

Intermediary Talent under Taiwan's Cultural Creative Industries Policy Transformation: Roles and Development Challenges of Local Cultural Administrators in Tainan

台灣文創政策轉型下的中介人才：台南市文化行政人員角色與發展挑戰

CHUNG Hsiao-Ling * 仲曉玲

Abstract

This study investigates the evolving roles and institutional challenges of local cultural administrators in Taiwan amid the cultural and creative industries (CCI) shift toward ecosystem-oriented and technology-integrated governance. While national strategies promote cross-sector collaboration and innovation, they largely overlook the intermediary functions of municipal administrators who translate policy, coordinate institutions, and adapt frameworks to local contexts. Talent development has remained confined to industry- and market-oriented paradigms that inadequately reflect governance needs.

Focusing on Tainan, Taiwan's designated "cultural capital," the study asks: (1) How does the ecological transformation of CCI policy shape demand for intermediary talent? (2) How do local administrators perceive their roles and navigate institutional constraints? Using policy discourse analysis and 17 interviews with administrators and experts, the study applies the "creative ecologies" framework, emphasizing diversity, adaptability, learning, and change. Findings reveal three challenges: misalignment between national policy design and local implementation; individualized professional development with limited institutional support; and evaluation metrics privileging industrial outputs over governance capacity. Despite these constraints, administrators exhibit adaptive capacity, mediating between central directives, communities, and technology providers.

The paper calls for reframing "intermediary talent" to explicitly include governance roles. Recommendations include broadening talent definitions to cover administrative and relational capacities, institutionalizing cross-departmental platforms and training programs, and revising evaluation systems to prioritize ecosystem coordination. Recognizing municipal administrators as strategic intermediaries is essential to building resilient and adaptive cultural governance.

Keywords

Cultural and creative industries policy, creative ecologies, local cultural administrators, cultural governance, intermediary talent, Tainan

* Associate Professor, Institute of Creative Industries Design, National Cheng Kung University, Taiwan.
國立成功大學創意產業設計研究所副教授

Introduction

Since the early 2000s, Taiwan's cultural and creative industries (CCI) policy has been shaped by an industry-oriented logic privileging economic growth, commercial performance, and technological advancement. While this approach has spurred market expansion and innovation, it has also reinforced a narrow, instrumental view of cultural talent. Recent developments signal a shift toward "ecosystem governance," emphasizing cross-sector collaboration, sustainability, and adaptive capacity. Yet despite this discursive turn, talent strategies remain tied to industrial and technological imperatives, insufficiently addressing evolving governance needs.

The concept of "intermediary talent" has gained prominence in CCI policy since the late 2000s, evolving from industry-academia matchmaking to roles involving cultural translation, resource integration, and technological coordination. However, this evolution has not been matched by institutional reform. Talent cultivation still emphasizes managerial and technical skills, sidelining the strategic and cross-sectoral competencies needed in public cultural governance.

Local cultural administrators, defined here as public-sector professionals in municipal cultural bureaus, implement policy, manage programs, coordinate across departments, and adapt national frameworks to local contexts. Positioned at the intersection of policy, community, and institutions, they perform key intermediary functions: translating policy into practice, fostering collaboration, and mediating cultural-technological integration. Despite their strategic roles, they remain under-recognized in both policy and academia. While intermediary organizations receive scholarly attention (Cronin and Edwards 2021; De Propriis and Mwaura 2013), individual administrators still lack visibility, authority, and professional development support.

This study distinguishes carefully between different uses of the term *intermediary*. Existing scholarship often highlights *industry-facing intermediaries* such as brokers and marketers in private cultural markets (e.g., Maguire and Matthews 2012; Chao, Lu, and Chang 2014; O'Connor 2015; Virani 2019; Stockley-Patel and Swords 2025). These are not the subject here. Rather, the paper focuses on governance intermediaries: local cultural administrators in municipal bureaus who translate central policy, coordinate across departments, and mediate between communities and technology providers. For clarity, *cultural intermediaries* are used only as a broad theoretical umbrella across sectors, while the empirical analysis is confined to the governance side. This distinction ensures that references to private-sector intermediaries illustrate policy discourse trends, not the definitional basis for this study.

Focusing on the governance intermediary perspective, this article foregrounds the lived experiences and evolving roles of local cultural administrators in Taiwan. It asks: (1) How does the ecological transformation of CCI policy shape the demand for intermediary talent? (2) How do local administrators perceive their changing roles and respond to institutional constraints? The study thus expands understandings of intermediary agency in cultural governance, bridging national discourse and local administrative realities. It contributes to broader debates on public-sector intermediation, policy implementation, and the evolving logics of governance under ecosystem frameworks.

The study adopts the creative ecologies framework to examine the evolving roles of administrators in Taiwan. Originally developed for creative industries, the framework identifies diversity, adaptability, learning, and change as markers of systemic sustainability (Howkins 2009; Potts et al. 2008). It allows analysis of cultural governance as an interdependent ecosystem in which intermediary roles shift with institutional contexts. "Diversity" refers to varied backgrounds and networks; "adaptability" to responses to change; "learning" to formal and informal knowledge practices; and "change" to administrators' agency in transformation. Applied metaphorically to interview data, the framework identifies patterns in administrators' experiences and highlights their contributions and constraints within Taiwan's governance ecosystem.

Tainan, a municipal city in southwestern Taiwan, offers a representative case for examining the localization of CCI policy and the intermediary role of municipal administrators. As Taiwan's oldest city and former Qing dynasty capital (1683–1887), its layered heritage shaped by Indigenous, Dutch, Ming loyalist, Qing, and Japanese regimes, makes it central to preservation and production. Designated a "Smart Cultural Technology City," Tainan integrates heritage and innovation. Initiatives such as Tainan 400, commemorating four centuries of history through digital programming, mobilize cultural assets for cross-sector collaboration. Aligned with national frameworks like the Cultural Content Investment Plan and 5G innovation policy, Tainan exemplifies how local governance translates central visions into ecosystem-oriented practice.

This study employs a mixed-methods approach to examine how Taiwan's evolving CCI policy shapes the roles of local cultural administrators as intermediaries. Through policy discourse analysis and in-depth interviews conducted in Tainan, it traces how national frameworks are interpreted, adapted, and enacted within an emerging cultural-technology ecosystem.

Literature Review

Scholarship on Taiwan's cultural policy reveals a persistent gap: although "intermediary talent" is now a policy priority, institutional support for public-sector administrators remains weak. Recent initiatives emphasize digital innovation and market-oriented skills but offer little systematic training for governance capacities, leading many professionals to shift toward higher-paying technology sectors (Taiwan Association of Cultural Policy Research, 2023). This review proceeds in three parts: first, it traces the evolution of Taiwan's CCI policy and its framing of intermediary talent; second, it outlines Tainan's cultural governance structure, including organization, recruitment, and project coordination; and third, it examines institutional constraints and international parallels shaping the development of governance intermediaries.

The Transformation Process of Taiwan's Cultural and Creative Industries Policy and the Evolution of Demand for Intermediary Talent

Taiwan's cultural and creative industries (CCI) policy has evolved significantly over the past two decades, shifting from a predominantly economic development model to a more

integrated approach that foregrounds cultural governance and ecosystem construction. However, despite the increasing complexity of policy discourse, the notion of “intermediary talent” remains conceptually ambiguous and functionally underdeveloped. This section traces four major stages of policy transformation from 2002 to 2025, with a focus on how intermediary roles have been framed, marginalized, or redefined, and the institutional dilemmas that continue to affect their development.

2002–2008: Establishment of an Economy-Oriented Talent Cultivation Foundation and the Need for Industry-Academia Cooperation

The formalization of CCI policy began in 2002 with the Executive Yuan's Challenge 2008: National Development Plan (《挑戰 2008：國家發展重點計畫（2002-2007）》), which positioned the CCI as a strategic national sector. The plan identified four priority areas, with “talent” singled out early as a crucial investment to promote economic value. In response, the Council for Cultural Affairs (CCA, later the Ministry of Culture 行政院文化建設委員會) released the 2004 Cultural White Paper (《2004 文化白皮書》), articulating a vision for a creative Taiwan. It declared 2004 the “Year of Cultural Talent” (「文化人才年」) and proposed initiatives like industry-aligned training to enhance international competitiveness (MOC 2004).

Although this period was a foundational phase for talent cultivation, its orientation remained strongly instrumental, with talent viewed primarily as an economic input to enhance productivity. The notion of intermediaries was not yet articulated; instead, their functions were implicitly embedded in the discourse of industry collaboration, reflecting an early, economic view of talent as a facilitator of industrial output rather than as a cultural or governance actor.

2009–2016: From Branding Strategy to Ecosystem Foundations, Shifting Policy Priorities: Intermediary Talent as “Catalyst”

Following the 2008 global financial crisis, Taiwan's CCI policy discourse increasingly highlighted the need for cross-section collaboration and innovation. This was most explicitly articulated in the 2009–2013 Creative Taiwan Action Plan (《創意臺灣—文創產業發展行動計畫》), which introduced intermediary talent as a policy priority. The plan, structured around two major strategies—“environmental preparation” and “flagship projects”—envisioned Taiwan as an Asia-Pacific CCI hub, with intermediary talent positioned to bridge culture and commerce. The intermediary role was conceptualized as a “catalyst” that could convert cultural creativity into marketable value.

This vision was operationalized through three key strategies: (1) cultivating intermediary talent to enable cultural-commercial translation; (2) integrating cross-disciplinary programmes into higher and vocational education; and (3) expanding internships to enhance industry readiness. The passing of the Cultural and Creative Industries Development Act (CCI Act) in 2010 (《文化創意產業發展法》), legally codified talent cultivation as central to industrial development. Articles I and II of the Act explicitly mandated support for interdisciplinary training, industry-government-academia

collaboration, and institutional infrastructure to support intermediary development.

The 2013–2016 Value Industrialization Plan (《價值產值化—文創產業價值鏈建構與創新計畫》) further reinforced the need for intermediary and brokerage talent, alongside skills in international market operation. These initiatives laid the foundation for institutionalizing intermediary functions within Taiwan's education and industry systems, while shifting policy discourse closer to ecosystem thinking. By 2016, this trajectory culminated in the Cultural Content Investment Plan (「文化內容投資計畫」), which outlined a long-term vision of ecosystem construction and cultural-technological fusion, eventually leading to the establishment of TAICCA (The Taiwan Creative Content)¹ and broader inter-ministerial cooperation.

Persistent Gaps: Structural Contradictions and Policy Limitations

Despite growing recognition of intermediary talent in Taiwan's cultural and creative industries, structural limitations hinder its development. Cross-disciplinary curricula often prioritize professional management over cultural depth, weakening intermediaries' ability to act as "meaning negotiators" between cultural values and market logic (Chao, Lu, and Chang 2014; O'Connor 2015). While policy defines intermediary roles through an industry-facing lens—focusing on gatekeepers and marketers—it overlooks the crucial governance functions needed for a sustainable creative ecosystem (Virani 2019). This industry-first approach creates a critical gap, leaving the public-sector intermediaries essential for policy translation and local coordination structurally unsupported.

In sum, while Taiwan's CCI policy from 2009 to 2016 aimed to elevate intermediary talent from passive brokers to active strategic actors, it was constrained by an economic output-driven logic. This resulted in a fragmented landscape where intermediary roles were encouraged rhetorically but under-supported institutionally, marked by misalignment between education and industry and limited cultural depth.

The 2018 Cultural Policy White Paper: Redefining Intermediary Talent in Ecosystem Governance

The release of Taiwan's 2018 *Cultural Policy White Paper* (《2018 文化政策白皮書》) marked a significant shift in CCI policy, introducing the concept of "ecosystem governance" as a guiding principle for cultural development (Ministry of Culture, 2018a). In this framework, intermediary talent was reconceptualized as central to cross-sectoral connectivity, positioned as key nodes linking cultural content, technological production, financial capital, and market platforms. This reframing moved beyond earlier instrumentalist notions of intermediaries as passive brokers, and aligned more closely with the idea of "eco-actors" or "network builders" in cultural intermediary theory—actors who enable resource flow, collaboration, and systemic coherence across fragmented sectors (Cronin and Edwards 2021).

¹ The Taiwan Creative Content Agency (TAICCA) is a government-funded organization under the Ministry of Culture, established in 2019 to support the development of Taiwan's cultural content ecosystem. It focuses on talent cultivation, international market expansion, investment and financing mechanisms, and cross-sector innovation. For an overview see: <https://en.taicca.tw/page/about> (Accessed April, 30, 2025).

Expanded Functions and Evolving Models of Intermediation

The White Paper identified three major developments in understanding intermediary talent. First, it redefined intermediaries as crucial agents for sustaining cultural infrastructure. Under the "Cultural Sustainability" (「文化永續力」) chapter, they were described as connectors across creation, production, finance, and regulation who enable value translation between cultural production and market systems. Policy proposals included content support mechanisms, a cultural finance system, and international expansion strategies, all centered on enhancing institutional support for intermediary roles.

Second, under the "Cultural Transcendence" (「文化超越力」) framework, the scope of intermediaries expanded to include both resource circulation and market expansion. The White Paper cited research from the European Network of Cultural Experts (EENC) on the global shift toward collaborative, co-creation business models. However, empirical critiques suggest that Taiwan's implementation still prioritizes business and management skills over the narrative depth and cultural literacy needed to mediate between local culture and global markets (Chao, Lu, and Chang 2014).

Institutional Limitations and Policy Contradictions

The White Paper also acknowledged shortcomings in earlier talent development policies. It criticized the overemphasis on brokerage functions and the long-standing neglect of professionalization within public cultural institutions. This mirrors scholarly critiques of "instrumental thinking" in cultural policy, which argue that treating intermediaries as mere facilitators of market access undermines their potential as "meaning negotiators" and cultural translators (Cronin and Edwards 2021).

Although the White Paper introduced forward-looking strategies like "cultural-technological translation bridging" and an "ecosystem collaboration model," structural constraints have hindered implementation. Research continues to point to systemic fractures between education and industry and a lack of institutional infrastructure for sustained, cross-sector learning. These unresolved tensions highlight a persistent governance dilemma: while policy discourse increasingly recognizes the strategic role of intermediary talent, implementation remains largely technocratic. It often overemphasizes the commercial and managerial functions, such as agent or broker training (Chao, Lu, and Chang 2014), while providing insufficient support for the cultural, reflexive, and epistemological work that public-sector intermediation entails.

2018–2025: Ecosystem Construction, Legal Reform, and the Limits of Implementation

Policy Innovation: From Sectoral Support to Ecosystem Thinking

The 2018 Cultural Policy White Paper signaled a shift in Taiwan's CCI policy from sectoral assistance to ecosystem-oriented governance. This approach reframed culture as a dynamic field requiring integration across technology, finance, and international networks, emphasizing the need for "cross-domain intermediary talent" who can navigate cultural, technological, and institutional interfaces (Chiu 2022; Ministry of Culture 2020). Institutionally, this vision was operationalized by establishing the Taiwan Creative Content

Agency (TAICCA) in 2019 to handle resource integration, investment, talent cultivation, and internationalization. TAICCA School programs aimed to produce "triple-threat talent" proficient in creative production, entrepreneurial logic, and digital innovation. This cross-sector ambition was further articulated through projects like the 5G Content and Technology Cross-Domain Innovation Ecosystem. Amendments to the CCI Development Act in 2023 formalized this direction by upgrading the CCI to a national strategic industry and adding investment incentives.

Identified Gaps in Literature and Policy Practice

Recent studies highlight unresolved challenges in developing intermediary talent. First, cross-disciplinary education often prioritizes managerial skills over the cultural depth and critical reflexivity essential for mediating between cultural value and market demands (Maguire and Matthews 2012; Chao, Lu, and Chang 2014; O'Connor 2015). Second, a gap persists between formal training and practical needs, with competency courses often lacking the coherence and clear pathways needed for cultural governance. Third, the intermediary role remains conceptually vague. While literature defines intermediaries as hybrid actors who perform gatekeeping, incubation, and market linkage (Virani 2019; Stockley-Patel and Swords 2025), policy often reduces them to brokers, overlooking critical governance functions.

Institutional offerings, including TAICCA's, typically align with commercial imperatives and pay limited attention to the needs of governance actors like local cultural administrators. These administrators face challenges in policy translation, coordination, and ecosystem-building, yet often lack formal recognition or tailored training (Lin 2021). Their roles are further constrained by evaluation systems and administrative structures that frame intermediary functions in narrow, instrumental terms (Liao 2019).

While policy discourse highlights cross-sector collaboration, literature often views it through a technical or entrepreneurial lens. Consequently, intermediary roles are framed in industry-facing terms, leaving governance dimensions underexplored. The work of local cultural administrators is seldom addressed in policy or scholarship. Despite a recent shift toward ecosystem governance, institutional and training systems have not kept pace. These gaps underscore the need for more empirical research on intermediary roles within public cultural administration, particularly at the municipal level.

Tainan's Cultural Governance Architecture

Under Taiwan's system of local self-government, special municipalities such as Tainan hold significant autonomy in cultural policy. According to the Law for the Development of the Cultural and Creative Industries (MOC 2010), the central government sets the national policy framework (Article 5), while municipal authorities are empowered to formulate and implement their own local plans (Article 6). The city government exercises this mandate through a combination of ordinances, budget allocations, and project-based instruments that shape local cultural initiatives.

Within this structure, Tainan's Cultural Affairs Bureau (CAB) serves as the lead

operational unit, responsible for managing everything from cultural industries to technology integration². The administrators in this study work across the Bureau's key divisions—including those for Cultural and Creative Industries Development, Heritage Operation, Arts Development—to coordinate projects and mediate among diverse stakeholders. However, project coordination rarely rests within the CAB alone. The internal governance system relies on cross-departmental coordination committees and contracted operators for implementation. Major cultural initiatives typically require collaboration with the Tourism Bureau (destination branding), the Urban Development Bureau (planning), and the Smart Development Center (digital integration), shaping the administrators' intermediary roles.

Personnel are recruited through the national civil service system, with entry via competitive exams and advancement based on seniority and performance. While this system ensures procedural fairness, it offers limited flexibility in matching expertise to new governance demands. In practice, administrators often bring diverse professional backgrounds that strengthen the Bureau's capacity for cross-domain collaboration. This governance architecture establishes the institutional frame for the study's analysis, embedding the selected cases of cultural-tech development within a context that both shapes and constrains the intermediary work of local cultural administrators.

Cultural Administrators as Governance Intermediaries

Domestic research points to structural constraints in developing public-sector intermediaries. Current policies often fail to integrate cultural and technological fields, prompting many skilled professionals to seek higher-paying jobs in tech sector—limiting growth in cultural administration (Taiwan Association of Cultural Policy Research 2023). Although the MOC has launched initiatives like the "5G Cultural Technology Talent Development and Cross-Sector Application Project," these remain focused on digital upgrades, with limited commitment to systematic training for public-sector roles. The following subsections examine the evolution of these roles, key institutional limitations, and Taiwan's positioning within global governance trends.

Evolving Intermediary Roles in Cultural Governance

Recent scholarship increasingly acknowledges that cultural administrators have evolved beyond traditional bureaucratic functions to assume multifaceted intermediary roles within governance systems (Rius-Ulledemolins and Klein 2020). Building on this line of thought, these roles can be understood to span four main domains: policy translation, technological integration, community collaboration, and interdepartmental coordination (Wang 2024; Trenerry, McDonald, and Myers 2021). Administrators must interpret abstract policy language in relation to local cultural contexts, deploy digital tools to engage publics, navigate linguistic and institutional gaps across governance tiers, and broker knowledge across departments and disciplines (Ferreira and Santos 2022; Gu 2018; Lee, Banks, and Oakley 2016).

² See the organizational structures of the Tainan City Government and its Cultural Affairs Bureau (CAB). <https://www.tainan.gov.tw/en/cp.aspx?n=13211>; <https://culture.tainan.gov.tw/english/content/index?Parser=1,16,155,148>. (Accessed Sep., 25, 2025)

Building on this, Wang (2024) introduces the concept of 'infrastructuring' to emphasize how cultural governance is shaped not only by policy intentions but by uneven material supports, spatial configurations, and the limits of institutional system-building. Rather than forming a cohesive ecosystem, governance efforts often manifest through fragmented infrastructural assemblages, what Wang describes as cycles of 'fixation, surplus, and waste', where symbolic ambitions outpace practical implementation capacity. This perspective highlights the necessity of attending to the infrastructural and organizational conditions that enable or constrain cultural governance reform."

This transformation aligns with the evolving view of cultural intermediaries as "value translators" and "institutional nodes", figures who navigate between cultural production and market or policy systems, mediating symbolic meanings and operational logics (Maguire and Matthews 2012; Bourdieu 1984). Holden's (2015) ecology of culture model builds on this by framing culture as a dynamic system of interdependent actors, guardians, connectors, platforms, whose interactions sustain creative vitality. Liu (2016) extends this thinking through a "cultural ecology" framework rooted in Eastern philosophy, particularly the Chinese principle of harmony between humanity and nature. His approach advocates for governance grounded in collaboration, co-creation, and ethical reflexivity, challenging dominant economic or technocratic metrics. In digital contexts, intermediaries also act as bridges between cultural meaning-making and data-driven technologies (Hutchinson 2023; Airolidi and Rokka 2022).

Together, these perspectives underscore the importance of recognizing local cultural administrators not merely as technical implementers, but as strategic intermediaries. Their work is central to fostering resilient, inclusive, and value-sensitive governance, particularly within Taiwan's evolving cultural policy landscape.

Learning Demands and Institutional Limitations

The expansion of intermediary functions places growing demands on the learning needs and competency frameworks for cultural administrators. In addition to policy literacy and administrative skills, current expectations increasingly encompass cross-domain integration, adaptive thinking, and digital fluency (Rius-Ulldemolín and Díaz-Solan 2023; Quinn Lenihan, and Brennan 2021). Administrators are also expected to navigate pluralistic values and engage communities with cultural sensitivity (Trenerry, McDonald, and Myers 2021).

However, Taiwan's institutional training systems—such as civil service exams (Ministry of Examination 2022) and the iCAP platform—remain focused on legal and procedural knowledge, with limited attention to collaboration, adaptability, or interdisciplinary practice. Opportunities for digital cultural learning, co-creation, and cross-sector exchange are limited, raising concerns about the adequacy of institutional support for evolving governance roles. Wang and Kao (2019) similarly argue that fragmented regulations and institutional silos hinder integrated governance. Drawing on heritage revitalization, they advocate for infrastructural commons to enable coordination and sustained engagement across policy levels. These limitations also resonate with critiques from cultural labour scholarship, which highlight how relational, affective, and informal labour is often undervalued or

rendered invisible in formal training and evaluation systems (McRobbie 2016; Gill and Pratt 2008). Intermediary work in cultural administration often involves emotional negotiation, boundary-crossing, and continuous self-learning forms of labour that resist codification but are essential to governance transformation. Such perspectives offer useful insights for rethinking intermediary capacity-building.

In response, the literature outlines three key directions for developing governance-relevant intermediary capabilities: (1) promoting cross-domain integration across cultural, technological, and social sectors; (2) strengthening digital literacy and narrative skills for local cultural translation; and (3) cultivating glo-cal thinking through exposure to international practices grounded in local relevance (Bozkurt and Stracke 2023; Huang and Gao 2021). These priorities highlight the need for a grounded, practice-based understanding of intermediary development. This study contributes by examining the lived experiences of local cultural administrators.

Global Trends and Local Constraints

Research indicates that cultural administrative systems are being restructured in response to the convergence of cultural policy, digital transformation, and governance complexity (Lin 2021). At the multilateral level, institutions such as the EU and UNESCO have advanced frameworks emphasizing cultural diversity, participatory governance, and cross-sector collaboration, forming a normative foundation for ecosystem thinking in cultural policy (Feder, Menger, and Peukert 2023; Lin 2021; Banga, Douglas, and Newton 2021; Oakley and Ward 2018).

In Western contexts, reform has centered on digital capacity-building and organizational integration. The UK has prioritized digital skills within cultural institutions, the US inter-agency collaboration on cultural-technology initiatives, Germany data governance and digital heritage (Müller and Schmidt 2022), and Finland interdepartmental coordination for governance reform (Renko et al. 2022). In Asia, countries are increasingly institutionalizing intermediary roles within cultural innovation systems (Ko 2024). South Korea has professionalized such talent through state-backed agencies like the Korea Creative Content Agency (KOCCA), aligning development with global content strategies (Kim 2021), while Japan and South Korea have explored models integrating technological innovation with cultural administration.

Internationally, cultural administrators are now viewed as strategic governance actors rather than mere brokers or managers. In Taiwan, however, policy responses remain inconsistent in recognizing and supporting these roles within the public cultural system. Central initiatives like the 5G Cultural Technology Talent Cultivation Plan prioritize technological competencies, with limited focus on intermediary functions such as coordination and cultural translation (Lin 2021). While programmes like the 5G Content and Technology Ecosystem and Local Cultural Features Integrated with 5G explore culture-tech intersections, they seldom address administrators' intermediary responsibilities in a structured way.

In Taiwan, several county administrations have experimented with culture-tech integration in response to national 5G policies. Chiayi digitized local heritage projects, Yilan

launched 5G Fast Forward, Yilan Forward using immersive technologies to promote smart cultural living, and Tainan incorporated AR/VR into Tainan 400 to reimagine its historical landscape and project a future-oriented identity. Kaohsiung emphasized internationalization by combining large-scale digital art with creative content development at the Pier-2 Art Center, reinforcing its role as a culture-tech hub³.

Although Taiwan's policy discourse has shifted toward ecosystem governance and intermediary talent, institutional frameworks still prioritize technical and managerial skills over relational and interpretive capacities. In contrast, international models adopt more integrated approaches. These disparities call for closer examination of how intermediary roles are conceptualized and supported within Taiwan's evolving governance landscape.

Research Methods and Scope

This study uses a mixed-methods approach to examine how Taiwan's evolving CCI policy has shaped the intermediary roles of local cultural administrators. The first phase involved qualitative discourse analysis of key national policy texts spanning four stages of CCI development (2002–2025). The corpus included development plans (e.g., Challenge 2008, Value Industrialization Plan 2013–2016), White Papers (2004, 2018), strategic initiatives (e.g., Creative Taiwan, Cultural Content Investment Plan, Cultural Technology Policy Outline, 5G Innovation Project), legislative instruments (e.g., CCI Development Act, Cultural Fundamental Law), and reports from the Ministry of Culture. These texts were selected for their role in articulating policy visions, institutional strategies, and talent frameworks. The analysis traced discursive shifts in terminology and assumptions, especially regarding "intermediary talent," from brokerage to ecosystem facilitation.

According to a review of its recent policy plans, this study adopts a case study approach focused on Tainan as a strategic site of governance experimentation. Tainan stands out for its integration of heritage-driven cultural policy with digital innovation. As Taiwan's historical capital, it has shown steady CCI growth, especially in transforming cultural assets into creative and economic resources. Flagship initiatives such as the Tainan 400 programme (2024) incorporate immersive technologies (e.g., AR/VR) into heritage reinterpretation, while the Future Tainan—5G and Local Cultural Integration Plan promotes digital revitalization, cross-sector collaboration, and tech-enabled branding. These initiatives align with the broader sustainability vision of the Shalun Smart Green Energy Science City, positioning Tainan as a model for ecosystem-based cultural governance. The case provides a grounded context for analyzing how cultural administrators engage in policy translation, cross-domain coordination, and intermediary innovation within evolving policy frameworks.

The second phase involved 17 semi-structured interviews with cultural administrators in Tainan and key informants, including project officers, division chiefs, directors, and experts—a cultural policy scholar, a bureau director, a secretary-general, and a senior policy specialist from the city council. Participants were selected through purposive and snowball sampling.

3 Administration of Digital Industries(MODA). "5G and Local Culture Integration Plan." <https://moda.gov.tw/ADI/services/govinfo/subsidies/15892> (Accessed March 20, 2025).

Interview transcripts were thematically coded using the creative ecologies framework, focusing on role adaptation, learning processes, and institutional constraints. Analytical categories such as "cross-sector coordination," "learning challenges," and "support gaps" were developed to trace how administrators respond to national policy agendas. These findings were cross-referenced with policy analysis to identify alignments and discrepancies between official discourse and on-the-ground implementation, with particular attention to how intermediary functions are enacted within municipal-level culture-tech integration. Anonymized interviewees are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. *Anonymized Interviewee Roster*

Source: Designed by the author.

Interview Code	Institutional Affiliation	Title / Role/ Personnel Code
I	CC Development Division, Cultural Affairs Bureau, Tainan City Gov (TCG)	Project Officers X 2 Coded as A1-A2
2	CCI Development, Cultural Affairs Bureau, TCG	Division Chief Coded as A3
3	CCI Development, Cultural Affairs Bureau, TCG	Project Officer X2 Coded as A4-A5
4	CCI Development, Cultural Affairs Bureau, TCG	Division Chief- A3.1 Project Officer -A6
5	Public Works Committee, Tainan City Council	Senior Specialist-E1
6	National Taiwan University of Arts	Professor, E2
8	CCI Development, Cultural Affairs Bureau, TCG.	Project Officer -A7
9	Tainan 400 Project Office, TCG	Secretary-General-E3
II	Arts Development Division, Cultural Affairs Bureau, TCG	Specialist-A8 Assistant-A9
12	Smart Development Center, TGC	Director- A10 Division Chief- A11 Project Officer- A12
13	Historic Sites Operation Division, Cultural Affairs Bureau , TCG	Division Chief-A13
14	Cultural Affairs Bureau, TCG	Director General-E4

Table 1 summarizes anonymized interviews conducted in Tainan from December 2020 to June 2024, across two annual national research projects. Participants include local cultural administrators and expert informants involved in cultural policy implementation. Codes beginning with "A" refer to administrators from Tainan City Government; "E" denotes external experts. Titles reflect roles at the time of interview, and group interviews

are indicated where applicable. Most interviews lasted 90–120 minutes. The table provides contextual reference for the empirical analysis.

In addition to the interview roster presented above, Table 1a synthesizes findings by mapping each code family to representative interviewees, illustrative evidence, and policy implications. This structured presentation highlights how interview data underpin the study's analysis.

Table 1a. *MAnalytical Mapping of Code Families, Illustrative Evidence, and Policy Implications*
Source: Designed by the author.

Code Family / Theme	Representative Interviewees	Illustrative Quote (short excerpt)	Evidence Type	Policy Implication
Policy Translation	A3 (Division Chief), A4 (Officer)	"We're not policy designers, but we have to handle frontline reactions..."	Interview	Need formal policy-translation support mechanisms at municipal level
Cross-department Coordination	A6 (Officer), E4 (Director)	"There's no permanent mechanism for interdepartmental cooperation..."	Interview + Expert	Institutionalize cross-sectoral coordination platforms
Learning Challenges	A2 (Officer), A12 (Project Officer)	"I feel like I'm becoming an expert just by self-learning."	Interview	Expand structured training pathways beyond legal/procedural exams
Governance Role Ambiguity	A5 (Officer), E1 (Senior Specialist)	"We often carry the most responsibility but have the least authority."	Interview + Policy doc	Adjust performance metrics to reflect coordination and mediation
Cultural-Tech Mediation	A12 (Officer), A13 (Division Chief)	"Tech firms move quickly but often overlook local sensitivities."	Interview	Encourage cultural-tech co-design and narrative mediation in project planning

Empirical Analysis

This study draws on John Howkins' *Creative Ecologies: Where Thinking Is a Proper Job* (2009), which frames talent not as a fixed asset but as emergent and relational, shaped by how individuals think, adapt, and interact within complex systems. It emphasizes thinking, translating, and coordinating as central to governance innovation. Four key components guide the analysis: **diversity**, the range and interrelation of actors, institutions, and perspectives that enable cross-sector dialogue; **learning**, an ongoing, often informal, process of knowledge exchange and skill development; **adaptation**, the ability to respond to shifting conditions through collaboration and adjustment; and **change**, the evolution of systems through disruption, conflict, or innovation. The following sections examine each component

in turn, showing how administrators navigate cross-sector engagement, shifting policy priorities, and institutional and technological transformation.

Diversity: Professional Heterogeneity and Resource Networks

The 2018 Cultural Policy White Paper underscored the need for cross-sectoral integration and ecosystem-oriented governance, implying a growing demand for administrative diversity. Interview data suggest that professional heterogeneity among cultural administrators contributes significantly to their capacity for policy translation, resource brokering, and collaborative engagement.

Professional Backgrounds and Creative Literacy

Administrators often come from varied disciplinary backgrounds, including film, media, architecture, and law, allowing them to navigate the sector's growing complexity. As one officer with a film background reflected, "My role is more of a node between the public sector and industry; I need to understand both languages and the gaps between them," (interview 3, A5) highlighting cross-sector communication skills. Another interviewee expressed an interest in learning digital tools such as social media management and video editing, noting that, "...cultural administration is not just paperwork-it must respond to the cultural practices of the image era." (Interview 3, A4)

Such comments reveal how administrators internalize creative literacy to support content production and governance work. A division chief described their office as "Tainan's creative platform-whether it's finding people, spaces, resources, or courses, this platform should address all issues," (Interview 2, A3) suggesting that the team's effectiveness hinges on a diversity of skills and a shared willingness to learn across domains.

Resource Networks and Intermediary Positioning

Most interviewed administrators also described their work as involving extensive negotiation across civil society, central ministries, local departments, and external contractors. One division chief noted:

We are intermediaries among civil society, city government, media, central government, and land agencies, with work often involving complex legal, contractual, and land issues, requiring matching and legitimizing within institutional gaps...we are often the buffer between policy and the local field....
(Interview 2, A3)

Here the term *buffer* refers to the mediating role administrators occupy between central directives, community stakeholders, and contracted operators, translating policy goals into locally workable terms. This statement underscores the diversity of actors and institutional interfaces involved in intermediary work. Positioned between internal and external stakeholders, administrators must navigate varied expectations and fragmented systems, reflecting the cross-sector complexity central to their role. A project officer responsible for a film park development used the metaphor of "tree nodes" to vividly describe the role of resource integration:

Let's use a tree as a metaphor: the project officer is like a node, and after finding resources below, new branches can grow. When developing a site, we reach out to local offices and community associations, and after obtaining resources, we can then propose projects to the central government to get some funding. The project will then spread and reach more points and connections. We are just different nodes on the same tree, constantly growing upward (Interview 3, A4).

This "nodal thinking" illustrates how administrators actively connect and transform local knowledge, community energy, and central policies, creating possibilities for resource flow and innovative collaboration within institutional gaps. They are not merely administrators but catalysts for multi-actor cooperation.

Multi-Actor Interaction: From Executors to Strategic Participants

The recent shift toward cross-domain and cultural-tech initiatives has redefined the intermediary function from task execution to strategic mediation. Several administrators reflected on the challenge of balancing diverse stakeholder demands, legal constraints, and cultural sensitivities. A vivid example is the Tainan-400 AR/VR heritage project, where administrators mediated between tech firms eager to showcase immersive tools and community elders concerned about cultural sensitivities. Objections to animated overlays near temple sites led administrators to work with both sides to redesign the sequence so that ritual meaning was highlighted rather than diminished. The case shows how their intermediary role extended beyond procedure into narrative mediation, aligning innovation with cultural values to secure acceptance and legitimacy.

As one project officer explained, "People think we're blocking projects, but we're actually protecting them, making sure they can withstand scrutiny." Another officer elaborated on the tensions between planning and implementation:

Our major concern is the future operation, who will actually manage the site? Their vision might not match the city's. While the city and central governments see the site as a film base that also supports tourism, but potential investors may focus solely on tourism, which could divert us from our original goal of supporting the film industry...Even if our plan starts with one vision, yet once a BOT or OT operator takes over, the trajectory could shift completely... (Interview I, A1).

These reflections underscore the administrators' expanded gatekeeping responsibilities: not only navigating bureaucracy, but also mediating between legality, public interest, and cultural vision. As one policy expert noted:

...On one hand, you have central policy; on the other, it's the operators after OT contracts... It's clear these sites aren't easy to run. You can't expect them to be self-sustaining just by outsourcing through BOT. Real collaboration with local governments and industries is needed, along with policy tools and supportive resources to back it up (Interview 6, E2).

A second case is the proposed film-base project, where central government, the municipality, and private investors pursued divergent goals. National agencies envisioned a cultural hub, while operators emphasized tourism revenues, risking dilution of film

functions. A bureau chief described "constant brokerage", redrafting plans, convening meetings, and negotiating with contractors. The case highlights administrators' managerial role in aligning institutions while protecting cultural priorities. In projects involving technological applications, this balancing act becomes particularly pronounced. An officer managing a 5G cultural project admitted:

Tech firms move quickly but often overlook local sensitivities. For example, local elders can't accept AR animations next to deities-we have to explain and redesign the experience processes so technology is accepted in the cultural context (Interview 12, A12).

Project documentation from the Tainan-400 initiative similarly highlights adjustments made to balance technological design with community concerns, confirming administrators' mediating role. This underscores the narrative mediation required to reconcile cultural values and technological applications. Another officer overseeing immersive exhibitions stated:

Sometimes tech businesses only provide technical specs, but we need to think from the audience's perspective, adjusting narrative pacing and display methods. Administrators become participants guiding creativity, we become active co-creators (Interview 14, A11).

In sum, the diversity of professional backgrounds, institutions, and perspectives in Tainan's cultural governance both enables and complicates intermediary work. This heterogeneity embodies what Howkins (2009) calls an "ecology of thinking," where administrators function as active nodes translating across policy, community, and market domains. Their practice resonates with Liu's (2016) and Maguire and Matthews' (2012) notion of "value translation," bridging symbolic, legal, technical, and institutional gaps. Yet such mediation relies more on individual initiative than systemic support. Diversity thus becomes both a resource and a challenge, requiring communicative agility and adaptive coordination within a fragmented governance structure.

Adaptivity: Navigating Constraints in Cross-Sector Cultural Governance

Following Taiwan's recent policy shifts, two key phases emerge in cultural administration: the "Catalyst" phase (2009–2016), focused on market-driven mediation, and the "Ecological Node" phase (post-2018), emphasizing tech-enabled cultural governance. In both, administrators face persistent gaps between policy design and implementation. This section explores their responses across individual, organizational, and institutional levels, with attention to translation, collaboration, and structural constraints.

Individual-Level Adaptation: Policy Translation and Value Mediation

Frontline cultural administrators frequently adopt flexible, experience-based strategies to bridge gaps between abstract policy and local realities. Many describe themselves as "buffers" who interpret both central directives and community responses. In this context, buffer denotes the administrators' mediating role, positioned between policy expectations and on-the-ground realities. One bureau supervisor noted: "We're not policy designers, but

we have to handle frontline reactions, respond to the public, and report to superiors, often relying on experience to adjust ourselves." (Interview 3, A4)

Cross-departmental collaboration has become routine in projects involving land use, heritage, tourism, and cultural industries. However, such collaboration remains informal, often relying on personal networks rather than established procedures. One division chief observed, "There's no permanent mechanism for interdepartmental cooperation, everything relies on personal relationships. We often carry the most responsibility but have the least authority." Another officer added, "For tasks like land-use and traffic planning, we often draft documents and handle the cases ourselves."

This perception is consistent with the absence of any permanent coordination platforms in municipal cultural governance regulations, as confirmed in the policy documents reviewed. In addition, these accounts point to what might be termed a pattern of "individual adaptation", a reliance on ad hoc problem-solving in the absence of formal support structures. While such flexibility allows for short-term responsiveness, it also risks long-term inefficiencies by overburdening staff, hindering organizational knowledge retention, and impeding the transfer of experiential learning across roles or units.

In parallel, administrators frequently operate as "conceptual harmonizers," translating between divergent institutional logics, particularly those of central policy bodies and local industry stakeholders. One officer involved in film base development reflected:

Some central government officials envision film bases based on successful cases abroad, perhaps from places they've visited or heard about, but these models often differ significantly from the needs of the local industry in Taiwan, especially in Tainan. My role is to serve as a buffer between the public sector and industry, interpreting both languages and expectations to prevent resource misallocation.

Such frontline mediation aligns with Rius-Ulledemolin and Díaz-Solan's (2023) call for administrators with "hybrid competences" that span policy logic, cultural values, and technological fluency. Yet the lack of formal mechanisms reveals a disjuncture between the ideal of adaptive governance and the institutional realities facing local practitioners. Another officer noted: "We're not technicians, but we have to learn the language and workflows of the film industry to ensure policies don't fall flat." (Interview 3, A4)

Together, these findings point to structural contradictions in the current system: while cross-sector collaboration is essential for advancing cultural-technology integration, the institutional infrastructure to support such collaboration remains fragmented. Intermediary functions, though increasingly central to cultural governance, are still ambiguously defined and weakly resourced within administrative systems. This underlines the need for more formalized support structures to sustain interdepartmental cooperation and institutional learning over time.

Organizational Collaboration: Informal Networks and Structural Tensions

Within cultural-technology initiatives, the intermediary role becomes increasingly complex, demanding careful coordination across professional and institutional boundaries. One mid-level officer noted that many technology providers lack sensitivity to cultural contexts,

requiring administrators to intervene subtly: "We offer suggestions gently... considering both public acceptance and budget, because not all tech proposals are suitable for cultural sites." (Interview 12, A12)

This highlights a core tension in cross-sector collaboration, that is technological solutions often arrive detached from the cultural values and heritage sensitivities of the implementation context. One division chief recalled how a successful cultural-tech project hinged not just on funding, but on the ability to match the right partners:

Nothing really happens until a cultural authority lights the spark by providing funding, only then can we adapt academic research for public use. But academic language alone doesn't connect; people need to see or experience it, through an app, a virtual system, interpretive signage, or a brochure. That takes time and resources. We needed a team that could translate the research into something accessible. We were fortunate to work with a design firm capable of integrating technology, exhibition design, and public engagement. For a national heritage site, you need something that both informs and engages, while still respecting its historical character (Interview 13, A13).

The challenge extends beyond technology deployment to the deeper task of bridging epistemic and institutional divides. As one officer working on a 5G cultural project explained:

The 5G project was a first for us, we were working with the cultural sector, but with digital tech...when we pitched to the Ministry of Digital Affairs, we couldn't answer their questions, the vocabulary and technical expectations were totally different... I can explain clearly the value of Taiwanese opera, but not the technical reasons for applying a certain technology. That's not our training at all (Interview 11, A8).

Reports on the 5G Cultural Technology Pilot similarly noted the communication barrier between cultural and digital sectors, underscoring that administrators' experiences mirror broader structural misalignments. This case also highlights a core organizational challenge: navigating misalignments between innovation and heritage preservation, and between the fast pace of technology and the slower rhythms of cultural governance. Administrators often act as institutional "translators," requiring what most interviewed officers described as a "bilingual ability", the capacity to mediate between technological and cultural domains.

Yet these cross-sector tasks are rarely supported by formal mechanisms and instead rely on informal networks and adaptive coordination. Staff must often reshape technical proposals to fit cultural contexts, align timelines across departments, and negotiate divergent expectations. Though largely invisible in official accounts, this behind-the-scenes work is essential to making cultural governance function under conditions of increasing complexity.

Institutional Challenges: Vertical Governance and Dysfunction of Intermediary Functions

Despite the cross-sectoral nature of cultural technology policies, rigid vertical governance

structures and siloed departmental logics persist. Interviewees frequently pointed to the disconnect between central directives and local implementation. As one officer noted:

The central government's language is often too abstract; we have to digest and retranslate it at the local level. But there's no system for that, just informal, experience-based interpretation... (Interview 4, A6).

This gap is evident in the Cultural Policy White Paper itself, which frames "intermediary talent" in broad aspirational terms but offers no practical mechanisms for policy translation at the municipal level. These challenges are amplified in large-scale initiatives like Tainan 400, where administrative coordination remains fragmented. A bureau director reflected:

...Right now, we're just following the annual plan and completing tasks, it's more about ticking boxes. Resources are divided evenly across departments without really considering how the sub-projects connect. It would be great, if we could gradually integrate an internal system through implementation....Culture shouldn't just be the responsibility of the cultural bureau, it should be a core strategy for city governance (Interview 14, E4).

From a creative ecologies perspective, adaptivity requires not just individual flexibility but systemic capacity for learning, coordination, and institutional change. However, this study finds that local intermediary work relies heavily on personal initiative, without the structural mechanisms necessary to convert experiential knowledge into organizational learning. As one respondent put it, "Changing departments feels like starting a new job, the language and expectations are completely different, and there's no structured way to bridge them" (Interview 3-A5).

These accounts reveal a recurring pattern: local administrators act as de facto intermediaries in fragmented governance systems, without clear mandates or institutional tools. This absence is not only experienced by staff but also visible in municipal organizational charts and procedural rules, which lack any permanent cross-departmental platform for cultural-technology governance. Their adaptability, while crucial, is unsustainable without structural reform. These findings underscore the need to reframe intermediation as a structural function, not just individual effort.

Learning: Professional Growth, Knowledge Flow, and Organizational Learning Dilemmas

Since 2018, Taiwan's cultural policy has emphasized cross-sectoral integration and technological adaptation, substantially raising the learning demands on local cultural administrators. While many interviewees demonstrated strong self-directed learning, the findings reveal a structural asymmetry: learning is predominantly individualized, informally acquired, and insufficiently supported by institutional mechanisms. This gap underscores a broader tension between ambitious policy goals and the system's limited capacity to sustain knowledge flows, posing significant challenges for the professionalization of governance intermediaries.

First, the intensification and fragmentation of administrative responsibilities restrict opportunities for deep, domain-specific learning. Administrators are increasingly expected to engage with diverse knowledge areas, ranging from land management and architecture to heritage regulation and digital media, often under pressing timelines. As it is found that there is no structured capacity-building programs existed for administrators, underscoring the reliance on informal, experiential learning. As one officer reflected:

When I first started, it felt like being in graduate school, studying architecture without the time to study. I'm busy with operations during the day and have no time to read at night. Many projects require land-use processing; I even considered taking the land administration exam because there's no one to teach us. I feel like I'm becoming an expert just by self-learning (Interview 1, A2).

Second, in the absence of structured training pathways, professional development hinges largely on personal initiative. Administrators shared learning video editing, researching YouTube strategy, or informally shadowing private-sector professionals to meet emerging demands. These improvised learning strategies recall McRobbie's (2016) analysis of precarious creative labor, they occur within public institutions that offer limited support for the very competencies they expect. As one officer noted: "Administrators need to understand content production to communicate effectively with industry practitioners"(Interview 3, A5).

A third challenge lies in the epistemic labor required to bridge cultural values with technological rationales. One division chief emphasized: "Tech companies often don't understand the cultural context. We have to use cultural language to persuade the public and clarify policy boundaries. This gap can't be bridged by regulations alone; it requires experience and on-site judgment" (Interview 13, A13).

Similarly, an officer described how she navigates these gaps: "Every night I watch AR or video editing tutorials. Sometimes I just ask tech providers to demo their ideas, because we can't afford to be ignorant of technical logic when reviewing proposals" (Interview 12, A12). These accounts reflect a system increasingly reliant on self-taught personnel to navigate complex, cross-sectoral responsibilities in the absence of coordinated institutional guidance. From an institutional standpoint, expert interviews echoed these concerns. One bureau director remarked: "We can no longer train mere executors; we need managers who understand both cultural technology and industry logic" (Interview 13, A4). This concern echoes the 2018 Cultural Policy White Paper, which identified a gap in governance-oriented professional training despite strong investment in digital and commercial talent. In this study, manager refers to the coordination role administrators perform across departments and external partners when converting policy objectives into implementable projects. This statement reflects concerns raised in the 2018 Cultural Policy White Paper, which identified a gap in governance-oriented professional training despite extensive investment in digital and industry-facing talent. A senior specialist warned: "The administrative system must establish intermediary support mechanisms; otherwise, administrators will shoulder all responsibilities" (Interview 5, E1). A cultural scholar further stressed: "Professionalization should not only improve efficiency but

also contribute to the reproduction of cultural knowledge. This is key to effective governance"(Interview 6, E2).

Finally, weak knowledge circulation within organizations hinders institutional memory. Respondents frequently noted that information is transmitted informally via "oral instructions" or "learning through doing." As one junior staff member explained: "There's no SOP or shared platform, we rely on memory. Once an issue is resolved, it's forgotten. Next time, someone else starts from scratch" (Interview 3, A5). Internal bureau reports reviewed similarly describe informal peer-to-peer sharing as the main mode of professional development, with no structured pathways for knowledge transfer in place. This ad hoc mode of knowledge transfer impedes onboarding, obstructs cumulative learning, and increases uncertainty and stress for new personnel.

From a creative ecologies' perspective, learning is a systemic condition essential to adaptability and innovation in governance ecosystems (Howkins 2010; Chapain et al. 2010). Taiwan's post-2018 shift toward ecosystem governance and technological integration has increased the learning demands on cultural administrators, who must now navigate both cultural and technical domains. While many demonstrate strong self-directed learning, their development remains informal and individualized, with limited institutional support. This exposes a policy gap: national agendas call for cross-sectoral, tech-savvy talent, yet training systems lag behind. As a result, governance depends on precarious, experience-based adaptation rather than structured, transferable expertise.

Change: Paradigm Shifts and the Institutional Adaptation Limits

Taiwan's cultural policy has increasingly emphasized ecosystem integration and digital innovation, demanding not just new content but institutional change. Yet interview data reveal a persistent gap between policy rhetoric and administrative capacity. Despite calls for cross-sector collaboration, implementation is shaped by fragmented systems and informal workarounds. The following section examines how administrators confront these challenges amid ongoing structural inertia.

From Top-Down Execution to Network Governance: Gaps in Institutional Design

Interview data reveal a collective and growing awareness that governing the cultural and creative sectors is no longer just about top-down control by the state. As the cultural bureau director observed: "Governance is no longer unidirectional state-led control. It requires triangulating private sector operational strategies, civil society's public cultural ethos, and governmental oversight to form an effective network..." (Interview 14-E4).

This "network governance" logic, particularly salient in cultural-technology initiatives involving diverse actors such as platform providers, creators, contractors, and communities, demands new forms of coordination and translation. Yet existing administrative systems lack permanent cross-domain mechanisms, formal intermediary roles, or institutional scaffolding to support these interactions. In such contexts, the absence of formal intermediary infrastructures means that success often depends on the

informal capacity and individual initiative of administrators rather than systemic support. Another senior division specialist explained:

We depend on ad hoc project funding. Many interdepartmental collaborations are nominal, leaving execution burdens on us. The system provides no scaffolding... Ecosystem thinking is nice, but without permanent staff and stable funding, we're just rotating people around old problems (Interview II-A8).

This fragmented support structure undermines the creative ecosystems ideal of mutual adaptation. In Taiwan, ecosystem thinking is rhetorically embraced but lacks structural realization, leaving administrators to pursue change without systemic backing. Informal negotiation becomes the default, but without institutional alignment, such efforts remain fragile and piecemeal.

Professional Gaps and Organizational Misalignment in Cultural-Tech Transitions

Despite policy ambitions for digital innovation and ecosystem integration, Taiwan's human resource systems remain primarily oriented toward regulatory compliance and administrative efficiency. Critical competencies, such as evaluating cultural-tech applications, negotiating with tech providers, or designing participatory digital experiences are largely absent from formal training pathways. As one government specialist observed, "Cultural administrators must evolve into platform-based network nodes to sustain creative flows, ...what matters most is giving the project officers full autonomy, it's important that the team feels a sense of accomplishment from what they do..." (Interview IO-A13). A bureau director echoed this view:

We can no longer just train executors; we need managers who understand cultural technology and industry logic...As intermediary personnel, we are insufficiently prepared; administrators should be further equipped with the general competencies required in contemporary cultural administration... (Interview I3-E4).

Across interviews, administrators consistently identified a widening gap between policy complexity and institutional capacity. Even in departments piloting 5G-based cultural projects, existing competency frameworks fail to equip personnel for the strategic and affective demands of immersive technologies. As one administrator put it: "Beyond administrative tasks, we must articulate immersive visions that inspire teams toward future-oriented outcomes" (Interview I2-A12). This misalignment is particularly visible in efforts to apply technologies like AR, VR, and 3D modeling to cultural heritage. A senior specialist described the dual challenge of technical mediation and public engagement:

We hope to revitalize heritage through creative reuse, via 3D modeling or immersive tech, but it's hard to produce immediate emotional resonance. If audiences can feel the aesthetic value of the technology, that's success. But that requires more than just technical delivery; it needs cultural interpretation (Interview II-A8).

Beyond audience experience, the same officer stressed the lack of market awareness within the public sector:

We don't typically think in terms of business models, but cultural innovation can't

ignore commercial logic, just look at how Google and AI changed everything. We must integrate cultural content with viable models to stay relevant. (Interview II-A8).

These reflections point to a systemic tension: while administrators are expected to serve as cross-sector strategists and cultural-technological interpreters, institutional infrastructures have not evolved to support these expanded roles. The absence of integrated training, professional recognition, and strategic alignment not only hampers policy implementation but also threatens the long-term resilience of Taiwan's cultural governance system.

From a creative ecologies' perspective, "change" is not reducible to top-down reform but emerges through situated agency, collective learning, and institutional flexibility (Howkins 2010; Chapain et al. 2010; Potts et al. 2008). While interview data show that administrators have responded resourcefully, navigating ambiguity, mediating values, and initiating local innovation, these practices remain structurally unsupported. The lack of institutional pathways for intermediary roles, knowledge co-production, and cross-sector continuity undermines broader policy aspirations.

In conclusion, the interviews highlight how paradigm shifts in governance require not only discursive and technological adaptation, but also systemic redesign. Without formal mechanisms for capacity-building and institutional alignment, local administrators remain burdened by unsupported innovation. Change, as understood through the creative ecologies lens, must be embedded within the institutional logic of governance, not left to the resilience of individuals alone.

Discussion and Conclusion

Reframing Intermediary Talent: Governance Capacities, Role Ambiguity, and Ecosystem Policy Gaps

The Ecological Shift and the Demand for Intermediary Talent

This study asked how the ecological transformation of CCI policy shapes demand for intermediary talent. The literature traced Taiwan's shift from industry-driven models to ecosystem-oriented frameworks, which discursively elevated intermediaries as strategic nodes. Yet intermediary talent remains conceptually ambiguous and institutionally unsupported. National strategies (e.g., TAICCA, 5G Innovation) emphasize cross-domain talent but target industry-facing competencies, overlooking governance roles rooted in policy translation, coordination, and cultural mediation.

Empirical findings reinforce this gap. Administrators demonstrate adaptation, resource integration, and narrative negotiation across policy, technology, and community domains, but these skills are cultivated informally. Their capacities highlight the contradiction between policy rhetoric and administrative reality: while ecosystems require adaptive governance talent, such talent emerges from improvisation rather than institutional planning. The vignettes of the Tainan-400 AR/VR project and the film-base coordination case illustrate this dynamic, showing administrators translating abstract policy into

culturally sensitive practice while managing institutional negotiations beyond their formal authority.

Administrator Self-Perception and Role Ambiguity

The second research question examined how local administrators perceive their roles under institutional constraints. While Western literature often classifies intermediaries as gatekeepers, brokers, or translators, Taiwan's administrators describe themselves as intermediaries operating under persistent role ambiguity. Their functions—coordinating actors, mediating cultural-technical conflicts, and translating abstract policy—are strategic yet structurally informal.

The Taiwan context intensifies these dynamics. Unlike South Korea's KOCCA or other institutionalized models, Taiwan's local intermediaries lack formal platforms for knowledge-sharing or cross-departmental integration, relying heavily on personal initiative. Their roles remain fluid, overlapping, and context-dependent, requiring simultaneous administrative, communicative, and creative work under shifting expectations. This paradox underscores their centrality to governance ecosystems while exposing their institutional invisibility.

These findings highlight a structural misalignment: cultural policy envisions ambitious ecosystems yet neglects the institutional conditions necessary for governance intermediaries to function effectively. Administrators' roles emerge not from clear mandates but from necessity and improvisation, sustaining adaptive networks under constraints. The creative ecologies framework—emphasizing diversity, adaptability, learning, and change—proves valuable but must be extended to address asymmetries in institutional support and recognition. In Taiwan, administrators are ecosystem actors by default, not by design, leaving their contributions precarious.

This study is bounded at the municipal level, with Tainan as the empirical case. Rather than representing Taiwan's governance as a whole, it highlights the intermediary challenges faced by one leading municipality under evolving policy frameworks. Its contribution is twofold: empirically, it documents the governance gaps and adaptive practices of municipal administrators; analytically, it foregrounds overlooked public-sector intermediaries in contexts where policy discourse privileges private-sector talent.

Policy Implications and Strategic Recommendations

To address the structural gaps identified in this study and fully leverage the intermediary potential of local cultural administrators, three interrelated strategies are proposed: (1) **Conceptual Inclusion:** Broaden national definitions of "intermediary talent" to formally recognize governance-oriented roles within public cultural institutions, particularly at the local level. This broader view should extend beyond cultural affairs bureaus to include officials from other divisions, such as smart development centers, who also pilot and advance cultural-tech initiatives. (2) **Structural Support:** Institutionalize intermediary functions by establishing cross-sector collaboration platforms, targeted training programs, and professional development pipelines aligned with the real-world demands of cultural

administration. **(3) Evaluation Reform:** Redefine performance metrics to reflect ecosystem health, such as institutional coordination, policy translation, and stakeholder engagement, rather than solely industrial outputs.

These recommendations reposition local administrators as strategic actors in Taiwan's evolving cultural governance. Their work in translating policy, mediating institutions, and facilitating cross-sector collaboration is foundational to ecosystem-oriented policy. Recognizing them as "intermediary talent" reflects the urgent need to integrate governance capacities into national talent frameworks. Sustained investment in their competencies, visibility, and institutional roles requires moving beyond fragmented, project-based deployment toward structural recognition and support.

This study, centered on Tainan, shows that cultural governance reform depends on strengthening municipal administrative capacities. Its contribution lies not in a national overview but in documenting the intermediary work of local administrators and the governance gaps they face. Policy discourses of "intermediary talent" have privileged market-facing roles while overlooking governance-side functions.

Policy recommendations are therefore directed at governance: (1) broaden national definitions of "intermediary talent" to include municipal administrators; (2) institutionalize support through cross-departmental platforms and targeted training; and (3) reform evaluation systems to emphasize ecosystem coordination rather than industrial outputs. These measures would ensure administrators' intermediary roles are structurally supported rather than left to informal improvisation.

By applying the creative ecologies framework to Taiwan's local governance context, this study highlights administrative labor as both a site of innovation and a lever for institutional learning. While the focus is municipal, the insights extend beyond Tainan, inviting comparative research across governance levels. Future studies might employ methods such as network analysis or benchmarking to map intermediary configurations and inform more inclusive and adaptive cultural policy reform.

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