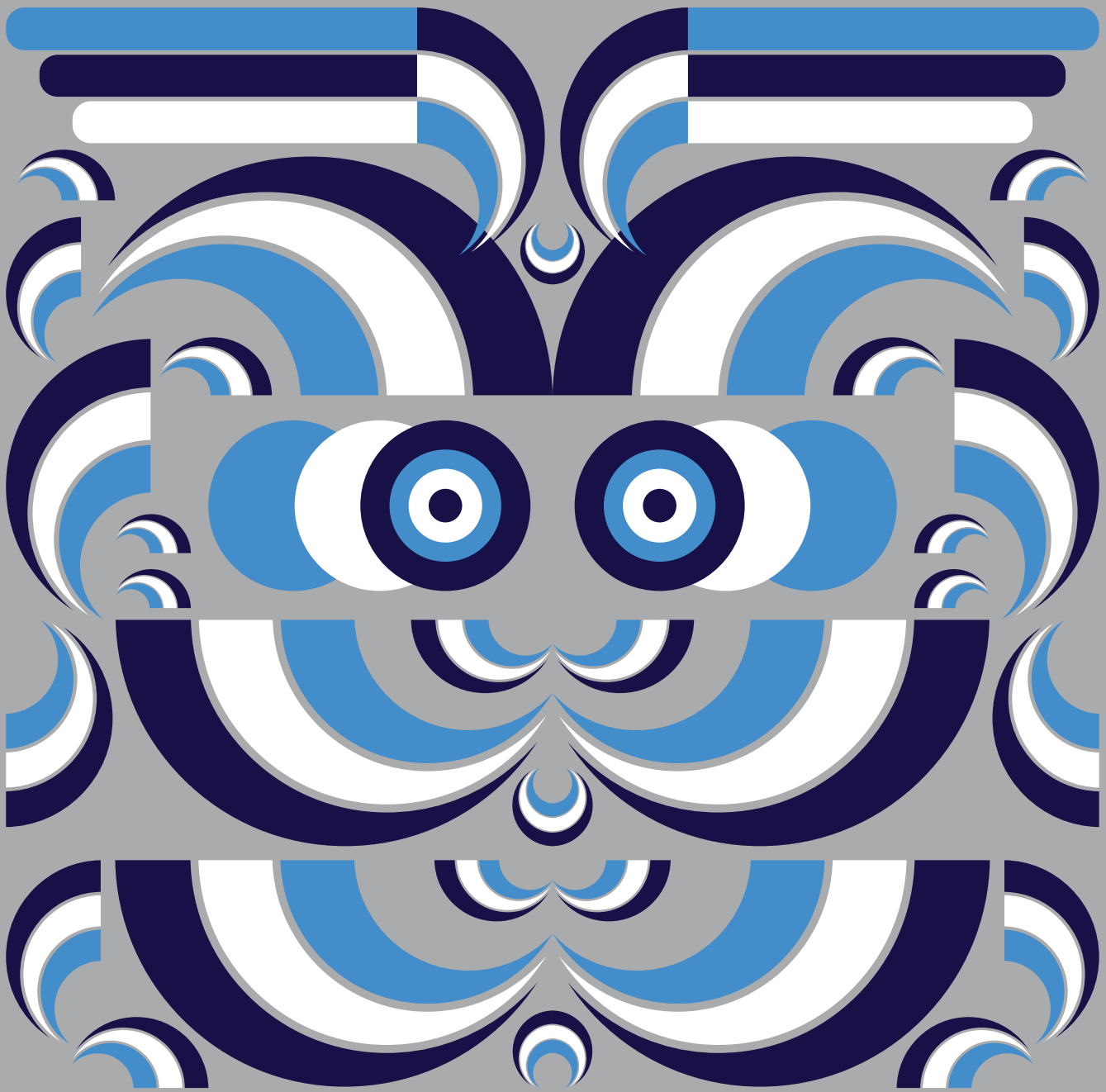
Summit Report

10th WORLD SUMMIT
ON ARTS & CULTURE
SEOUL 2025



Charting the future of arts and culture

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Arts Council Korea (ARKO) is a national organisation for the arts and culture established in 1973. ARKO shifted into a consensus decision-making structure consisting of Board members in 2005. ARKO aims to stand as a strong groundwork to support diverse disciplines. ARKO's main scope of activities comprises of contributing to various funding opportunities for artists and arts institutions; advocating for the arts in society; and fostering arts professionals. ARKO strives to ensure everyone's access to arts and culture through cultural vouchers and community projects.

ARKO continues to expand partnerships worldwide with individuals, private and public sectors. ARKO currently runs outstanding arts platforms in Korea and abroad such as ARKO•Daehakro Arts Theater, ARKO Art Center, ARKO Arts Archive, ARKO HRD Center, and the Korean Pavilion at the Venice Biennale.

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Top L-R: Byoung Gug Choung at Gala Opening; Jesoni Naga at World Café; Niusha Khanmohammadi at Long Table: *Finding common ground: rebuilding connectedness in a polarised world*; Delegates at Open Session, Delegates networking at ARKO Arts Theater; Delegate with Summit programme book; Nguyen Phuong Hoa speaking at Janchi; ARKO Arts Theater. Photo: © PILHO SEUNG, courtesy of ARKO and IFACCA.

Foreword from ARKO



This past May in Seoul, Republic of Korea, a city where cultural policy experts, artists, and citizens actively engage with one another, we had the great privilege of welcoming colleagues from across the globe. United by the belief that arts and culture serve as a universal language for the future of humanity, we reached beyond our diverse backgrounds to foster meaningful connections and lasting friendships.

In the face of the unpredictable changes shaping our time, we gathered for a week of intensive and focused dialogue on the urgent challenges confronting the arts and culture sector today, and on the direction we must pursue together for the future. This Summit was more than a formal convening. It marked a defining moment in which the global arts and culture community came together in a shared sense of responsibility and a commitment to a common vision for the path ahead.

Concerns are mounting that today's technological advancements may threaten the ecosystem of cultural diversity. While digital environments facilitate global connectivity, they also give rise to a reality in which minority voices, traditional communities, languages, and collective memory are at risk of disappearing. At the same time, the evolving technological landscape presents new possibilities. It encourages the exploration of alternative worldviews that reframe conventional knowledge systems, the pursuit of a symbiotic relationship with technology, and active contributions to its discourse by artists.

This Summit also provided a platform for in-depth discussion on regional disparities. Structural inequalities continue to affect all dimensions of the arts and culture ecosystem — including funding, infrastructure, institutional frameworks, freedom of expression, and digital accessibility. These disparities must be addressed not simply as matters of aid or cooperation, but as issues of justice, redistribution, and true cultural equity. The effects of climate change, conflict, and displacement have likewise entered the realm of artistic practice. Even in the face of such crises, art has not remained silent. It bears witness, records lived realities, and creates spaces for healing and empathy.

Even in the face of … crises, art has not remained silent. It bears witness, records lived realities, and creates spaces for healing and empathy.

Arts and culture are a powerful force for social change. That change must take shape through practice, in different contexts, through the distinct

voices and lived experiences of each community. Now is the time to move beyond questions and step forward into action and solidarity.

Now is the time to move beyond questions and step forward into action and solidarity.

Arts Council Korea aims to build on this Summit as a foundation for expanding its international partnering efforts and developing practical models to advance global cultural solidarity. We hope that IFACCA will continue to serve as an essential platform linking the public and civil sectors, as well as local and global communities, in support of international collaboration among emerging artists, the safeguarding of cultural diversity, the mitigation of technological gaps, and effective responses to sustainability challenges on a global scale.

The successful realization of this Summit was supported by the dedication of all who stood with us. I extend my sincere gratitude to everyone who believed in the power of the arts and the potential of dialogue in times of uncertainty. I also thank the speakers and participants who contributed valuable insights and practices throughout each session, as well as Chair Kristin Danielsen, Executive Director Magdalena Moreno Mujica, and the dedicated teams at IFACCA and Arts Council Korea, whose tireless efforts brought the Summit to completion.

Art does not turn away from the pain of our time. It holds the power to guide the world toward greater justice and equality. I hope the momentum we have created together will endure. Until we meet again, may each of us carry this spirit forward through ongoing practice in our respective contexts, and continue to uphold and strengthen the bonds of solidarity.

Byoung Gug Choung
Chair, Arts Council Korea

Introduction by IFACCA



Magdalena Moreno Mujica. Credit: © PILHO SEUNG, courtesy of ARKO and IFACCA.

The 10th World Summit on Arts and Culture took place in Seoul, Republic of Korea from 27-30 May 2025. Presented in partnership by Arts Council Korea (ARKO) and the International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies (IFACCA), the programme addressed the theme *Charting the future of arts and culture* and recognised that we continue to operate in a global context defined by crises, conflict and rapid change. The Summit brought together 406 delegates from 94 countries comprising artists, cultural practitioners, leaders and decisionmakers from the arts and culture ecosystem and beyond. They exchanged, debated and reflected upon how we might secure the future for arts and culture with a focus on how we position culture and its value, and current and future technological realities.

The primary purpose of the Summit is always to provide a participatory space in which delegates can engage in global dialogue and exchange; share their experiences of local, national and regional contexts; and collectively consider pathways to advance arts and culture. As country hosts, ARKO and their fellow Korean representatives offered delegates incredible insight into the Republic of Korea, its cultural and creative sectors, and its priority issues. In the 50 years since ARKO was first established, we learned, political democratisation has catalysed creative activity, freedom of artistic expression, and digital innovation within the country; the government has actively developed policies to protect the rights of artists and cultural practitioners; and the cultural K-Wave (Hallyu) has reached a global community through popular music, television, films and fashion. However, the country also faces pressing challenges, many of which are shared throughout the international community: from social tensions, political upheavals, and technological transformations to questions of collective action beyond borders, and the future of arts and culture, policy and investment. All of which was reflected in the programme.

During the Summit, discussions followed a network of transversal programmatic clusters, including knowledge systems and agency; participatory systems and connectedness; and digital systems and technology. The first day kicked off with reflections on the current state of play and delegates identified key issues related to rapid change in the arts and cultural sectors; explored emerging and longstanding tensions; shared their achievements; considered recent shifts in the roles of state and non-state actors; and began to envision the future. On the second day, the programme discussions developed upon ideas already raised and the focus shifted to delve deeper into the issues and think about possible action and solutions. On the third and final day, participants grounded the discussions to consider how we can influence and make tangible change for the future.

The programme included 29 sessions with different formats to allow for meaningful shared experiences, such as the in-conversation and plenary sessions attended by all delegates, which took place on the main stage and are available to view online

(artsummit.org); as well as smaller group sessions, such as long tables, workshops, panels, a dialogue circle and open sessions, which ran in parallel and followed principles of respectful engagement to foster safe space for dialogue and peer exchange. To connect all these conversations, at the start of each day, delegates benefitted from daily round ups presented by Sylvie Durán Salvatierra, a cultural policy and development expert and former Minister of Culture and Youth from Costa Rica, and Alastair Evans, Director of Strategy and Planning for Creative Scotland, who drew together key issues and provided their personal reflections and insights.

Discussions revealed that how we define, value and communicate about culture will be paramount as we chart the future. Delegates interrogated existing approaches, their historic effects, and the need to carefully consider the narratives and concepts we use as we move forward. They highlighted different approaches that – while complex and often interconnected – are distinct in how they frame culture and its value. These approaches include viewing culture as essentially social, the value of which is non-economic and non-instrumental; as social capital, the value of which is instrumental insofar as it is leveraged to create social cohesion, trust, wellbeing and mutual benefits; as the creative and cultural industries (CCI), valued primarily in economic terms; and as cultural and creative sectors (CCS) that generate cultural and artistic expressions of social value, which may also hold instrumental and/or economic value.

Culture is an essential dimension of any liveable society. In practice, however, it is difficult – if not impossible – to separate social approaches to culture from the cultural and creative sectors upon which so many cultural and artistic expressions rely, particularly for those working in the policy and investment space. These dimensions of culture are deeply intertwined and embedded across a range of issues, whether they at face value seem more weighted towards social or economic concerns, and even when they do not seem directly linked to culture. Moreover, this complexity must be factored into decisions about policy, legislation and investment as we chart the future.

These dimensions of culture are deeply intertwined and embedded across a range of issues ... [and] ...must be factored into decisions about policy, legislation and investment as we chart the future.

Our discussions also confirmed that we must protect both culture – as expressions of our identities and our humanity – and cultural rights in our strategies for the future. We must consider cultural ecosystems, comprising both social and economic dimensions, as being dynamic and evolving and avoid monolithic concepts that define culture in the singular (heritage, history, narrative) when we need concepts that recognise plurality (cultures, histories, ways of life). We should also connect culture and cultural rights to important existing debates such as those on development, security, migration, and the priorities of Indigenous Peoples and minorities, so that our futures reflect our values and narratives, how people want to see themselves reflected and ensure the greatest possible participation.

Technology was a significant theme, and it became apparent that artificial intelligence (AI) is a major concern for those working in the CCS. In the 10th World Summit Discussion Paper, Dr Zune Lee presented his perspective from the Republic of Korea where he has observed growing recognition of the interplay between nature, humans and technologies

– grounded in traditional Korean thought and East Asian philosophies related to harmony and non-duality – and their coevolution to generate hybrid knowledge. During the Summit, whether perspectives were techno-utopian or techno-sceptic (or somewhere in-between), the consensus was that technologies are reshaping the CCS worldwide and require greater and more ethical governance, as well as education and training to ensure culture can critically reflect upon technologies, participate in decision-making and effect change. Many also agreed that AI brings both innovation and risk. Yet more than anything, discussions revealed that the future is not a done deal, and we have the power to exercise agency in how we engage with technology, the relationship we have with it, and the stories we tell about it – to ourselves and others. In short, technological development directly affects our social, environmental and political realities and does not happen on its own, it is the result of the choices people make. This makes the realm of the digital fundamentally cultural.

As the following report reveals, while some problems are globally shared, they are certainly not universally experienced. The Summit offered space for diverse perspectives to be presented and challenged, in which delegates developed understanding, empathy and solidarity. This was captured by Haniko Te Kurapa, Senior Manager, Te Kaupapa o Toi Aotearoa at Creative New Zealand, who offered delegates the analogy of the *waka hourua* – a double hulled ocean-going canoe – where opposing hulls are connected by the *kiato* (crossbeams), so while they may be in tension, they are inseparable and subject to the same movements of the sea.

... the whole cultural ecosystem must work together to ensure that culture has its place.

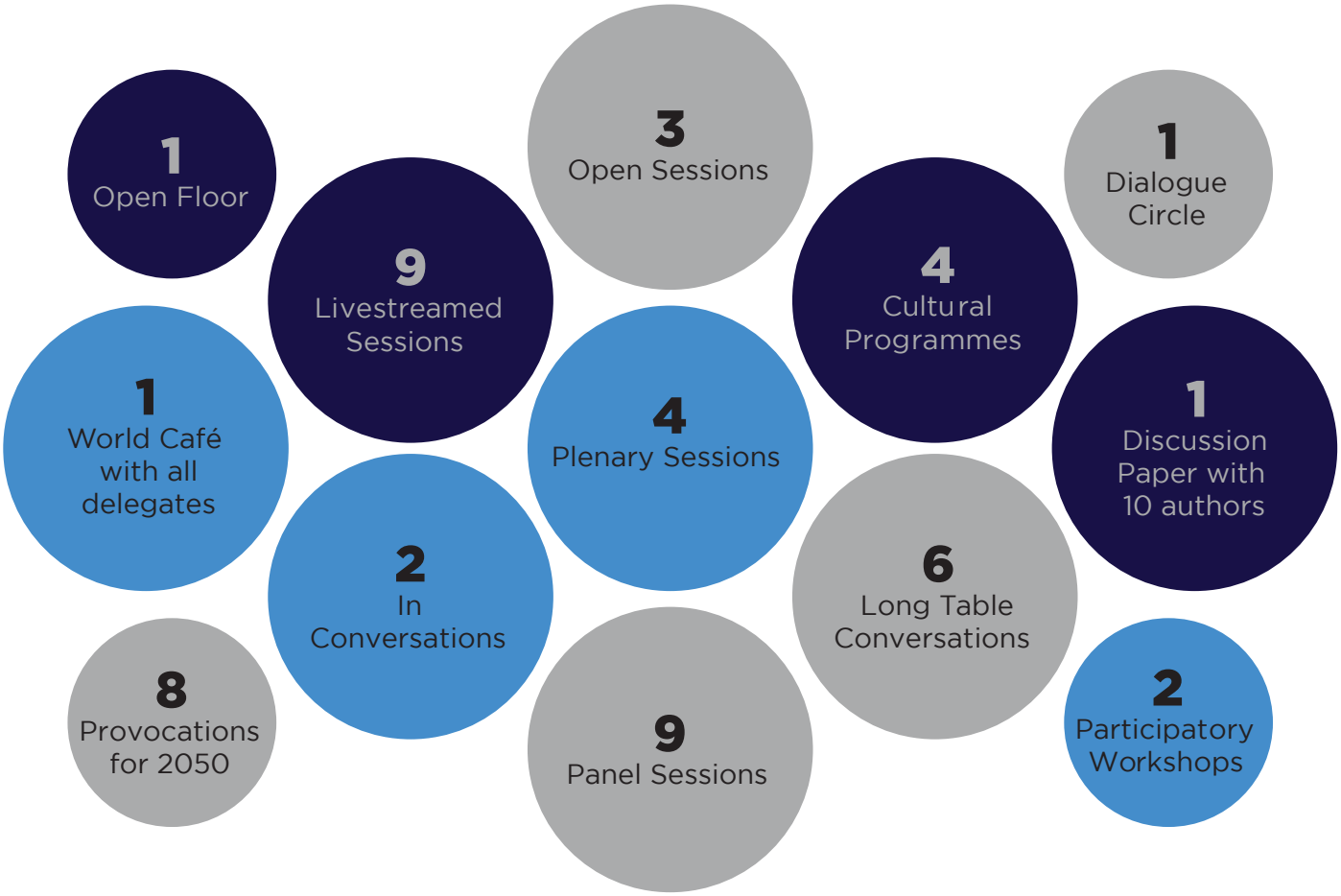
Delegates agreed that climate change is not only an environmental and economic crisis — it is fundamentally a cultural crisis that challenges us to rethink what we value as a global community. While small island states face unique vulnerabilities, Indigenous traditional knowledge, intangible cultural heritage, and innovative cultural and artistic practices must be central to our collective climate response.

International collaboration and spaces for dialogue will be vital to a just and inclusive future that includes culture. This is a shared responsibility that cannot be achieved by any government, institution or community in isolation and the Summit confirmed that the whole cultural ecosystem must work together to ensure that culture has its place. However, this vision can only be realised if we promote cultural rights; diversity, access and participation; and redouble efforts to empower and address the priorities of Indigenous Peoples, their knowledge systems, languages and cultures.

Set in the global context, the timing of the Summit reflected a key milestone, taking place in the lead up to the UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development – MONDIACULT 2025, which will be held in September in Barcelona, Spain. As the United Nations (UN) approaches the end of its 2030 Agenda and shapes priorities for global governance in the future, MONDIACULT 2025 will be a moment for governments and policymakers from around the world to set their own priorities and prepare the case for the stand-alone goal for culture within that agenda. It is the hope of the cohosts that discussions from the 10th World Summit will help them in this endeavour, based on the knowledge, expertise and lived experiences of those working in the cultural and creative sectors worldwide.

Magdalena Moreno Mujica
Executive Director, IFACCA

The Summit - at a Glance



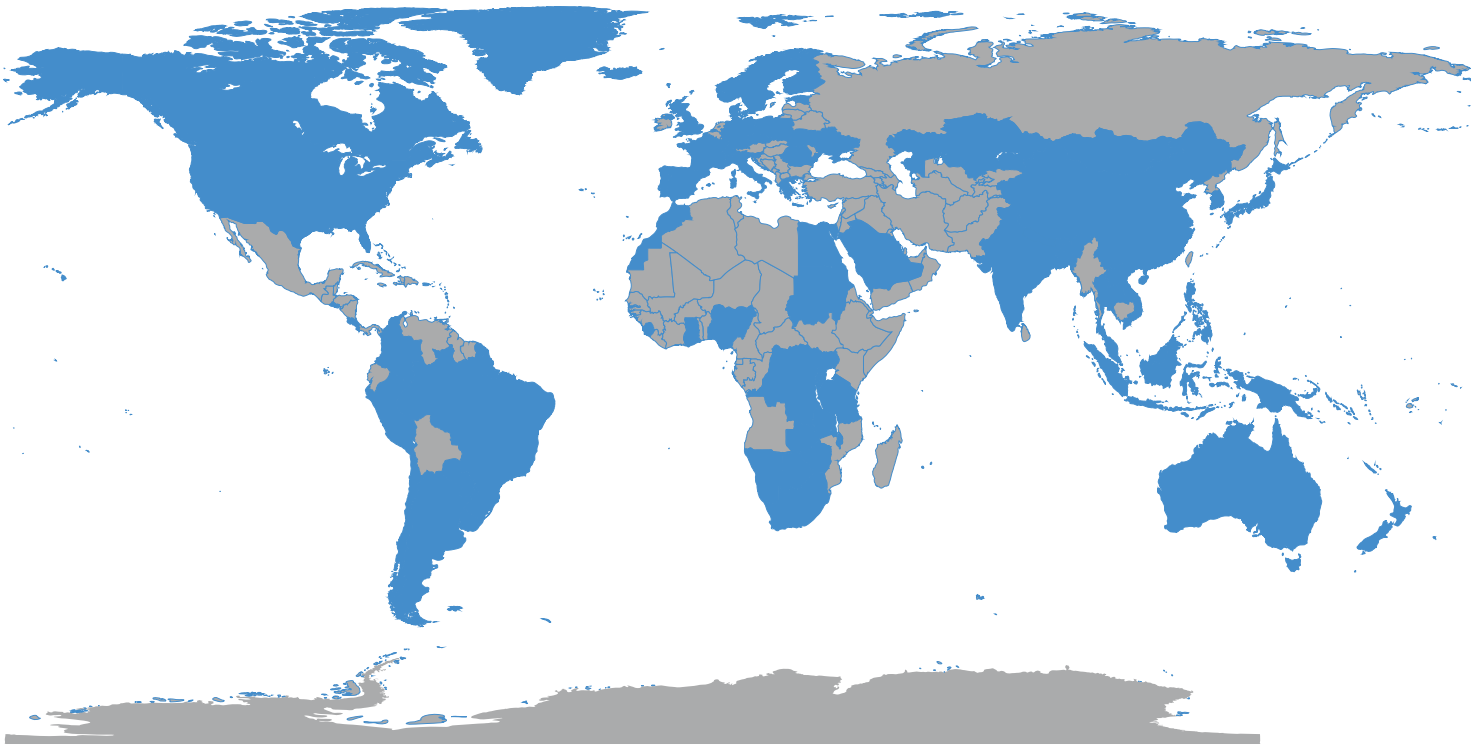
The World Summit on Arts and Culture is the flagship event of the International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies, which is generally convened every two to three years in different parts of the world, co-hosted with a National Member of the Federation. It is a highly participatory platform that fosters exchange between stakeholders within the global cultural policy field, including representatives of government, cultural and non-cultural sectors, and civil society. Through the World Summit, the Federation provides a platform for global thought leadership and explores key issues, in a spirit of openness, pluralism and curiosity.

The 10th World Summit co-hosted with Arts Council Korea brought together more than 400 people from over 90 countries, including leading policymakers, researchers, managers and practitioners from the arts, culture, and related sectors.

Delegates

Representation by country *

94
Countries represented



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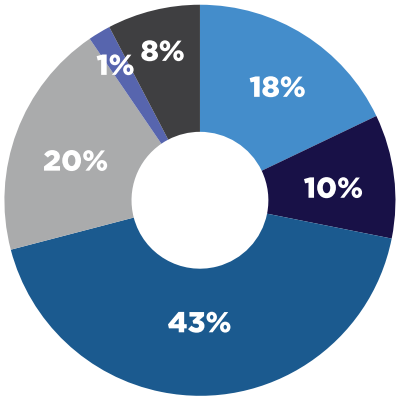
Countries represented by delegates include Argentina, Australia, Austria, The Bahamas, Belgium, Botswana, Brazil, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Cook Islands, Costa Rica, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt, El Salvador, Estonia, Eswatini, Fiji, Finland, France, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Latvia, Lebanon, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Malta, Mongolia, Morocco, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Romania, Rwanda, Samoa, Saudi Arabia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovak Republic, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, State of Palestine, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Tanzania, Thailand, Togo, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom (including England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales), Uruguay, United States of America, Vanuatu, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

* Country data based on registration form. For those delegates who specified more than one country, both countries were represented in ‘Number of countries’ and ‘regional representation’. Delegates represents registered delegates based on registration form data.

Delegates

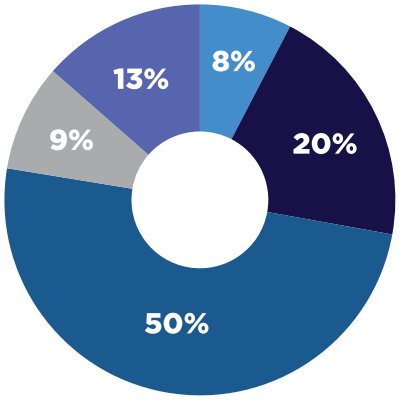
406
Delegates

Representation by region



- Africa (18%)
- Americas (10%)
- Asia (43%)
- Europe (20%)
- Gulf Region (1%)
- Pacific (8%)

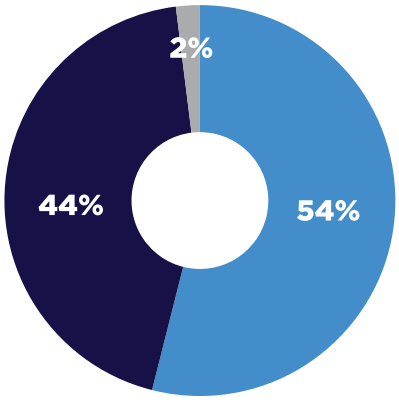
Representation by sector *



- Academia (8%)
- Civil Society (20%)
- Government (50%)
- International organisations (9%)
- Other (13%)

* 'Government' includes national, state, regional and local governments, as well as national agencies and institutions, such as galleries, museums and libraries. 'Civil society' includes artists, organisations and private foundations.

Gender balance



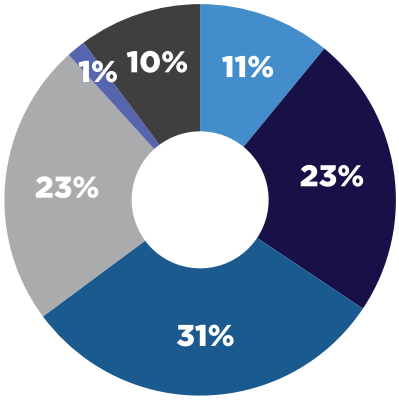
- Women (54%)
- Men (44%)
- Prefer not to say (2%)

Speakers

104
Speakers

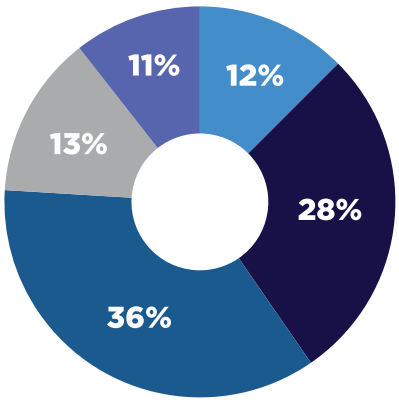
62
Countries represented

Representation by region



- Africa (11%)
- Americas (23%)
- Asia (31%)
- Europe (23%)
- Gulf Region (1%)
- Pacific (10%)

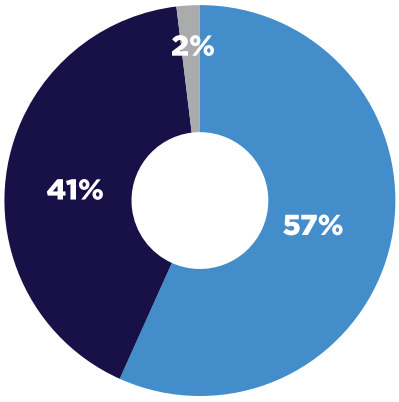
Representation by sector *



- Academia (12%)
- Civil Society (28%)
- Government (36%)
- International organisations (13%)
- Other (11%)

* 'Government' includes national, state, regional and local governments, as well as national agencies and institutions, such as galleries, museums and libraries. 'Civil society' includes artists, organisations and private foundations.

Gender balance



- Women (57%)
- Men (41%)
- Prefer not to say (2%)

Key Takeaways

1. Culture is an essential dimension of any liveable society

Culture is a distinct dimension of social life that is essential to any liveable society and its value is social. In practice, it is difficult to separate this social value from the creative and cultural sectors on which so many cultural and artistic expressions rely. The social and economic dimensions of culture are deeply intertwined and embedded across a range of issues; and decisions about policy, legislation and investment must deal with this complexity – and consider the potential side effects of different approaches – as they engage across domains to position culture alongside other priorities.

2. Culture is not monolithic; its definitions are multiple

Culture is not monolithic; its definitions are multiple; and the concepts we use have powerful potential to shape perceptions held by wider communities (and policymakers). No body owns definitions of culture, and we need to ensure that any definition allows for community ownership, evolution and plurality (cultures, histories, ways of life). While new concepts may be useful to help us articulate the value(s) of culture, we should consider the uses and connotations they carry for people outside of our immediate sphere, as they may influence how our ideas and arguments are received.

3. Cultural rights are inextricable from civil, political, economic and social rights

Cultural rights matter on their own, not because of their transformational impact. They assure that culture is an everyday practice and that all people can participate freely in cultural life. As human rights in the field of culture, they are inextricably linked to civil, political, economic and social rights and there is a mistaken perception that most countries already enshrine cultural rights in their legislation. In our strategies for the future, we should prioritise a cultural rights approach, recognising that culture is for citizens as an everyday practice. Secondarily, we should connect culture and cultural rights to important existing debates such as those on development, security, migration, and the priorities of Indigenous Peoples and minorities, so that our futures reflect our values and how people want to see themselves and ensure the greatest possible participation.

4. We have agency to shape the future of technology and its role in our lives

Technological development does not happen on its own. It is the result of the choices we make and is deeply connected to cultural, social, environmental and political realities. AI is a double-edged sword that brings innovation and risk, including massive environmental impact; and it reproduces existing threats to diversity of cultural expressions. However, we have agency to shift our thinking to decide what we want its role to be in our world, lives, and societies. We must develop AI education and training for the CCS that goes beyond use of tools to consider the full spectrum of AI technologies, which have distinct ethical and governance considerations; resist the trap of convenience to actively consider ethics and take responsibility for our actions; and stake a place for culture and critical thinking to shift from observing technology to actively shaping it.







Top L-R: Kristin Danielsen at Gala Opening; Delegates at World Café; Delegates at Long Table: *Global connections: rethinking transnational cultural exchange and mobility* Haniko Te Kurapa and Hae-Bo Kim at World Café. Photo: © PILHO SEUNG, courtesy of ARKO and IFACCA.

5. Indigenous knowledge and languages anchor shared cultural consciousness

Indigenous knowledge and languages are the soul of identities, the keepers of ancestral wisdom and the anchors of shared cultural consciousness, not simply means of communication. This makes the loss of knowledge and language equivalent to the loss of identity. There is a need for greater investment, legislation and whole-of-government approaches to implement – and sustain – international commitments to recognise and safeguard living cultures. Traditional knowledge should be included as a fundamental dimension of culture in the post-2030 agenda and future policies should align with existing international agreements, including the 2007 *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.*

6. Social and economic conditions related to the CCS must be addressed with urgency

There is an urgent need to improve the social and economic conditions of artists and cultural workers. International legal instruments can provide valuable frameworks and tools with which artists and cultural workers can protect their rights, receive fair compensation and retain ownership of their cultures and communities. In practice, however, the ways in which these laws are framed and implemented are often limited and differ starkly between different national and regional realities. We need to better understand the CCS workforce, and the nature and extent of its problems, to make the case for government investment and protections. However, the ways in which we define the workforce and collect the data we need is not straightforward, particularly in countries where trust in government is not high. The potential for universal basic income, or a creative basic income, remains an open debate: while there is evident appeal, we need to think further about how it might work in practice.

7. International collaboration is imperative

International collaboration across the entire cultural and creative ecology remains imperative. Artists, communities, civil society, related and private sector actors, academia, governments and international organisations must cooperate, listen and learn from one another; articulate the ongoing role and values of culture; and position it as a transversal priority in national and global governance agendas to secure the future of arts and culture.

The manifold dimensions and values of culture

How we approach, define and value culture will be paramount as we chart the future. Particularly when we engage and communicate with people for whom the cultural sector is less familiar, whether they are individuals, communities, other domain policymakers, or decisionmakers in national and global governance. In developing the Summit programme – and in its work more broadly – IFACCA adopts an approach that aligns with Article 4 of the UNESCO 2005 *Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions*, which views culture as encompassing

> traditional as well as contemporary cultural expressions and content in their many forms. Cultural content refers to the symbolic meaning, artistic dimension and cultural values that originate from or express cultural identities; and cultural expressions [are] those which result from the creativity of individuals, groups and societies and ... have cultural content.[1]

During the Summit, delegates interrogated existing approaches, their historic effects, and the need to carefully consider the concepts and narratives we use as we move forward. These discussions revealed different approaches that – while complex and often interconnected – are distinct in how they frame culture and its value. In principle, these approaches include viewing culture as:

- a distinct dimension of social life that is essential to any liveable society, the value of which is essentially social, rather than economic or instrumental
- social capital, the value of which is instrumental insofar as it is leveraged to create social cohesion, trust, wellbeing and mutual benefits
- creative and cultural industries, valued primarily in economic terms and
- creative and cultural sectors – including not-for-profit, informal, public and commercial sectors – that generate cultural and artistic expressions of social value, which may also hold instrumental, transformative and/or economic value.

In practice, our discussions confirmed that it is difficult – if not impossible – to separate social approaches to culture from the cultural and creative sectors upon which so many cultural and artistic expressions rely. These dimensions of culture are deeply intertwined and embedded across a range of issues, whether they at face value seem more weighted towards social or economic concerns, and even when they do not seem directly linked to culture. Moreover, those who work in the policy and investment space must deal with this complexity – and consider the potential side effects of different approaches – as they engage across domains to position culture among other priorities.

[1] https://www.artsummit.org/programme-objectives

This was highlighted by Dr Yang Woo Park, a former Minister of Culture, Sports and Tourism in the Republic of Korea, who reminded us that culture is bound to and profoundly influenced by external factors – from environmental and public health crises and political upheaval, to social stability and education – and 'it is only when all these factors are in the right place, that we can foster and grow our arts and culture.'

Culture: A way of being in the world

During the Summit, Dr Justin O'Connor – a professor in cultural economy based in Australia – made the case that we need a more focused definition of culture, rather than the expansive anthropological one found in the 1982 *Mexico City Declaration on Cultural Policies and the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions*. Issued by UNESCO Member States at the close of the inaugural MONDIACULT in Mexico City, it defined culture

> [as] the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterise a society or social group. It includes not only the arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs (41).

Later, at the close of the 33rd session of the General Conference of UNESCO, the 2005 Convention reaffirmed 'the link between culture and development;' recognised the importance of intellectual property rights; and outlined the dual status of cultural activities, goods and services which 'embody or convey cultural expressions, irrespective of the commercial value they may have,' noting that cultural activities 'may be an end in themselves, or they may contribute to the production of cultural goods and services' (4-6).

While recognising historical context and good intent, O'Connor proposed that such broad definitions are too wide to be useful. The change agents acting on this 'whole way of life' – such as economics, politics, urban planning, consumerism - are far broader than cultural policy. In that sense cultural policy does not own 'culture'. O'Connor suggested we focus on culture as a specific set of symbolic or meaning-making activities – images, texts, sounds, movements, rhythms – which are an essential part of human existence and participation in which is a human right. As such, he stressed that 'culture is a separate or distinct dimension of social life'.

The cultural sector is outlined in the 2005 Convention as:

> a sector of activity [which] includes, but not exclusively, cultural workers, artists and other creative professionals; commercial (for-profit) businesses; not-for-profit firms in the arts and culture; public cultural institutions, such as museums and galleries, heritage sites, libraries etc.; education and training institutions in the arts; government agencies and ministries responsible for arts and cultural affairs; NGOs and civil society involved in cultural activity.

Whilst there are deep and complex relations between this focused notion of culture and the wider anthropological culture as an essential to any liveable society, the primary focus of cultural policy, including any cultural goal should be on cultural expressions and the sector in which they are primarily organised. Without a cultural sector our collective cultural life can barely exist. It is in this sense that culture should be seen as a fundamental human necessity alongside basic infrastructure, health, education and social services.

Social capital

The concept of social capital is central to the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) Wellbeing Framework which measures wellbeing outcomes, how these are distributed across populations, and the resources that contribute to outcomes over time, which require whole-of-government approaches to policy and investment. The OECD defines social capital as the 'social norms, shared values and institutional arrangements that foster cooperation' among different groups (2024, p.25) which enable 'positive adaptation to economic and social change' (p.6), with social connectedness and 'trust in others' among its indicators (p.15). As such, CEO of Arts and Culture Norway and IFACCA Chair, Kristin Danielsen, proposed that there may be benefits to framing culture as social capital, affirming that

> Culture is not a commodity but represents human and social value … [it is] how we live, relate and imagine our futures; it is central to our humanity; it shapes us as individuals, but importantly creates communities with shared meaning and purpose. Yet we are challenged to make this the case for more people, communities, and governments.

The OECD definition of social capital is used by governments and within the United Nations National Accounts Section, which suggests a certain level of shared international understanding of the concept. Yet it is worth noting that various disciplines define social capital differently and hold different views on its source and function, which may influence how the idea of culture as social capital is received. Notably, in his 1999 paper prepared for the International Monetary Fund, political scientist Francis Fukuyama states that social capital 'constitutes the cultural component of modern societies' and considers different authors' renderings of the concept. He observes that where some see social capital as deriving from private goods, others see it as deriving from public goods that must be provided by states.

In its latter form the concept therefore suggests a link to existing cultural policy discussions, particularly with the *2022 MONDIACULT Declaration*, which recognises 'culture as a global public good with an intrinsic value to enable and drive sustainable development.' While such recognition of culture in broader agendas is very welcome, we also note that the framing of culture as a public good is neither straightforward nor uniformly received. This is shown in the 2024 IFACCA report *Culture as a Public Good: Navigating its role in policy debates*, which explores the origins and application of the public goods concept in relation to culture, and the complexities that emerge from different readings of the concept which bring both opportunity and responsibility.

Cultural and Creative Industries vs Cultural and Creative Sectors

At face value, there seems to be little distinction between the notions of cultural and creative industries (CCI) and cultural and creative sectors (CCS), and many use the concepts interchangeably. However, we suggest there is a subtle distinction: where the former focuses on industries that generate economic value, which may also generate social outcomes; the latter considers a wider ecosystem of not-for-profit and public sectors that create social value and have the potential to generate economic outcomes. This does not diminish the CCI, rather it shows that a broader approach may allow us to better consider the wider ecosystem upon which culture and creativity depend.

Yarri Kamara – a cultural policy advisor and writer from Sierra Leone and Uganda who works across sub-Saharan Africa – considered the benefits and possible pitfalls of framing culture solely in terms of

cultural and creative industries. She observed that throughout Africa, recent cultural policy discourse has been dominated by a CCI approach that emphasises economic value, particularly in relation to jobs and revenue. In part, she attributes this to the shift in population demographics: unlike most regions of the world, which face issues related to ageing populations, Africa is experiencing a youth bulge that creates greater need for opportunities for employment. Kamara acknowledged that there have been benefits to this approach. In relation to artists and practitioners, giving an example from the perspective of a writer, she noted that policy and investment to develop the creative industries means there are now more African publishers, publishing more works by writers from the region. In addition, she observed that making the economic case to governments with an evidence base to argue for jobs and income has more recently resulted in a level of policy interest regarding culture that did not previously exist in the region, which presents opportunity for broader conversations. The need to recognise both the commercial and economic value of industries and their non-commercial social value was also highlighted in a session on the music sector, in which delegates discussed the complex structures of the industry and wider sector, which are often not fully understood by those working outside the sector.

However, Kamara cautioned that focusing solely on industries can make it easy to obscure the social dimension of culture; and that commodification and privatisation may limit access to culture for those who do not have spending power, which may in turn eliminate free public spaces for shared cultural experiences. For Kamara, this raises important questions about the future such as: How can we ensure continuity of pre-colonial, non-market-based cultural practices? Will there still be space for potentially disenfranchised youth to find healthy outlets? And will governments that have paid attention to the social dimension of culture be tempted to abandon social priorities to pursue purely economic objectives? Ultimately, stressing the importance of language and the concepts we use, Kamara suggested that an approach that frames culture as the creative and cultural sectors may help address some of these issues, as it encourages people to consider culture's non-commercial aspects and non-profit spaces, and what they are – or should – be doing, stating that:

> we need to find the language, the evidence, the examples that get us beyond preaching to the choir … It is very easy to convince ourselves of the importance of culture because we are already convinced. We need to find the language that speaks to the indifferent, that speaks to the sceptical.

Although this distinction may seem a difference of degrees, it is an important one with powerful potential to shape the parameters of policy and investment, as well perceptions held by wider communities about the value of culture.

Making the case for culture

The concepts we use to make the case for culture have an effect and we should be intentional as we frame our narratives and consider our audiences. We should also consider the kinds of evidence that might support our narratives and demonstrate the value(s) for which we argue.

Delegates considered questions of how we value culture and how we might use data to expand thinking and narratives beyond strictly economic concerns in an interactive workshop, facilitated by Avril Joffe, UNESCO Chair in Cultural Entrepreneurship and Policy at the University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa and political scientist Diana Rey from Colombia. They explored the range of data available for public agencies and civil society organisations *to use to make decisions*

informed by evidence, shape effective public policies, build citizen trust in programmes and services, and demonstrate impact to advocate for priorities and grow the sector. They also discussed the updated the System of National Accounts (SNA) adopted by the United Nations Statistics Division in 2025, the framework of which has been expanded to better account for elements that affect wellbeing and sustainability, and identified the potential to develop guidelines to integrate the social dimensions of culture – including contributions to health, wellbeing and social capital – to ensure that they are adequately captured by national and international statistical systems.

Delegates also identified the need for greater sector awareness of existing statistical resources and tools, such as the welcomed revision of the UNESCO 2009 Framework for Cultural Statistics which will be launched in September 2025 and will be more inclusive based on the concept of a cultural and creative ecosystem; and the existing UNESCO Culture|2030 Indicators. This suggests an opportunity to further develop sector awareness knowledge and capacity to ensure actors across the CCS understand and appropriately leverage data.







Top L-R: Jo Kukathas speaking at the Final Plenary: *Future horizons: roadmap for a just and sustainable future for arts and culture*; Speakers at Plenary 1: T*he future of culture in times of exponential shifts*; Panellists for *Creative crossovers: lessons for the wider creative economy from the music* (Heejin Shim presenting). Photo: © PILHO SEUNG, courtesy of ARKO and IFACCA.

Foundations for the future

Cultural Rights

Cultural rights – which are human rights that relate to the field of culture – are emblematic of the inseparability of the social and economic dimensions of culture. Although the cultural rights framework does not adopt a set definition of culture, as human rights – which are recognised as being indivisible and interdependent – cultural rights are inextricably linked to civil, political, economic and social rights. Under Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), rights related to culture include the right of all persons to participate freely in the cultural life of the community; to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits; and to the protection of the moral and material interest resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which they are the authors.

In 2009, the Human Rights Council established the mandate for the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights. Since then, mandate holders have worked to elaborate and clarify the content of these rights, which protect

- human creativity in all its diversity and the conditions for it to be exercised, developed and made accessible
- the free choice, expression and development of identities
- the rights of individuals and groups to participate, or not participate, in the cultural life of their choice and to conduct their own cultural practices
- the right to interact and exchange, regardless of group affiliation
- the rights to enjoy and have access to the arts, to knowledge including scientific knowledge, and to an individual's own cultural heritage, as well as that of others'
- and the rights to participate in the interpretation, elaboration and development of cultural heritage and in the reformulation of cultural identities (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2019, p.4).

During the Summit, Dr Alexandra Xanthaki, UN Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights called for us to resist efforts to undermine diversity; to ensure that any definition of culture allows for evolution and plurality; to protect both culture and cultural rights; and to renew commitment to human rights-based approaches to culture. She identified as a pressing issue how the world views diversity in the current moment, with many working to shut down diverse voices and reinforcing structural inequalities and discrimination; and reminded us that while some in the Western world may have started to realise that their elites oppose diversity, this is not new, and many parts of the world have never recognised the importance of cultural diversity. She added that

> it is important now to stand firm together in the cultural sectors against any bullying of difference and of people who are different, and of people who want to be different in their lives, in their artistic lives, and in their visions and priorities.

Xanthaki affirmed the need to think about cultural ecosystems – comprising both social and economic dimensions – as being dynamic and evolving and warned against monolithic concepts that define culture in the singular (heritage, history, narrative) when we need concepts that recognise plurality (cultures, histories, ways of life). In addressing strategies for the future, Xanthaki insisted that we must protect both culture – as expressions of our identities and our humanity – and cultural rights, stating that we must 'continue to pressure and be loud and clear that cultural rights matter … [and] they matter on their own … not because of their transformational impact.' While we should prioritise this approach to culture, Xanthaki identified secondary value in connecting culture and cultural rights to important existing debates such as those on development, security, migration, and the priorities of Indigenous Peoples and minorities, so that our futures reflect our values and how people want to see themselves and ensure the greatest possible participation.

Flexible and collective cultural policies that integrate across policy areas – including those related to other social goods such as education, health and environment – and legislation that mandates investment and decentralisation can support the delivery of such rights-based approaches and protect future outcomes against political upheaval and instability. Márcia Helena Gonçalves Rollemberg, the Secretary of Cultural Citizenship and Diversity at the Ministry of Culture in Brazil, shared her experience delivering the government's cultural diversity and citizenship agenda, which put in place an innovative legal framework that establishes cultural rights, to facilitate interaction between diverse social communities and different levels of government, based on the belief that 'cultural rights enrich the set of human rights … as the ways of being, living, acting, and perceiving the world, [and] providing meaning to our existence.'

Cultural rights were further explored by delegates during the World Café session on the first day of the Summit, with a focus on potential actions and how these may improve (or degrade) the future for arts and culture. In the group discussion on advancing equity, justice and cultural rights, delegates pointed to a mistaken perception that most countries already enshrine cultural rights in their legislation; identified tensions around the meaning of cultural rights; and questioned whether culture and cultural rights can have universal meaning for all, particularly in the context of debates around the human rights framework as a Western construct. However, delegates agreed that the ability to advance cultural rights relies on the guarantee of other basic rights, including those related to education and access to information.

Human rights and culture as an everyday practice are also linked to questions of how we frame and value culture. In the final plenary of the Summit, Dr Jazmín Alejandra Beirak Ulanosky – Director General, Cultural Rights at the Ministry of Culture in Spain – observed that there is a tendency to see society and culture as separate, divorcing the majority of the population from those who work in the cultural and creative sectors. However, many of the problems that culture faces stem from this concentration of value and power within the CCS. She called for us to remember that culture is for citizens and consider cultural rights and culture as an everyday practice; and to redistribute the power to define, work with, and create policies for culture, as there can be no agency without power.

Living cultures, language and knowledge

There is pressing need for greater investment, legislation and whole-of-government approaches to implement – and sustain – international commitments to recognise and safeguard living cultures. During the Summit, delegates shared perspectives from diverse regions and recognised that despite positive

international commitments these have not been adequately legislated and implemented domestically. Moreover, in some cases where they have been implemented, there are recent examples where historic gains have been rolled back, which confirms the need for continued monitoring and vigilance.

Providing a positive example from Brazil, Rollemberg explained that the cultural diversity and citizenship agenda includes the National Policy of Living Culture, which is a public partnership with communities that seeks to expand cultural rights, democratise the promotion of culture, strengthen cultural diversity, and to position culture and creativity as drivers of social and economic transformation across the country. She added that the basic principle informing this policy is that 'the state does not produce culture but recognises and supports the cultural activities of cultural groups, collectives and civil society institutions,' which it refers to as *points of culture* (of which there are currently more than 7,200).

Delegates in another session called for political commitment at national, regional and international levels and flagged the need for action to be taken in partnership with the artists, practitioners and communities who are the keepers of living cultural knowledge and heritage, with Christopher Waiwori, Senior Executive Advisor for the Melanesian Spearhead Group stating that

> we must ensure that our communities, local talents and artists ... as custodians and practitioners ... [can] walk forward together, hand-in-hand to protect, uphold, safeguard, embrace, and celebrate our living cultures and diverse heritage.

During the Indigenous-led dialogue circle session, delegates called for future policies to be developed and benchmarked against the 2007 *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*; discussed sovereignty and self-determination and the need to hand power back to Indigenous communities, so that they decide how they preserve their knowledge and with whom they share it; and identified an opportunity to empower communities to monitor the implementation of legislation related to their cultures, rather than being monitored by national public bodies.

Delegates also addressed issues of education, such as total immersion schools where learning includes cultural values and world connection to land, seas, mountains and local histories; and called for long-term partnerships between governments and communities to incorporate cultures and histories in curricula for young people to safeguard their cultural identity, as well as investment and training for wider communities.

In the final plenary of the Summit, Emile Kairua, Secretary and Head of Ministry for the Ministry of Cultural Development in the Cook Islands – asserted that the vision of a just, sustainable and inclusive cultural future can only be realised if we address the ongoing degradation of Indigenous languages, which are not simply a means of communication: they are the soul of identities, the keepers of ancestral wisdom and the anchors of shared cultural consciousness. This makes the loss of language equivalent to the loss of identity. He pointed to discussions about climate change and global displacement and spoke from the experience of the Cook Islands – predominantly sand key islands and atolls, no more than two to three metres above sea level – where his people are already looking to the future and considering places where they might relocate entire families and communities. He put this in historical context, acknowledging that while the reasons are different and troubling

> this is not the first time that we have had to do this. Many years ago, many hundreds of years ago, a flotilla of canoes left the shores of Ngatangiia to take our people to places like

> New Zealand, and this is where that migration and the need for improvement started. It's not a new thing, so we are very versatile, we're durable, and we will adapt.

Ultimately, delegates agreed that respect for diverse perspectives, laws, protocols and cultures is essential, calling for respect now, today, and tomorrow.

Culture in times of conflict and crisis

Geopolitics and its impact upon culture was explored throughout the Summit. While every conflict or war unfolds within a unique context – with distinct cultural, historical and societal dynamics – in discussions on conflicts in Lebanon, Myanmar, Northern Ireland and Ukraine, delegates highlighted that these contexts are not isolated and are increasingly interconnected with other countries and their societies. Delegates identified an opportunity to develop new models of cooperation at local, regional, national and international levels to foster mutual trust and a culture of care between societies that prioritise active equal engagement and emphasise the distinction between sympathy and empathy.

In times of conflict, delegates highlighted the need to acknowledge that attacks on cultural heritage are deliberate attempts to undermine cultural identities and traditions; recognised the vital role that cultural institutions such as libraries, museums and heritage centres play in providing spaces for communities to access support, healing and dialogue; and called for national and international actors to support artists and cultural practitioners to be actively involved with communities – ensuring ethical approaches that acknowledge trauma and support mental health – and safeguard artistic freedom. As Daryna Zhyvohliadova, a cultural professional and academic from Ukraine, affirmed: 'in times of war, culture becomes a space for empathy and solidarity. Together, we can achieve more.'

Culture also has a peacemaking role beyond periods of direct conflict and recovery. Delegates stressed the need for policymakers and civil society actors across the CCS to work together to widen their focus and support proactive measures for peacemaking to mitigate and prevent conflict; to build systems that enable meaningful cultural dialogue and promote mutual understanding of diverse cultural identities through freedom of creative expressions; and ensure sustainable funding to support initiatives that strengthen international cohesion and cultural resilience.

The importance of language and the peacemaking potential of culture also applies to non-armed social conflict, both within and beyond national borders. Throughout the Summit, delegates reported that the contexts in which they work are increasingly marked by polarisation and oppositional views, which are sometimes extreme. In discussions on finding common ground, delegates questioned the usefulness of concepts that seem to be increasingly used in public discourse around the world, such as *polarisation* and *unity*, noting an important distinction that needs to be made between *unity with* and *unity against*. They considered whether increasing exposure to conflicts worldwide may skew our perception and eclipse our ability to see the extent of our commonalities; and cautioned against framing all disagreement as polarisation rather than open debate, as the former can escalate tensions unnecessarily and misrepresent healthy democratic political discourse

Democratic discourse and questions of censorship are increasingly evident in democratic countries of the Global North, despite the assumption and framing of these issues as pertaining to countries in the Global South. Delegates acknowledged that respect for diversity and freedom of artistic and cultural expressions means sometimes withstanding discomfort and understanding that our perspectives can be challenged; that we have the agency to

consider and measure our response; and it is part of the role of the arts to provoke and challenge.

Delegates also highlighted the importance of government investment in systems and spaces that connect people with diverse and disparate views to encourage, facilitate and support dialogue, and in which people can feel safe to be uncomfortable together. In the parallel session on finding common ground, an example was provided of a show that was programmed specifically to showcase works that had courted media controversy, which allowed the presenters to frame it as a space for constructive exchange and reflection on why works might be considered controversial. This need for physical spaces for exchange and connection was also highlighted in the World Café session on dialogue across the divide and beyond echo chambers, in which delegates observed that physical dialogue allows for more nuanced emotional engagement with others, which is important not only between people with different cultural identities but between generations, too.

The existential threats posed by climate change intersect with arts, culture and climate action and delegates agreed that while there are clear environmental and economic concerns, climate change is fundamentally a cultural crisis: it demands that we reevaluate as a global community what we value. This should include the environment and living cultures. Delegates highlighted the unique vulnerabilities of small island states and emphasised the vital role of Indigenous traditional knowledge, intangible cultural heritage, and innovative arts and cultural practices. Delegates also highlighted that adaptation is at the heart of what it means to be human and the arts and culture – particularly through Indigenous traditional knowledge and community-based strategies – can provide powerful tools to address the climate crisis, noting that these need to be context-specific to ensure local implementation and accountability. This could be done through advocacy, systems change and education, which plays a vital role to shift mindsets, (re)shape narratives and bolster new and existing cultural values and practices at local, national and international levels.

Delegates called for arts and culture to be integrated into multisectoral social and environmental frameworks, including financial instruments related to impact investment, to consider effects on culture and make explicit cultural losses and damage. They stressed the need to rethink institutional processes to empower local and Indigenous communities; to encourage academic and research institutions to adopt interdisciplinary inclusive approaches that embed cultural knowledge, creative practices, and community leadership in their mandates; and to build and strengthen the capacity of artists, cultural practitioners, and communities to lead on climate action.

Participation and access for all

Cultural participation cuts across both the social and economic dimensions of culture: it encompasses cultural and creative practices, the exchange of ideas, community practices, open processes in governance and policymaking, as well as access to goods and services. In a panel discussion on empowering participation in cultural life delegates explored cultural participation as a political and creative practice that can shape narratives, build communities, rebalance representation in cultural life, and shift power through collective agency.

Delegates again highlighted the need for more critical approaches to concepts and language, particularly those that we use in discussions about the governance and future of culture. They challenged dominant terminology such as *sustainability* and *resilience* and called instead for local governance to be guided by concepts rooted in local cultural and linguistic realities, and simplified

texts that are accessible and respond to community needs. They also identified ongoing issues of uneven access and participation, prevalent even in countries where there is robust public investment in cultural life, which results in a lack of representation; and stressed that inclusive and participatory cultural ecosystems rely not only upon structural changes but also demand our deep attentiveness to reimagine and change how authority and knowledge are shared and understood.

Systemic inequalities in access to representation, resources and policymaking processes related to culture and the CCS persist; and all too often policy frameworks designed to support participation, access and inclusion must adapt, pivot and or reshape to align with political cycles and disruptions. During the Summit, delegates identified the need to ensure that participatory initiatives consider all communities, including those outside of metropolitan areas; to foster greater access and inclusion; and to ensure that artists and cultural practitioners are recognised on their own terms and are not reduced to single aspects of their identities. Delegates also considered how cultural agencies might develop more sustainable models for inclusion that are not reliant on public funding; and long-term policy frameworks to protect communities' cultural lives from economic, political and social turbulence.

Practical examples of policymaking and governance processes to foster participation, equity and inclusion and respond to the needs of diverse communities were explored in a panel discussion on decentralising cultural governance, with insights provided from Canada, Colombia, Republic of Korea, and South Africa. In Canada, CINARS – which organises a biennial international performing arts conference among other things – deliberately operates outside the country's dominant cultural capitals to embrace geographic decentralisation and offer space for artists outside major metropoles; and runs a cross-cultural exchange programme that foregrounds the artistic contributions of, and fosters dialogue between, diverse communities including from Indigenous and rural populations.

The Bank of the Republic in Colombia has a nuanced decentralised cultural governance model. It prioritises participatory, community-led approaches, based on constitutional commitment to the protection of cultural diversity and legislation to recognise the diversity of its population, among which there are 66 Indigenous languages spoken. In the Republic of Korea, to counter the centuries-old legacy of centralisation of political and cultural power, Arts Council Korea and other institutions have made a strategic transition to devolve decision-making to regional cultural councils. While in South Africa, to counter a centralised cultural system that is a legacy of apartheid and community exclusion, the government has instituted national frameworks that call for power to be devolved to provincial and municipal structures, to which the National Arts Council has aligned its policies, governance structure, and funding models to prioritise informal and community-driven artistic practices.

Delegates identified common challenges that need to be considered in decentralisation efforts:

- not all regions will have existing infrastructure to manage decentralised systems, so there may be need for investment and training
- there needs to be strong coordination to monitor and evaluate outcomes, to ensure efficiency and avoid duplication
- dominant regional cultures may marginalise minority voices and reproduce exclusion at the local level, and
- where decentralisation is in process, political instability and changing priorities can disrupt implementation.

They also confirmed that to effectively decentralise governance and policymaking, governments must transfer authority and authorship to local actors, not just resources; that institutions must reform their structures and investment models; and that investment in local infrastructure can lead to the creation of unique cultural forms, stimulate local creative economies, and support cultural sustainability.

Delegates highlighted the need to distinguish between decentralised and decentred approaches: where the former implies redistribution from a centre, the latter reimagines the relationship and elevates regional knowledge (which needs to be the foundation, rather than supplementary). As Interim CEO of the National Arts Council of South Africa Julie Diphofa put it:

> decentralisation is not simply administrative – it is about cultural justice, dismantling inherited hierarchies and enabling artists and communities to define and shape the cultural ecosystem on their own terms.

Rights, responsibilities and protections

There is an urgent need to improve the social and economic working conditions of artists and cultural workers. International legal instruments can provide valuable frameworks and tools with which artists and cultural workers can protect their rights, receive fair compensation and retain ownership of their cultures and communities. In practice, however, the ways in which these laws are framed and implemented are often limited, including in their Western approach to knowledge which can put an unfair burden on those individuals and communities that they are meant to protect. These issues were brought to the fore during discussions on rights related to culture, including intellectual property (IP), copyright, labour rights, and social and legal protections (both existing and potential).

Cislé Jacobs – Chair of the National Arts Council of Namibia who has worked as a UNESCO national expert, on copyright legislation revisions, and as a technical expert for Namibia's 2024 National Arts Fund Draft Bill and Regulations – pointed to the fact that although many countries have ratified International Labour Organisation and UNESCO conventions designed to provide protections, in most countries only minimal standards have been put in place and these rarely respond to the specificities of the CCS. She called for public agencies to push for the enforcement of existing IP, copyright and labour protections, and for greater coordination and collective bargaining among workers, stating that, although we may not always experience it as such:

> Culture is a right. Culture is labour. Culture is our shared responsibility. It is both a sector of sustaining livelihoods and dimensions of development … [as well as] identity, community, economy, and sovereignty …

Solamalemalo Dr Hai-Yuean Tualima – senior law lecturer at Te Herenga Waka-Victoria University of Wellington – reflected on Indigenous community protections offered by the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) *Treaty on Intellectual Property, Genetic Resources and Traditional Knowledge* adopted in May 2024, after 25 years of negotiation. Despite its imperfections, Tualima – who led Pacific country negotiations – sees the treaty as a political win for Indigenous Peoples and local communities who have been fighting for recognition of their individual and collective rights, and the meanings they attach to culture and creative works. However, she highlighted that its adoption is only the start of a much larger process, as its effectiveness will rely on states to ratify and implement the treaty, with Malawi being the only country that has so far made this commitment. For those who do ratify and implement the treaty, Tualima identified the need for national governments to ensure a whole-of-government approach to policy and investment,

which should at least include ministries responsible for intellectual property, environment, culture and foreign affairs.

Importantly, she confirmed the need for governments to engage and coordinate with community leaders, based on the 'genuine … free, prior and informed consent' of communities; and to think carefully about whose capacity requires building, noting that neocolonial institutions tend to locate lack in local communities when sometimes it is government institutions that do not have relevant knowledge and understanding. From a community perspective, Tualima encouraged artists and knowledge holders to be clear about their needs and expectations, and to advocate for recognition of their rights in cultural policies and other national policy domains that are relevant.

Decent working conditions and protections for artists and cultural workers in the future demand we address issues of precarious employment, wage gaps and barriers to social protections specific to the CCS. However, our ability to understand the CCS workforce and the extent and nature of its problems – and our ability to make the case for government investment and protections – relies on an ability to define the parameters of that workforce, which is not straightforward. Delegates considered the pros and cons of establishing definitions and criteria for who qualifies as an artist or cultural worker, noting that the definitions used by different countries are not always consistent. On the one hand, the ability to define these workers enables governments to identify gaps and provide access to social protections and benefits, including healthcare and pensions; on the other, formalised definitions may be exclusionary and pose risks of censorship, censure and the instrumentalisation of culture for propagandist or political ends, which is of particular concern in countries where there has been historic abuse of power and trust in government and public institutions is not high.

Delegates also recognised the relationship between clearly defined criteria and the ability to gather and leverage data about the CCS workforce. They identified the need for accurate workforce data, particularly when working across government with agencies responsible for tax and social securities to advocate investment and measures tailored to the CCS, noting that income patterns and portfolio careers – which supplement income from arts and cultural practice – can obfuscate the true nature of precarity experienced by some CCS workers. However, the collection and tracking of personal data was also flagged as a sensitive issue for artists and cultural workers in countries with issues related to trust in government.

Discussions also covered issues of employment status and contracts. Delegates flagged that even in countries where robust labour protections are in place, labour laws tend to only cover those people who are formally employed and not those who are considered freelancers. Delegates discussed the problem of the 'projectariat' within the CCS – referring to the common practice of engaging workers on a project-by-project basis, often without formal contracts – and identified the need for agreed standards and best practices to which all actors across the sector should commit. This is particularly important as workers' ability to access formal protections relies on their ability to demonstrate employment history. Providing an example from Scandinavia, Director General of the Swedish Arts Council Kajsa Ravin shared that in Norway and Sweden state contracts are in place that must be followed by all state art institutions and are recommended for other public or private arts organisations, which set minimum pay rates for visual artists, photographers and illustrators; and the Swedish Arts Council in its grant assessment criteria asks independent organisations seeking public funding to demonstrate commitment to professionalism through the use of contracts and budgeting appropriate artist pay.

Delegates also considered the *Fair Culture Charter* developed and published in 2024 by the German Commission for UNESCO, which sets out principles for fair development of the cultural sector including decent working conditions and fair remuneration; access to diverse cultural expressions and resources; non-discrimination and gender equality; local development; market access; digital equity and ethics; respect for the environment; and public and consumer awareness.

Related issues were further explored during World Café conversations that focused on fair working conditions in the CCS and pathways for sustainable cultural ecosystems. Delegates in these groups recognised starkly different national and regional realities; discussed the positive potential for collective action and to reimagine labour unions, cooperatives and transnational alliances; and called for stronger policy frameworks, universal protections for freelancers, and investment to build capacity within the sector. Delegates considered the difference between decency and dependency; questions of power in relation to who invests, defines and decides where support is directed; how the sector can professionalise without becoming overly bureaucratic and exclusionary, particularly for younger generations; and how artists and cultural workers can secure a livelihood without compromising freedom of artistic expression.

The issue of universal basic income, or a creative basic income, recurred throughout the Summit. In a plenary session on the ethics and governance of AI in futureproofing the CCS, Micaela Mantegna – a lawyer, researcher from Argentina and member of the World Economic Forum Council – argued for universal or creative basic income to be included among policy measures to address artists' loss of income due to copyright abuse and diminishing royalty payments. Mantegna recognised that the copyright framework alone is unlikely to address the problems faced by artists and creatives, as existing practices have already shown that licensing money tends to reach companies rather than the individuals who produce knowledge and culture. She also argued that a basic income could ensure that artists are liberated to create, free from political and investment priorities. In response to a question from the floor about whether our existing economic models would allow for this, Mantegna pointed to an established history of government use of tax and policy interventions to address social and ethical problems, noting that it would demand that governments actively rebalance power in our current monopolistic economic systems.

While the appeal of a basic income was evident throughout discussions, so was the need to think further about how it might work in practice. For example, should the CCS advocate for a creative basic income for workers in the CCS or would there be greater value in advocating for universal basic income to align with other sectors and local labour laws? And if creative basic income is possible, should such investment be managed centrally, or through agencies responsible for culture and their budgets, particularly when the latter are already often stretched, underfunded, and subject to political instability?

Overall, these discussions revealed that the extent and nature of the issues faced by the CCS are deeply connected to local context and history; that there is general agreement on the need for governments to create fair systems for artists' income and labour and social protections; and that civil society should be empowered to act where others do not.

The future of investment

Clearly there is much work to be done to secure the future of culture, its social value, and the cultural and creative sectors that provide its foundations. This will demand adequate investment, resources and sustainable approaches. So how can we revitalise our

policies, frameworks and implementation models to remedy the effects of a decades' decline in funding for culture globally and respond to all these issues? This question was at the heart of discussions on the future of investment in culture, in which delegates considered new ways of approaching investment, articulating value, and measuring return on investment in creative practice.

Adrian Collette, CEO of Creative Australia, provided an example based on recent cultural policy developments in Australia, where focus has shifted to investing in and advocating for a generative creative industry that builds cultural, social and economic value for the country. In response, Creative Australia has transitioned from being a grant-making body, to an investment and development agency that makes direct and indirect investments, including through promoting public-private partnerships with philanthropic and commercial interests. In this way, he said the agency can 'tell a much bigger, more robust story about value … a story that will underpin public investment itself, while incentivising other vital forms of philanthropic and commercial investment.'

Dr Hae-Bo Kim, Advising Director of Policy and Strategy Division at the Seoul Foundation for Arts and Culture in the Republic of Korea highlighted the need to reconsider how we measure, quantify and protect the value of culture. He proposed we incorporate what he calls the *demonetisation zone of culture* – the intangible and affective elements – in our value frameworks and make this part of public agency mandates; to think about cultural products no longer in terms of global market competition but instead in terms of community cultural attractiveness; and proposed that we replace measures of supply and demand, with measures of satisfaction and dissatisfaction. He proposed the 3-I Cultural Values for ABC-P Model[2] and advocated incorporating traditional Eastern philosophical perspectives—which value the existence of the intangible and seek harmony with the tangible—into contemporary cultural policy frameworks. He asserted that

> In the era of the affective economy, where it is the movements of the mind – our emotional impulses and sentiments – that shape the flow of money, emotions are no longer fleeting; they are quantifiable, storable, and most importantly, monetisable. The emotional dimension of human life, once considered intangible and private, has become the new frontier for capitalist extraction.

Reflecting on different approaches, delegates also heard perspectives from Croatia, where investment in culture is premised on the conviction that culture is a social and public good; and Tanzania, where limited public resources for the sector has led to practical measures that have brought benefits, such as artist permit fees paid to the government which are then redirected to support the creation of new works. Ultimately, delegates concluded that all investment requires some kind of return: philanthropic interests seek social outcomes; commercial interests seek profit or other benefits; and governments are obliged to create long term value for the country and to taxpayers. They also recognised that any form of investment must be based on the contexts in which artists, creative practitioners and decisionmakers operate; and highlighted the need to continue speaking and listening to others, to understand how we can prioritise and invest public resources in the pursuit of cultural and creative value. During the Summit, delegates also pressed for public investment to empower civil society through resources, capacity-building, and partnerships with governments and private sector actors.

[2] A value framework that encompasses economic value through social value













Top L- R: Participants for Dialogue Circle: *Honouring the past, building the future: a dialogue of listening together and cocreating*; Dr Alexandra Xanthaki, UN Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights speaking during Plenary 1; World Café table notes; Delegates at World Café; Daryna Zhyvohliadova at Open Floor session; Speakers for the Final Plenary: *Future horizons: roadmap for a just and sustainable future for arts and culture.* Photo: © PILHO SEUNG, courtesy of ARKO and IFACCA.

Realising the future: setting it in motion

AI, agency and action

It seems that when we think of the future, many of us cannot help but think of technology; and in our current moment this thinking is dominated by questions of AI. Whether perspectives were techno-utopian or techno-sceptic (or somewhere in-between), the consensus among delegates was that technologies are reshaping the CCS worldwide. Moreover, many agreed that it can be a double-edged sword that brings both innovation and risk. Yet more than anything our discussions revealed that the future is not a done deal, and we have the power to exercise agency in how we engage with technology, the relationship we have with it, and the stories we tell about it – to ourselves and others. In short: technological development does not happen on its own, it is the result of the choices people make; this makes the realm of the digital fundamentally cultural.

Linguistic, cultural and cosmological diversity

The first session of the Summit brought together in conversation Ayoung Kim, an artist from the Republic of Korea whose work incorporates digital innovation, geopolitics, mythology, technology and science fiction and Michael Running Wolf (Northern Cheyenne and Lakota), an AI ethicist and poet who cofounded and leads the First Language AI Reality (FLAIR) initiative at the Mila Quebec Artificial Intelligence Institute in Canada. In their conversation, they spoke about their respective work and considered the role and value of culture, how it challenges and adapts to shifting realities, and its power to inspire resilience, resistance and positive change.

Reflecting on his work, Running Wolf recognised the groundbreaking work done by a Māori research team based in Aotearoa New Zealand who created the very first Indigenous language speech recognition system in 2018 – composed entirely by community participants and created by local technologists – which inspired his work to do the same for languages in North America. He shared that the long-term vision of FLAIR is to build a speech recognition language tutor that works offline (the industry term for which is *edge AI*), so that it does not need to be connected to the cloud. However, the core goal is not to create technology but new language speakers, and to do so in a way that gives agency to Indigenous communities and gives them power over the technology, noting that

> If AI is your first choice, you're doing it wrong, because AI is very expensive, AI requires a lot of data, and AI requires the subservience of a community to an alien entity in a way, which is the artificial intelligence data pipeline.

Running Wolf explained that unlike large language models (LLMs) – for example ChatGPT or Gemini – which draw on vast quantities of data in English, Indigenous language models have limited data to work with due to the precarity of languages and declining numbers of speakers, citing that of the 7,000 languages tracked by UNESCO nearly half

are critically endangered. In response, FLAIR has focused on quality data and adopted a multilingual strategy to amplify the data they access by building a community with related languages who work together to create a collective data set.

The speakers also highlighted the limited nature of existing technologies – which lack the ability to reflect linguistic, cultural and cosmological diversity – potential pitfalls, and threats to cultural heritage. In relation to language, Kim recognised that although some LLMs operate in countries' national languages – including some in Republic of Korea – most operate with the English language. Running Wolf observed that there is a common assumption within the machine learning community that all languages are just a type of English, so the technology is transferable. However, this is intrinsically false: tools such as ChatGPT simply would not work for nearly 7,000 languages, particularly those that are highly polysynthetic – in which complex ideas are compressed into single words – because English does not capture their precision and resilience, which can introduce ambiguity, error and miscommunication. Kim also reflected on philosopher Yuk Hui's notion of cosmotechnics – how the cosmos and the moral are unified through technical activities – which is a concept he introduced in 2017 to challenge how technology has been understood throughout the twentieth century in philosophy, anthropology and history (Hui, 2020). Hui argues that the cosmologies that dominate technological development play an influential role, maintaining that

> technology is not anthropologically universal; it is enabled and constrained by particular cosmologies, which go beyond mere functionality or utility … there is no one single technology, but rather multiple cosmotechnics (Hui, 2017).

Considering threats to diversity of cultural expressions, Kim pointed to the infantile status of current AI models and their limited ability to communicate and produce results that reflect artists' intentions; and shared that she resists seeing AI as an organic entity that can compete with human cultural expressions, because it does not have intent, struggle, internal pain or creative drive. Running Wolf suggested that AI is a risk to cultural heritage, not because it is intelligent but because it is not, and research already warns us that it is not improving. He suggested that the threat is unlikely to come directly from LLMs, which have already acquired and exhausted most data. However, LLMs will be a stepping stone to the next reality, and we have already set the precedent that our intellectual property is owned by everyone and that large singular entities can exploit it without our permission or consent, which presents a real risk to artists and creators. He added that the argument that we should give up what is ours – our land, our intellectual property, our culture – for the greater good and the success of humanity is a familiar trope for Indigenous Peoples, from whom others might learn.

Concerns about the limits of AI in reflecting cultural diversity were echoed by Korean scholars and writers in a panel on elastic futurity in Korean arts and culture. They highlighted how data synthesised through LLMs risks becoming increasingly uniform over time; and warned that data volume can dominate and flatten specific cultural representations. This poses significant risks for collective memory, particularly as AI cannot encompass the full spectrum of human experiences including senses, feelings, and reasoning.

Data sovereignty and resistance

The conversation between Kim and Running Wolf affirmed that it is possible to adopt ethical approaches to conduct responsible research and

respect the sovereignty of communities. Unlike the academy, governments and corporations – who often take it for granted that peoples' data can be acquired and owned in perpetuity – central to FLAIR's approach is that participants are fairly compensated for their expertise and retain ownership of their data. Running Wolf explained that although, technically, when you pay someone to collect data you own that data, FLAIR has put in place contracts with sovereign community entities to license the data for a limited period with the option to renew consent or withdraw every 90 days, after which all data would be scrubbed from the system; and assures transparency by committing to quarterly reports on data use. All of this highlights the need for trust, transparency and relationships with communities to ensure the ethical development of technologies.

In their conversation, Kim and Running Wolf also considered how we might move away from being governed by algorithms as we increasingly use different platforms, apps and on-demand services; and the potential for resistance and change through techno-activism and collective movements. Offering a personal reflection, Running Wolf conjured a vivid metaphor that resurfaced throughout the Summit: there is a precious medicine of the Lakota and Cheyenne that is rare and harvestable only infrequently, with great care; it comes from a sandstone rock in which a cedar tree somehow grows, roots working a way through the hard and unusual environment to find the cracks and fissures to survive. This is how, he said

> We have to exist within this artificial edifice of Western culture and somehow take root so that we can survive and thrive … that is how our languages and our cultures survive today, because everything we have today was an act of resistance … And yet our roots are taking hold …

The choices we make, the stories we tell

In a second in-conversation session, Pooja Sood, a curator and founding member and Director of Khoj International Artists' Association in India and Gerfried Stocker, a pioneering media artist and the Artistic and Managing Director of Ars Electronica – a new media cultural, educational and scientific institute in Austria – looked at how practitioners offer different ways to engage with technologies and considered how we might sustain diverse narratives in a world increasingly shaped by technological advancement.

The stories we tell, to ourselves and others, was as a central concern and the speakers agreed that we must exercise agency with intent to decide what we do with AI, it should not decide what we do. Sood recognised that AI can help augment human creativity and personalise the narratives we experience; however, in its current form it also amplifies bias and homogenisation. She called for us to question what AI actually does, what its possibilities are, what it needs, and who it is for, especially when so many parts of the world – including in South Asia – have no access to the internet. Stocker observed that technology on its own does not change anything, as it depends on us and if we are able and willing to effect change. We are so obsessed with the hype around AI and forget to ask ourselves: what should be its role in our world, our life, our society? He sees this as a simple but profound shift in thinking that makes clear the connection between technology and human choices and actions, stating

> technology – particularly artificial intelligence – is not brought by aliens flying over the earth and dropping this technology to punish us. We have created it. So, this means responsibility, but this also means super opportunity, because we can be in charge. It won't be easy, but it's possible.

The speakers recognised that access is a major issue, as the tools exist but they are unevenly controlled and distributed, and we must work to prevent social, education and access gaps from worsening. Stocker recognised that control over these technologies rests largely in the countries of Europe and North America; and Sood cited that in India although there are 850 million internet users, only 50 percent of the population has access to the internet, never mind AI which carries even greater cost. However, she also cautioned against focusing on AI and overlooking the continued value of low-tech solutions, recalling the work of a group of young artists in India who started the network *Inquilab* (which means 'resistance') which was an open, portable, community-run local area Wi-Fi network that travelled to public protests in a backpack.

Environmental, social and political effects and the role of government

Technology is not external to our societies and politics; it directly affects our social, environmental and political realities. Sood highlighted the massive environmental impact of AI and related technologies, particularly the data centres they rely upon which draw vast amount of water for evaporative cooling. She shared that in India these centres are being erected in poorer states where there is already water shortage and where people do not have access to clean drinking water. This reflects practices in other parts of the world too, with a 2025 finding by Bloomberg News indicating that in the USA, almost two-thirds of new centres are located in areas already experiencing water stress. Meanwhile, a 2025 report from the International Energy Agency estimates that globally data centres consume approximately 560 billion litres of water per year, which could rise to 1,200 by 2030. And a 2025 MIT article on recent research indicates that each time an individual chooses to use a generative AI model such as ChatGPT, their query consumes about five times more electricity than a simple web search; and estimates that by 2026, globally data centres will consume up to 1,050 terawatts of electricity, making them the fifth largest electricity consumer in the world (between Russia and Japan).

The speakers agreed that while we may find ways to protect ourselves as individuals, we need stronger governance of the digital space by government. However, similar to conversations about data in relation to working conditions and social protections, the legacy of historic abuse of power and trust in government is a major issue when it comes to questions of government controls. Stocker observed that generally in Europe there is an agreed belief that governments should be responsible for the governance of digital space, citing as an example trailblazing legislation by the European Commission. However, he recognised that people from other parts of the world with experience of authoritarianism – or even those who remember life in former eastern Germany – have a different perspective, as trust in government is not as high. Sood agreed on the need for government legislation, as governments are the only ones able to enforce safety. However, she recognised that while some countries have introduced legislation that seems progressive and good for cybersecurity, they also impinge on privacy laws, which needs to be considered. On an individual level, Sood referred to the recently launched software Spawning AI – developed in collaboration with artists – to create tools that help artists control how their works are used online by making it easy to set data preferences to opt out from AI training models. Stocker agreed that such options are positive in principle, but of limited value if companies choose not to respect your preferences; this can only be done through regulation, which will also benefit businesses in the long run as the current approach, which rewards the fastest gunslinger, is not sustainable.

A place for culture and critical thinking

Innovation requires curiosity, courage and creativity. Stocker recognised that human innovation has and always will exist: we have problems, we need to solve them, and technology is the most successful way to do this. However, he thinks people also need to be curious and courageous enough to have ideas that push existing thinking, which is why the arts and culture have such an important role, as the soil where innovation grows. Sood observed that while many see innovation as the domain of research and development arms of companies, artists have an important place as society's true risk takers, and we should help them work with technical companies and technology institutes. Stocker added that there is a danger in treating creativity as a resource or raw material that can be exploited by companies: it is not something you can dig out of the ground, like coal or iron ore, it is something you must nurture constantly as part of an ecosystem of creativity.

Sood and Stocker flagged that while this need to collaborate with other sectors is important, we must also remember that culture has its own independent value. Stocker recognised an ambivalence on one side it is important for the cultural sector to connect with every part of society, but on the other we must maintain the special quality of art and culture, stating that

> if we do not insist on the unconditional, independent role of art, we lose the value that we can provide to society … this is really one of the biggest challenges that we have right now, also considering the commercial and financial pressure that is building up.

As such, we should reframe our thinking to consider how culture, and artists' projects, can contribute to a positive dynamic technical discourse, because it is the technical discourse that must change. He also flagged the benefits of education and artistic subversions – especially those that use humour and fun – to show that we do not need to be so afraid and impressed by technology but rather we can take a critical approach to technology and its limits. Stocker shared his belief that societies will recognise that there are better ways to use technology, which will start in institutions of culture and education, where critical thinking is fostered. Reflecting on this, Stocker affirmed that we can only leverage technologies – for democracy, for society, for culture – when we can think critically and use them in a competent and qualified way.

The speakers also considered potential strategies to futureproof and counter monopolies. Sood identified open source as a powerful tool, if not weapon, citing the example of DeepSeek and other open-source systems published in China. She noted that while the motivations for such moves may not be altruistic, they still represent a good way to break monopolies. Sood reminded us that AI isn't just for big companies — it's also available to everyone through opensource tools. She affirmed that it is key, because 'the best way to move forward is to get involved and start using it, even if it's not perfect yet.'

Stocker suggested that there is no way to futureproof, we can only brace for impact. This means that we must take AI seriously as a powerful technology, because 'we cannot sit it out … wait and hope it will go by … not only because we would lose all the opportunities, but because we just would be left behind.' He called for us to take responsibility for – and develop our capacity related to – the technologies we create and use; and for people in the arts and cultural sectors to be more self-confident, stating that

> we come from the most important universe for this future – the universe of storytelling, the universe of people who are ambitious and engaged, the universe of wonderful spaces and places where art and culture happen. This is what is really necessary. The technology will be only a means.

Ethics and governance

Ethics and governance in AI, and how we might futureproof the CCS, were further explored in a plenary session on the second day of the Summit. Moderated by Ojoma Ochai, co-founder of Creative Economy Practice at CcHub and Managing Director of Co-creation HUB Africa in Nigeria, speakers in this session included Dr Jinjoon Lee, a media artist and professor at the Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology and Micaela Mantegna, a lawyer and researcher from Argentina. Ochai opened the session by recognising that for many people from the Global South, it may seem unnecessary to talk about AI when basic infrastructure problems such as roads, education, literacy or internet access have yet to be solved. However, she pointed out the need to join the conversation, act now, and participate in the building of AI, otherwise other people will decide how stories are told, how artists are paid, and how cultures are represented in the future. Ochai highlighted the importance of considering the full spectrum of AI technologies – including generative AI tools, machine learning, recommender systems and algorithms – as each has distinct ethical and governance consideration that affect creators, artists, cultural diversity, fairness and inclusivity. She proposed that

> ethics simply means what good looks like in AI: fairness, inclusion, respect for human creativity, for artist rights, and so on … Governance, on the other hand, is how we make that goodness stick – so the rules, the regulations, the norms, and the oversight to make sure that these ethics are implemented everywhere and for everyone.

Education and critical thinking

During the session, the speakers further discussed the need for greater education and critical thinking, echoing calls from the World Café session on navigating AI in which delegates proposed that AI education should be mandatory in schools and connect to lifelong learning. Dr Jinjoon Lee recognised that technology has brought benefits and convenience but questioned if this equates to improving the world and called for education beyond digital literacy. He stressed the importance of critical education, not just so we know how to leverage AI – which should not be seen as negative in itself – but how to identify the human abilities that we may lose through its use and ensure we can find ways in which we can coexist and prosper. Mantegna agreed on the importance of critical thinking and highlighted recent research that shows that the use of generative AI affects our brains and cognition and creates dependency on technology. Ochai added that the need for education goes beyond young people and creators, as policymakers, cultural institutions and intermediaries that support the CCS also need to be able to speak the language of AI and the technology sectors in order to engage with the government agencies responsible for governing the digital world, otherwise we cannot engage in important conversations.

The implications for public agencies responsible for investment in the arts and culture were also brought to the fore. Mantegna observed that we may have already reached the point where it is impossible to differentiate between works created by humans, AI or a combination, which could make this difficult to assess artists' works. Lee considered how public agencies can support the creation of original works and protect artists whose work is used by AI. He underscored the importance of transparency and proposed that it should be built into the system, which could take the form of a 'certificate of AI' to recognise works created by or with AI.

Regulation and hidden costs

The need for greater and more ethical and responsive regulation was also a central concern during this session. Mantegna observed that the CCS seem to be in a deadlock with AI where choices

seem binary and excluding with regulation on one side and innovation on the other, and no middle ground in a zero-sum game. However, she argued that by narrowing the debate to copyright versus AI, we obscure a much larger picture in which other abuses related to data and labour occur. Mantegna gave an example of the invisible ghost workers who sanitise systems so that our online experience is not harmful, who are paid USD$2 an hour to deal with traumatising images of violence and abuse. She affirmed that ethics is multidimensional, and we must approach them in a way that reflects the structural, systemic and multi-dimensional nature of the problem. Ochai questioned how and who should ensure we have the right governance frameworks for the development and use of AI. Lee suggested that tech companies have their own motivations and cannot be relied upon to self-regulate; while Mantegna suggested that it should be a collective effort that balances civil society, academia, the private sector, and the public sector, noting that we can draw on the history of internet governance and multistakeholder frameworks to see what has worked or failed so far. She added that

> illegal is not the same as unethical … unfortunately, we can agree that [something] is unethical, but we're going to have a very, very deep and technical discussion to establish [that something is illegal].

The speakers also recognised the trap of convenience but reminded us that it is up to us to actively consider ethics and exercise agency. Mantegna acknowledged the ease with which we accept the convenience of these systems, but in doing so ignore hidden costs related to who owns the information, who is invisible in the process, and who is listening. She flagged that each time a user writes something in ChatGPT or a similar system, it is not private yet 'we are growing accustomed to the thinking that we have already relinquished our privacy.' In closing, Ochai reminded us that

> AI is not coming, it's already here. It's shaping how our stories are told, who sees our stories, and who benefits from them … now is the moment to get involved. We mustn't wait for others to set the rules. We must educate ourselves. We must advocate loudly for fairness, for inclusion, for ethical AI, and most importantly, so that the cultural and creative sector can claim its place at this table.

Our ability to learn from the past and the experiences of others was also highlighted in a panel session on how the music sector has adapted to digital disruptions, as a sector at the forefront of rapid digital change. In this session, delegates recognised the pitfalls of short-term policy measures that do not consider the full cultural ecosystem and called for long-term investment, the promotion of fair and transparent digital practices, governance and regulation frameworks that address IP rights, fair compensation and platform accountability, and transnational solutions to address rights in the digital space.

Reclaim agency, take action

Delegates collectively explored questions of agency and necessary actions in a dedicated workshop on decoding AI, facilitated by Director of Teseo Octavio Kulesz, a philosopher and digital publisher who worked with a team of international experts to draft UNESCO's 2021 *Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence*. In opening the workshop, Kulesz highlighted the existing ways in which narratives around AI are presented, many of which embed human helplessness and frame technology as a force of nature to which we are subject. He cautioned that we need to pay closer attention to the metaphors and myths that pervade such narratives and encouraged us to take a sociotechnical approach that recognises the interconnectedness of the social and the technological. Within the workshop, delegates

broke into groups to consider five thematic axes: AI in the arts and creative industries; AI and linguistic diversity; the (geo)politics of AI; AI ethics and regulations; and AI narratives. While each group started with a particular focus, discussions converged as delegates explored the opportunities, challenges, trends and future prospects of AI from the perspective of the cultural and creatives sectors.

Delegates concluded that the impact of AI is global, as it is reshaping all cultural sectors in all countries; and it is a double-edged sword that brings both innovation and risk. Delegates also identified the need for greater governance and cultural integration. We need regulations that curb monopolistic practices; reduce extractive practices related to data and raw materials; uphold human rights; and we need national AI plans that explicitly include cultural considerations, to ensure that culture is incorporated in technological agendas. The latter was also raised in the panel session on elastic futurity on Korean arts and culture in which participants called for national plans that encompass the CSS, explore alternative futures and assure informed and meaningful engagement for cultural actors.

On the issue of agency, delegates identified the need to shift from observing technology to actively shaping it through co-construction and collaboration. Reaffirming ideas from the in-conversation and plenary discussions, delegates agreed that education and empowerment will be essential and there is a pressing need for AI literacy and training for everyone working in the cultural field; and that transparency in datasets and AI systems should become the norm, not the exception. And, importantly, delegates called for us to reclaim our cultural authority, as the cultural sector has to some extent relinquished its influence over the narratives of AI. We must reclaim this space, imagine new conceptual tools and working methods and reaffirm that the realm of the artificial is, fundamentally, a cultural one. In closing the session, Kulesz presented a clear message: 'Neither techno-optimism nor despair will suffice. What is needed is realism, creativity and commitment.'

Global governance and international cooperation

The future of global governance, international cooperation and transnational exchange was another important theme for the Summit, with World Café session discussions dedicated to strengthening global governance and cultural relations; a panel session on global shifts and local impacts; a long table session on transnational cultural exchange; a panel session on the pathways and prospects for a standalone goal for culture in the United Nations post-2030 agenda; and a message from Ernesto Ottone R., Assistant Director General of Culture (ADG) for UNESCO in the closing plenary session on future horizons.

Dynamics in international relations and global governance affect local contexts and lived experiences, and delegates drew comparison between the adoption and diffusion of AI and the ways in which earlier technologies – from railroads and steam engines to telegram and radio – were adopted and ultimately affected local and Indigenous communities, who had little say in how these were developed and governed. Delegates also identified an intersection between culture, technology and nature which overlaps with local, national and regional development agendas in different parts of the world; and agreed that the disruptive effects of technology has the potential to plough through existing national and global governance frameworks that provide guardrails to protect local communities.

Transnational cultural exchange and mobility are a vital part of international cooperation that relies on the free flow and movement of ideas, people, goods and services, and delegates considered how they can create more beneficial and reciprocal

effects from international connectedness. Delegates recognised mobility as a tradition and human right that is strongly connected to freedom of artistic expression and a longstanding human custom that predates national borders; and recognised challenges and obstacles to cultural exchange and mobility, including the environmental impact of travel, access to visas, funding and information, representation of Indigenous artists in international exchange, and the tension between artistic expression and expectations that artists should represent national interests. They also discussed how we might better support mobility and transnational exchange; highlighted opportunities to develop partnerships, co-creation and collaboration that embed fair practices; and called for greater visibility and emphasis on reciprocal cultural exchange in the global governance of culture, including via international forums such as MONDIACULT.

The importance of international platforms, such as the World Summit, to come together and set agreed priorities were confirmed during the panel discussion on pathways and prospects for a standalone goal for culture in the United Nations post-2030 agenda. Speakers considered the different ways in which culture has been positioned – and justified in relation to other portfolios – in global governance conversations historically and how we might ensure its place in future global agendas, with implementation perspectives from Spain and Viet Nam. In Viet Nam, the government has successfully used international frameworks such as the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to create national development goals (VDGs), in which it additionally embedded and set goals specifically for culture. This focus on culture as a driver of social and economic development has been adopted in Spain too, however, the approach has been limited in its ability to prioritise cultural rights and ensure culture is accessible to all people.

In relation to the post-2030 agenda, delegates highlighted a need for clear definitions and a dedicated framework for culture, which must address the effects of artificial intelligence; and should be shaped by diverse groups including those outside of the CCS to ensure that it has champions beyond the sectors. However, delegates also recognised the open debate on how to define culture and its values; and the need to do so in ways that make sense and motivate others to prioritise, invest and incorporate culture in broader policy discussions. Despite different perspectives and complexities of definition, delegates agreed that there is no future without culture and urgent collaborative action is required – in global governance and by national governments – to secure its place.

The imperative to place traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions – which have wide-reaching implications for all cultural producers and artists – at the centre of global governance discussions about the future was asserted in open session in which all delegates had the opportunity to share their perspectives on the final day of the Summit. Dr Frances Koya-Vaka'uta, Team Leader Culture for Development for the Pacific Community, called for Indigenous and traditional knowledge to be a fundamental dimension of a standalone goal for culture and invited all present to continue to push this agenda, which 'rests at the very core of our creativity and survival as we know it.'

The need for greater international cooperation was also confirmed during this open floor session. The potential for collaboration between the countries of the Global South was raised by a delegate from South Africa, who questioned how artists can help change the rules of engagement to ensure that the West does not continue to make all the rules in the future. Another delegate flagged the need for further international dialogue and action related to the effects of AI on Indigenous communities to protect their living cultures and heritage and ensure they

are not once again excluded from the development of new technologies. A third highlighted the need for better mechanisms to strengthen international partnerships for actors across the CCS, including practitioners, civil society and government, to continue the sharing of knowledge and learnings. While a fourth called for us to consider what an international culture of solidarity informed by empathy might look like in practice, for every level of organisation from artists to government agencies and international organisations.

Issues of collaboration and global governance were also central to the final plenary of the Summit, in which Atang L. S. Arnold – an artist and curator working in a rural area located by a game reserve in Botswana – observed that while collaboration is a common refrain

> We need to work together across disciplines and across borders. We need to build capacity in rural and under-served creative communities. We need to ensure tools and financial resources are accessible and localised. We need to invest in social and cultural impact initiatives that go beyond profits. We need to demand and uphold accountability in institutions, organisations, and ourselves.

The need for international cooperation was further affirmed by ADG Ottone, who looked ahead to MONDIACULT 2025 as the time when we can turn commitment into concrete actions. He confirmed cultural rights as a priority for the global governance of culture and declared culture the living fabric of our society, as a powerful force that brings people together and underpins social cohesion, peace, and security; and which creates jobs, empowers communities and inspires innovation to drive sustainable development. He pressed upon the importance of integrating culture into education is key to enhance knowledge transmission, nurture creativity, support professional growth, and encourage lifelong learning. However, he recognised that as we prepare for the future, culture will face challenges and opportunities arising from the digital revolution; and that 'a resilient cultural ecosystem will ensure that even in adversity, creative expression endures for future generations'. He stressed the importance of international cooperation as we build this future, stating that

> [it] is a shared responsibility – no single government, institution, or community can achieve it alone. All actors in our cultural ecosystem must work hand in hand. I call on governments, international organisations, civil society, the private sector, artists, and community leaders to join forces in this effort.













Top L-R: Delegates at World Café; Cislé Jacobs at World Café; Haerin Shin speaking at the Panel discussion: *Elastic futurity in Korean arts and culture: a critical examination*; In Conversation with Michael Running Wolf and Ayoung Kim; In Conversation with Gerfried Stocker and Pooja Sood; Speakers for Plenary 2: *The ethics and governance of AI in futureproofing the CCS*. Photo: © PILHO SEUNG, courtesy of ARKO and IFACCA.

Conclusion: Culture as our compass

As we gathered in Seoul in 2025, we looked toward a future in which culture is humanity's compass. No doubt it will be one of our most powerful tools as we navigate accelerating technological transformation, climate challenges that demand new ways of being, and social divisions that can only be bridged through understanding. While our discussions were wide ranging clear messages emerged which we take with us as we set our course in motion.

Culture has a foundational role as an essential dimension of any liveable society, and its value is social. However, there exists a complex interplay between the social and economic dimensions of culture that must be navigated by policymakers. This includes cultural rights, which must be protected alongside living cultures, languages, and Indigenous knowledge systems; and they must be recognised as important in their own right, not merely for their instrumental benefits. It also includes the economic and social conditions of cultural workers and fundamental systemic change is needed to ensure fair working conditions. Systemic change is also needed to ensure sustainable models and investment for culture to secure its future, and we may benefit from decentralised approaches to governance and whole-of-government strategies that firmly position culture alongside other policy priorities and protect against detrimental effects of political upheaval.

We too each have a role to play. While technological development, particularly in relation to AI, may seem external and imposed upon us, this is a misconception. Technology results from human choices, which makes it a realm that is fundamentally cultural, and we need to think creatively and realistically about how we can use our agency – individual and collective – to shape the role that technology has in society, rather than society being shaped by it. We must develop literacy and critical thinking across the cultural ecosystem – from creators to policymakers – to ensure that the CCS can engage with questions of ethics and participate in decision-making about technological development.

International cooperation will be imperative... and we have a collective and urgent responsibility to act.

We have envisaged a future that is sustainable, inclusive and just. International cooperation will be imperative to realise this vision and we have a collective and urgent responsibility to act. No single government, institution, or community can achieve this alone, and we will need collaborative action across borders, sectors, and disciplines to effect meaningful change. Artists and representatives of government, international organisation, academia and civil society will need to work together to ensure that culture maintains its place in society. As we approach the start of a new agenda for global governance post-2030, the discussions from the 10th World Summit on Arts and Culture provide crucial insights that will help us position culture as a priority and turn these commitments into concrete actions.

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Cultural Programme

This year's cultural programme focused on the openness and resilience that have long defined the Korean arts and culture in times of rapid changes. *Baram* is the main concept for this Summit's cultural programme, a Korean word for the movement of air and a heartfelt wish. It moves freely across borders and divisions and opens new possibilities. Even when dispersed, it gathers again and begins anew. The open spirit that embraces the future of the arts and culture, and the tenacity to rise in the face of any challenges. ARKO hopes that delegates remember this breath of wind that blew from Seoul. This wind will serve to connect the arts with the coming new era. May the *Baram* delegates crossed paths with be with them, always.

Gala Opening at DDP

The Gala Opening took place at DDP (Dongdaemun Design Plaza), a space where one can encounter such boundless winds. Cultural heritage and modern creativity exist side by side in this space. Delegates were invited on this special night to roam freely among the futuristic architecture of DDP along the street where *Igan-sumun* was constructed six hundred years ago. A special full-course meal that harmoniously blends traditional Korean flavors with a contemporary sensibility was served, accompanied by the music of the electronic duo 'HAEPAARY'. ARKO invited delegates to experience the performance that transcends time—a contemporary reinterpretation of the music for the royal ancestral ritual in the Jongmyo Shrine and traditional lyrical songs imbued with ambient and techno influences.

An evening at the Leeum Museum of Art

When different currents meet, they grow stronger together. Arts and culture flourish through exchange, and creativity is sparked by understanding the differences. The Leeum Museum of Art, which opened in the Hannam-dong neighborhood in the heart of Seoul in 2004, is such a crossroad. Designed by world-renowned architects, it is a space that seamlessly connects tradition with modernity and Korea with the world, thereby creating artistic value in itself. Transcending time and genres, Leeum presents both the timeless elegance of Korean traditional arts and the emerging trends of the world's contemporary arts under the same roof. As delegates gathered at Leeum on the second night, ARKO invited delegates to share thoughts and cultures with open minds and experience the creative energy that diversity brings.

Janchi: Traditional Korean celebratory custom

When the summer breeze begins to blow, Koreans prepare a *Janchi*, for the occasion of *Dano* Day (the fifth day of the fifth lunar month). After the laborious rice planting season, farmers would gather on this day believed to hold the strongest Yang energy to pray for good harvest. On the last night as ARKO recreated the *Dano Janchi* and sought to share with delegates the collective will to get up again even when one falls, and to flow again even in the face of obstacles. ARKO invited delegates to sample the traditional dishes made with seasonal ingredients savoured by Korean ancestors, while

enjoying the dance and music performance that cross the boundaries between the old and the new by 'Ambiguous Dance Company', famous for their iconic choreography to the song "Tiger Is Coming". Delegates also tried their hand at Korean folk games such as *Gonggi* (the Korean Jacks), *Jeggi-chagi* (similar to a game of footbag or hacky sack), and *Ttakji-chigi* (a game played by flipping folded paper tiles). The *Janchi* delegates shared together and were reminded of the power of the arts and culture that enables us to uplift one another and build connection that remain strong even in difficult times.

Closing lunch

The Daehakro streets are where ARKO's aspirations, or *Baram* can be found in every corner. The Daehakro area is home to several key spaces run by ARKO and served for the Main Venue of the Summit. With the creation of Marronnier Park at its center, small and large theaters began to open, transforming the area into a vibrant heart of Korea's cultural and artistic life. With Daehakro's free and vibrant daily life in the backdrop, ARKO introduced Korean street food. In the streets filled with simple food stalls among the happy patrons, delegates discovered that the spirit of arts and culture is not confined to grand spaces but flows freely through ordinary lives. ARKO hopes that the food and dialogue shared at this closing luncheon helped to melt away any barriers and left all with a breeze of inspiration as delegates returned home.









Top L-R: Delegates at Gala Opening held at DDP; Delegates at Janchi held at Stage28; Delegates at the Closing lunch; Ambiguous Dance Company at Janchi. Photo: © PILHO SEUNG, courtesy of ARKO and IFACCA.

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