

CREATIVE & SPORTS ECONOMY FUTURES



5th International South African Cultural Observatory Conference 2025

#SACONF2025: FINAL Call for Abstracts, Papers & Presentations

Under the theme: "Creative & Sports Economy Futures: Perspectives, Policies and Practices for Tomorrow"

The South African Cultural Observatory (SACO) invites you to submit an abstract or proposal for consideration for SACO's 5th international conference #SacoConf2025 to be held on **4 and 5 November 2025, at the Cape Town Stadium.**

This will be a hybrid event with opportunities offered for both in-person and virtual attendees.



Creative & Sports Economy Futures: Perspectives, Policies and Practices for Tomorrow

From the rise of artificial intelligence to shifting political and social structures, the Cultural and Creative industries (CCIs) are dynamic sites for varied forms of artistic, creative and innovative work linking past, present and future, and producing artefacts of intangible and tangible value.

The 5th International South African Cultural Observatory (SACO) Conference invites us to explore and critically engage with the futures of creative economies across the globe. The conference will examine how emerging and hegemonic technologies, global disruptions, and changing cultural landscapes, whether real, virtual or hyperreal, and conditioning creative practices and policies, institutions and industries.

At the moment when creativity, innovation, and digital transformation are increasingly seen as vital to sustainable social and economic development it is now the time to scrutinise, engage and affect the pathways of the future creative economy and the pursuit of less inequitable, more inclusive, and sustainable modes of development and well-being.

Who should participate?

- Local and international academics
- Industry professionals and practitioners
- Public managers, policymakers, and thought leaders
- Creative entrepreneurs
- Cultural institutions
- Researchers, consultants, and arts funders
- Private sector players
- Arts funders and impact investors
- Organisations within the cultural and creative sectors
- Artists, content creators and creative workers, including young and emerging talent
- Festival and event organisers
- Sports promoters and administrators



Sub-Themes:

1. **Creative Futures: Rethinking the Cultural and Creative Industries of Tomorrow**

Envisioning the creative economy of the future – how will emerging trends, technologies, and global changes shape the creative industries in the decades to come? How do we conceptualise and catalogue the expanding new CCI and its increasing engagement with extended reality and the expansion of industrial policy?

2. **The Human-AI Accommodat: How Artificial Intelligence is Reshaping Human Creativity within and without the CCIs**

Exploring the intersection of human creativity and AI in the creative economy: Is AI a tool for enhancing or eroding creative work? What new roles and collaborations are emerging? The ownership of AI and the related subject of the ethical implications of the adoption of AI in the creative economy are among further areas of interest.

3. **The Political Economy of the Creative Economy: Institutions, Power, and Policy Shifts**

How do governance, policy frameworks, and power dynamics affect the growth and sustainability of the creative economy? Examining the class, diversity, conflict and the play of institutions shape the cultural and creative sector. The politics of greening the creative economy. The regulation of the mega digital platforms.

4. **Rewriting Cultural Policy: From Global to Local Realities**

A critical look at cultural policy in an era of change. The deconstruction of national cultural policy. Sub-national and supra-national developments. Responses from the ground up.

5. **Rethinking Creative Work: Digitalisation, Precarity, and the Future of Talent in the Creative Economy**

The impact of digitalisation and economic forces on the nature of creative work. The growth of precarity, gig and freelance work. Collective responses, reconsidered unionism, and new networks of resilience. The question of social protectionism with the CCI. Spatial implications, including from remote and hybrid creative work. How can we cultivate cultural and creative capital and manage talent retention?

6. **The Future of Copyright: Sustainability, Equity, and Fair Use**

How should copyright laws evolve to ensure fairness for artists, especially in light of AI debates, emerging technology and new business models (e.g., streaming, social media, and user-generated content)? What are the implications for copyright duration, fair use, and the sustainability of artists' income? What are the options for smaller players and individuals, and developing economies to challenge prevailing influence and practice in copyright and trademark matters? Case studies of national policy challenges are instructive and welcome.



7. The Future of Creative Economies: Across Geographies, Terrains, Technological Territories

Exploring how different regions, countries and technologies are redefining the creative economy: What unique challenges and opportunities exist in non-Western creative economies, and how can they contribute to global creative futures? Regional and national case studies cross cutting.

8. Creative Africa: Shaping a Future Economy through Culture, Identity, Stories, Language and Audience

Considering Africa's creative economies. Leveraging regional and post-colonial cultural identities. Continental and regional associations and the CCI. Africa, BRICS and the possibilities for CCI development. How can African countries build a sustainable creative economy that leverages both global opportunities and local realities?

9. Managing the Creative Economy: Strategies for Sustainability and Growth

Investigating the practicalities of managing the creative economy: What models, strategies, and policies are most effective in nurturing sustainable growth within creative sectors? The changing relationships between the public and private sectors in the CC sector. The increased recourse to partnerships and inter-institutional collaboration at subnational, national, regional and international levels. The growing importance of clusters, creative corridors and new spatial concentrations of creative and innovative firms. The question of cultural and/or creative leadership.

10. New Directions for Funding: The Future of CCI Support

The changing patterns of public, private and philanthropic funding for the CCI. The restructuring of public funding and the shifts to more hybrid public-private models. The increasing involvement of the private sector in public funding of the CC sector. The increased recourse to public infrastructure and facilities as part of the resourcing of the CCI. In addition, the increased emphasis on and implications of the entrepreneurial side and activities of creative firms and organisations in funding calculations are also trends and dynamics for examination. What shifts in funding structures, investment trends, and economic policies are expected, and how can creative industries adapt to capitalise on these changes while addressing existing challenges while embracing emerging and alternative methods of financing.

11. Crossroads: Sport, Recreation, and Culture in the Creative Economy

This sub-theme explores inter alia the intersections of sport and recreation, and popular culture, and the resultant commodification and consumption of such encounters. Other areas include the leveraging of such domains for cultural policy purposes at national and sub-national levels.



Call for Proposals

We welcome proposals from all fields relevant to the main theme and sub-themes. We are particularly interested in case studies, innovative approaches, and personal reflections on lived experiences within the creative economy. Contributions from diverse perspectives – including from practitioners, policymakers, and organisations working directly in the field – are encouraged. We also invite co-authored and collaborative pieces, and lightning talks to be delivered in a Pecha Kucha style.

What should be included in your proposal?

- **Papers and Presentations:** Abstracts (300–400 words) should outline how your work engages with the conference theme, the methodology used (such as data, case studies, or literature reviews), and key findings or insights.
- **Panel Discussions:** Proposals for academic or popular panel discussions should include a short rationale (under 400 words), an abstract, and a brief outline of the speakers' experience.
- **Pecha Kucha Presentations:** Short, focused and engaging presentations, exclusively utilising images without any accompanying text. The presentation will follow the 20x20 rule, where each presentation consists of 20 slides, each shown for only 20 seconds before automatically progressing to the next one.

Accepted proposals will be notified within 2–3 weeks of submission. Selected papers may be considered for publication in a post-conference academic output.

There will be an option to submit papers of an appropriate standard to the international and peer-reviewed African Journal of Creative Economy (AJCE). Further details will be posted on the 2025 SACO Conference website.

Submission Deadline: 31 August 2025



4 – 5 November
#SACONf2025

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