the self-employed in the arts and other values of the arts, and how artists and other creatives should and can improve their precarious conditions (e.g., TAKU 2023b). Mostly, they have provided dialogical observations and critical voices on – the often harsh reality of – business making in the arts. Their discursive stance intertwines with the effort to represent the viewpoints of artists and professionals working in the traditional core fields of the creative sector such as music, literature, visual arts, and theater, which are not as market-oriented or "entrepreneurial" as the "outer circles" of creative industries.

### **Artrepreneur as an ideal subject of creative work**

The core subjectivity of the public cultural policy creative economy discourse represented above is an entrepreneur. An artist who is creative and uses their brain and skills as a means of production, and who organizes this production – and marketing and distribution – in a business-like manner (cf. Foucault 2008; Pyykkönen 2014; Rose 1992). Freelancers and others who work in an entrepreneurial way are also included in this subjectivity of *artrepreneur* (Harvie 2013: 62–107; Pyykkönen et al. 2022).

The administrative and developmental speech about labor subjectivity in the cultural and creative sector changed rather dramatically in Finland at the beginning of the 2000s. Public cultural policy faced something that can be called a "hype of creative economy and entrepreneurship" (Heiskanen 2015; Pyykkönen 2014: 70–92). If the artist as a professional was the main frame of reference for labor subjectivity before, now the attention turned to a more market-oriented and (economically) self-managerial subjectivity. In the studied documents, entrepreneurship refers primarily to the organization of artistic work according to a business model and practices. However, it also represents a more general work ethos for

9. Business Finland (BF) operates under the MEAE. The organization is one of the key players in the creative economy implementation structures. It offers funding services and promotes export growth. BF also implements an audiovisual production incentive for production companies. It offers services to creative companies that develop scalable content (e.g., AV productions, music, and gaming businesses) and companies that wish to utilize creative methods and services to grow their existing business.

all cultural actors. A worker who has adopted the entrepreneurial ethos is one who behaves like an entrepreneur: They are flexible, ready to market themselves and the products or activities they offer. They can also calculate risks and are mentally prepared to cope with the pressures and stress inherent in the precarious work environment (MEAE 2007; MEC 2009; 2012; 2017b; see also Pyykkönen 2021; Rose 1991).

How did the market-oriented discourse of the early 2000s problematize the earlier forms of labor subjectivity and justify the rise of the creative entrepreneur? It did so by appealing to the socioeconomic necessities created by the changing conditions. In policy documents from 2009 to 2017 regarding entrepreneurship in the creative sector, the shift towards a society with a greater number of entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship was consistently viewed as inevitable, with preparation deemed a necessity (MEC 2009; 2017b).

On the other hand, if we look at the policy documents by other ministries such as the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MEAE 2007), we notice that they also see the entrepreneurial ethos of the creative economy as exemplary for all workforce. Other entrepreneurialized sectors like health, welfare, and sports can draw lessons from the cultural field. Cultural workers have historically operated as entrepreneurs due to their precarious income, and the nature of their work, rooted in innovation and creativity, aligns with the essence of today's entrepreneurial subjectivity.

With respect to economic productivity and business intelligence, it also seems important to have artists and creatives cooperate closely with other businesses. To this end, the Creative Industries Finland program focused on increasing business cooperation in the creative sector in 2007–2011. The issue was further noted in many MEC and MEAE documents about the creative sector and entrepreneurship at the time and during the 2010s. Currently, this side of entrepreneurialization is pursued by the Creative Finland network (which continues the work of the previous program) run by Business Finland (Creative Industries Finland 2012; Creative Finland 2022).

After the end of the 2010s, the approach to entrepreneurship started to change, as did the rhetoric concerning it. Policymakers and program and strategy creators obviously realized that the straightforward indoctrination of professional artists into entrepreneurship suggested in the previous documents did not produce desired results<sup>10</sup>, but a significant number of artists were still negative about becoming entrepreneurs (see, e.g., Rensujeff 2014; Hirvi-Ijäs et al. 2020: 106). What followed in the policy documents was a new strategic approach that emphasized the meaning of creative ecosystems in which artistic creativity and freedom could benefit the business world and economic growth and become more business-like – or at least business-related – at the same time (e.g., MEC 2017b). The idea was to recognize the extended economic value that the arts have and make artists also acknowledge that. Copyrights, immaterial property rights, and productization know-how became the key words and themes to introduce the entrepreneurial rationale to artists. The discourse of this phase was still openly in favor of entrepreneurship and the marketization of arts, but artists' low income and social security traps were now explicitly recognized as problems in policy documents for the first time in the short history of the entrepreneurialization of the arts. However, the problem was approached not so much from the point of view of artists themselves but from the perspective of the challenges of increasing entrepreneurial orientation and willingness (MEC 2017b).

In *Culture is always present* (MEC 2022), a report prepared to rebuild the Finnish cultural sector after the COVID-19 pandemic, cultural labor is tackled more broadly than

10. The lack of development of a comprehensive creative economy policy is illustrated, for example, by the fact that despite the policies of the “creative economy” and “cultural exports,” the share of GDP generated by cultural sectors has not increased in Finland during the 2010s (see Statistics Finland 2023).

before. The economization of the sector and entrepreneurialization of the work are still recognized as trends and emphasized<sup>11</sup>, but the document also acknowledges that the diverse voices of the cultural sector labor force must be taken into account to a greater extent. This also means the recognition of the fact that artrepreneurialization does not occur without problems. Several reasons are identified in the document: (I) The indicators of precarity (e.g., low income, temporary jobs, and poor chances to improve the conditions and structures) have not gone anywhere but have even got worse during the pandemic. (II) The adoption of entrepreneurialism or an entrepreneurial mindset is not increasing significantly in the field. (III) Perpetual problems exist in entrepreneurs' and freelancers' social security. (IV) Values other than economic ones are still very much appreciated when it comes to arts and culture.

### **Strategization of the institutional governance of the creative economy**

Already from the 1990s economic recession onward, the (re)construction of the welfare-oriented Finnish cultural policy system has steadily shifted focus toward policies driven by markets and tighter public finances while trying to maintain the established structures (also Sevänen & Häyrynen 2018). If the 2000s were a period of economic growth and creative economy “hype,” tightening austerity measures were introduced after the financial crisis that hit the Finnish economy hard from the 2008 onward. As a result, the MEC and its art administration adopted practices of results-oriented and strategic governance (Jakonen 2022). In the field of art policy, a transition was made from the more artist-led Arts Council Finland to a performance-steered agency, the Arts Promotion Centre Finland (Jakonen 2020).

Current government agency performance steering is increasingly comprehensive, focusing on strategic alignment at multiple levels toward common objectives, as highlighted in recent cultural policy phases. Ministerial strategies play a pivotal role in guiding long-term policies and goal achievement (e.g., MEC 2017a). This shift also sees a rise in the influence of the government and broader sociopolitical ideologies in art administration, resulting in more rigorous political regulation of art policies and activities (cf. Duelund 2008). This closer alignment with the creative industry policies reinforces collaboration with the MEAE's administrative branch.

Strategization is also about internalizing economic principles more profoundly – incorporating business-like practices and strategic management tools into art administration. A business-like strategic way of thinking fits better with the financial austerity and results-oriented steering than the “old-fashioned” welfare state distribution policy (Jakonen 2022). In this way, artists are expected to strategically integrate their role into society, develop business competence, and (again) act in a more market-oriented manner (cf. Royseng 2019).

Taike's overall socioeconomic instrumental orientation and strategic services and partnerships with regional authorities, municipalities, and development projects are strengthening (also Jakonen 2020). Currently, highlighting the agency's role as a creative industries implementer, Taike coordinates the EU-funded Creative Net project (Taike 2022). The aim is to produce new cultural and social innovations and business models through the interac-

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11. Straight away, the first chapter of the document is titled “Culture is an investment in the future” and utilizes such standard discourses of the creative economy as “culture is an investment,” “culture is an important area of economic activity,” “culture produces innovations,” and “culture is an export product” (MEC 2022: 7).

tion of experts in the creative industries in collaboration with actors in education, science, and different regions.

The role of other ministries such as the MEAE has become institutionalized in cultural policy making, and the regional and local governance of culture resonates directly with economic strategies. Just before the pandemic in 2020, the government program (2019) outlined that a new program, Creative Business Finland, was to be established under the MEAE to boost Finnish “creative industries.” A network called Creative Finland was established (although continuing previous measures) to coordinate and communicate creative economy policies and implement the measures of the *Roadmap to the creative economy*. This is done through strategic cooperation between Business Finland’s Creative Business Finland program, the MEAE, and the MEC (see Creative Finland 2022). Recently, the traditional artist policies have been associated with rather different, and contending, creative economy discourses.

## **The economism of COVID-19 and post-pandemic actions challenging the institutionalized structures?**

Pandemic policies: Contending actions and discourses

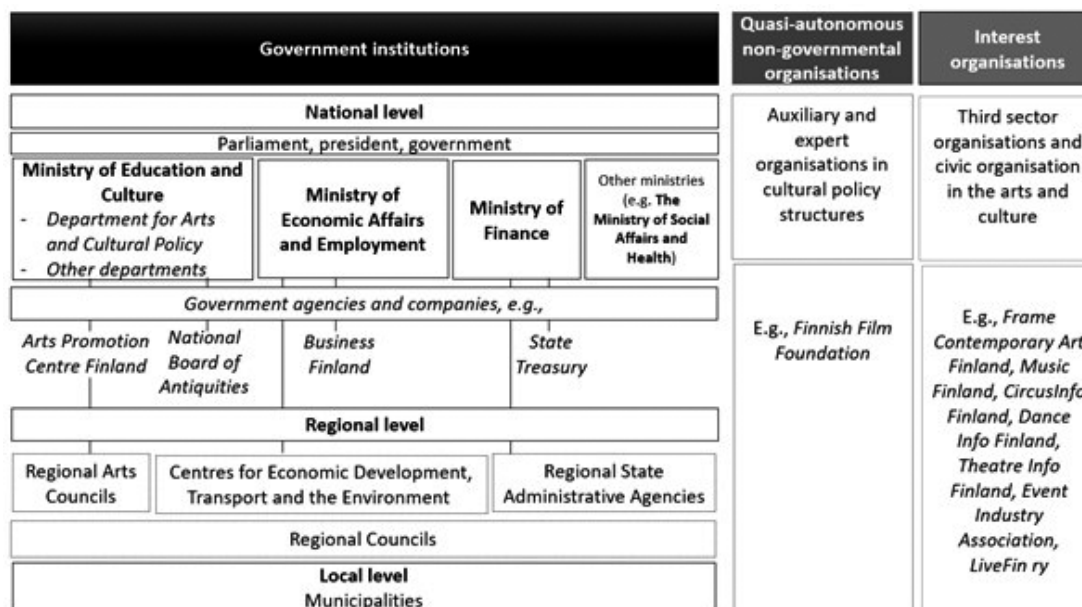
Globally, like in Finland, the COVID-19 pandemic situation represented an external disaster to the cultural fields and a sudden challenge for cultural policy in terms of priorities and practical implementation (Berge, Sigurjónsson & Ejgod Hansen 2022; Hylland et al. 2022). It has been claimed that especially the (continuing but not straightforward) economization of cultural policy was a key tendency when states responded with financial instruments to the shock caused by the pandemic (Hylland et al. 2022: 9): a) cultural policy took the shape of economic policy, fiscal policy, and labor market policy; b) ministries of finance or business in effect came to represent important parts of national cultural policy; and c) the entrepreneurial and business side to cultural policies was highlighted.

An examination of COVID-19 crisis support measures for Finnish creative industries (Luonila et al. 2022) highlighted the essential role of these industries within cultural production networks and exposed their incomplete status in Finnish cultural policies.<sup>12</sup> In Finland, COVID-19 support was provided through various financial instruments and organizations, benefiting traditional art and culture fields as well as the broader creative industries. This crisis funding extended to a wider range of cultural sectors than typical in Finnish cultural policies, placing emphasis on businesses and private sector involvement within the institutionalized cultural policy network (Sokka et al. 2022). The pandemic also led to the establishment of new advocacy organizations representing various industry sectors, such as the music industry and events.

In Finland, the interactions associated with the implementation of COVID-19 crisis support for the creative economy between 2020 and 2022 revealed how the multiple participants in the process had different policy goals. The participants entered the interactions indicating rather different and contending discourses – also discourses emphasizing artistic quality and development, not solely economic issues. Due to the limited space, we are unable to present these discourses in detail, but the institutional context of creative industry

12. For example, the allocation of crisis subsidies was criticized by many during the coronavirus crisis: while already strong cultural institutions were readily supported with pandemic-based additional funding, a vast part of the cultural workforce – the self-employed and freelancers – were purportedly left behind (also Hylland et al. 2022). The COVID-19 policies revealed the lack of self-employment support schemes compatible with the types of portfolio working and hybrid working more common among cultural and creative professions.

networks comprising the public, private, and third sectors during the pandemic is illustrated in the following Figure 1.



**FIGURE 1.** The institutional structure of Finnish creative economy policies in the context of COVID-19 crisis support. Source: Luonila et al. 2022: 48.

Post-pandemic developments: A mixture of institutional restructurations of creative economy and social security policies for the cultural workforce? The pandemic revealed the stressful conditions of all self-employed creative and cultural workers and the actual inability of the current cultural policy to address the issues of cultural workers. Attention was brought to the general precarity of cultural labor and the gap, also typical in the Nordic model, between a) the subsidized cultural sector (mainly established institutions), b) companies eligible for business subsidies, and c) freelance cultural production (Hylland et al. 2022; also Sokka & Johannisson 2022). The dividing line between institutions, big companies, and individual artists was politicized<sup>13</sup> (also Berge, Sigurjónsson & Ejgod Hansen 2022).

As said, entrepreneurship is still seen as the desired form of artistic work, but more and more emphasis is put on its shortcomings and challenges, and the policy discussions and suggestions on making artists' work better in general have gained ground in the discourse. For example, in the Finnish arts sector, the number of unemployed people has remained at a level higher than before the pandemic. The focus is now more on common improvements for all self-employed artists (entrepreneurs, self-employed workers, grant holders, freelancers) working in the sector in precarious conditions, which are linked to insufficient work, unemployment, and social security policies. For example, these issues are broadly recognized in one of the most recent key documents tackling artistic work in the aftermath of the pandemic, the MEC's *Culture is always present* (2022), which was written to help the cultural sector to recover and rebuild through collaboration between the MEC, the MEAE, and cultural fields.

13. Some artist-entrepreneurs entitled to COVID-19 business support knew how to obtain financial support for their limited company (especially from Business Finland, the State Treasury and the Centres for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment), while other artists and cultural field freelancers were not even aware of the kind of support they could apply for.

There is a need for measures *to create models of entrepreneurship and earning* in the field of arts and culture as well as suitable forms of support for them. In the cultural sector, opportunities such as *social entrepreneurship, cooperatives, and the social economy* can be exploited (MEC 2022: 17; italics by the authors).

Many studies (Jakonen 2022; Pyykkönen & Stavrum 2018; Rensujeff 2014; Saukkonen 2014) indicate that the change toward the creative economization and entrepreneurialization of work has not in fact been that dramatic in the practice of Finnish art worlds; rather, it has been mainly discursive. However, although the creative economy changes have not been dramatic in the actual institutionalized administrative practices or artists' labor market, they can be witnessed in them as well. The aforementioned report calls for "the necessary structural reforms to improve the working conditions of freelancers" (MEC 2022: 20), and that the "barriers across administrative branches must be removed" to advance the creative industries (MEC 2022: 6). Both the MEC's cultural policy support forms and the MEAE's economic policy are considered important for the development of the cultural sector (MEC 2022: 17).

As the experiences from the pandemic further emphasized the need to remove barriers between administrative sectors to promote culture more comprehensively, the fresh government program (2023) places emphasis on cooperation between the MEC and other ministries central to cultural policy. Between the MEC and MEAE, the government aims *to create permanent collaborative practices to coordinate measures promoting the vitality of the cultural and arts sectors* together with parties and representatives working in the field. Probably due to the pandemic experiences and the above ministerial recovery report, the program also recognizes *the position of freelancers in the cultural and creative industries as part of solving issues related to social and unemployment benefits*. The program's aspiration *to reform the administrative agency structures* will also affect key art and cultural agencies. The report envisions merging the Finnish Film Foundation, the National Audiovisual Institute and Taike into a specialized agency called Creative Finland. There has been support within the MEC and Taike for such institutional restructuring to bolster the creative industries. (See Jakonen & Renko 2023.)

## Politics of economized cultural policy

In this article, we have analyzed the economization of Finnish cultural policy. First, we found that the rationale for the economization of cultural policy stems from the more general political will to fuel economic growth and neoliberal ideas of saving public costs; arts and culture should be better capitalized in the national economy and as much as possible under the rules of market economy. This governmental mindset creates isomorphic pressures to extend the economic logic to the arts and cultural sectors. The governmental will to conduct arts and culture according to the broader political and societal strategic goals increases these pressures to reform the cultural economy and idealize the entrepreneur as the key subject of work. However, as the very recent administrative documents of the MEC, for instance, show, these rationales and ideologies are not indisputable.

We have studied economization in four different contexts of manifestation: discursive (I) economization and (II) entrepreneurialization, (III) the changes in institutional practices and settings, and (IV) the COVID-19 situation and post-pandemic developments in the cultural sector. We have analyzed these contexts from a political perspective, using discursive institutionalism. What do these recent changes mean in terms of politics within, among, and around institutions in charge of cultural policy? We have analyzed how the

political processes of the creative industries take institutionalized forms, but also how these new forms (discourses and practices) open the door for new politics through politicizing new issues and involving new actors in policymaking. Our view is that the seemingly technical cultural policy pursued by the administration is also inevitably political activity (Jakonen 2022). “Political” here means the discussions, debates, contests, and agreements between actors with different interests in the policymaking processes of arts and culture (ibid.; Sevänen & Häyrynen 2018).

Although the creative industries discourse has become established as one of the current hegemonic cultural policy discourses, it is not monolithic. Our analysis shows that the discourses and practices of the creative economy and marketization of cultural work have not replaced the older principles, discourses, and practices of cultural policies but intertwined with them and emerged alongside them. While art worlds have historically been merged with markets in various ways – the Nordic welfare state representing one peculiar period (Kangas 2004) – the current Finnish administrative cultural policy discourse on the creative economy indicates that art will be considered and appraised more and more in the framework of capitalist economy and according to its logic. At the same time, however, strong discourses and practices asserting artists’ freedom from the markets are still maintained (Taike; MEC), combined with the creative industries discussions. Many arts world actors have also been very critical about the marketization of the arts and artistic work, and some of them have also actively debated about the arts as a platform for democracy and critical debate (see, e.g., AAF 2023).

It seems that the major challenges for economized cultural policy lie in understanding the needs and complexities of creative work (also Haugsevje 2022) and thus developing such things as suitable funding instruments to support the sustainability of small businesses within the creative industries (MEC 2022: 17) and strengthening the unemployment security of cultural workers (Jakonen & Renko 2023). Regarding the growing economism in cultural policy, our conclusion is that, on the one hand, the increased concentration on the creative economy and economic impacts of culture depoliticizes cultural policy by making the market economy rationale natural, but, on the other hand, this opens horizons for new politicizations of the economic issues, identities, and work positions of cultural actors. In the current policy discourse, the logics and significations of economic and cultural capital are mixed instead of being contrary to or replacing one another.

Although the entrepreneurship discourse is powerful in Finnish cultural policy when it is about the ideal mode and subjectivity of cultural work, our analysis and the previous studies on working conditions and artists’ attitudes indicate that the hegemonization of the discourse is not indisputable and has not taken place parallelly in the administrative discourse and among the cultural actors (see also Ansio & Houni 2013; Rensujeff 2014; cf. Heian et al. 2015; Elstadt 2015; Kleppe 2018). Most of the artists’ interest organizations still argue that the work of artists needs public financing and welfare support structures; the success and well-being of an art worker cannot be left alone on the shoulders of a self-managerial entrepreneur (e.g., AAF 2023). The subject politics of cultural work has recently diversified among MEC policymakers as well: the most recent policy documents are less about entrepreneurship and more about the complexity and difficulties of all the different work positions, especially freelancers (MEC 2022). All this has opened, once again, the field of politics before policies to the discussions about the less precarious and more employment-like work conditions of artists. Numerous practical solutions, such as the artist salary or alliance model, have been recently discussed. However, there has been a lack of political will and allocated resources to implement these solutions.



The strategization of cultural policy (Jakonen 2022) represents a significant development concerning the economization and related institutional politics of creative industries. Firstly, there's a push to centralize political control within state governance to execute coordinated policy measures, particularly through performance steering and the establishment of strategic targets. Secondly, strategization underscores shared objectives, collaboration across administrative branches, and the alignment of cultural policy with goals originating outside the cultural domain. This, in turn, leads to a more intensive connection of traditional art administration with the strategic implementation of creative industry policies, fostering closer cooperation with the administrative branch of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment (in principle, at least). Thirdly, in addition to institutional politics, the state actively orchestrates its interactions with municipalities and interest groups to advance the goals of creative industry policies.

Recently, Finnish cultural policy has been in the midst of simultaneous crises, hit by both global and national developments: the COVID-19 pandemic, the decrease in gambling profits important for culture as well as the scarce cultural resources of municipalities. While the pandemic caused initial reactions that cultural policy might reorient or even change drastically due to the sudden crisis, our results from Finland reveal far more incremental development, rooted in decades-old discussions and developments (cf. Kangas & Vestheim 2010; Schmidt 2011). Our institutionalist perspective emphasizes particularly how earlier policies and their powerful "discursive traces" (established discourses and principles, organizations, laws, programs, etc.) impact current cultural policies (Lindqvist 2013).

We have conducted an analysis of the COVID-19 crisis measures and their post-pandemic effects (cf. Zamorano & Bonet 2022), representing recent developments that challenge and (re)politicize established institutional principles and responsibilities. The pandemic has intensified both actions and discussions concerning the roles of cultural workers and entrepreneurs within institutionalized cultural production networks that intersect with broader economic processes. Moreover, there are indications of ongoing institutional reconfigurations geared toward implementing Finnish creative industry policies. Some sections of the traditionally institutionalized cultural policy landscape are currently in contention and may undergo restructuring (cf. also Mangset 2020) within the overarching framework of the creative economy. This transformation is driven by influential reports and political programs advocating not only for structural changes but also changes in social security and unemployment benefits (Jakonen & Renko 2023). The course of the Finnish creative economy will ultimately be determined by political decisions. In the future, an in-depth investigation is required to assess the potential effects of these measures on the working practices of cultural and creative industries, with a particular emphasis on stability, fairness, and financial sustainability.

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