

# Bibliometric Analysis of the Creative Economy: Exploring Key Themes and Research Developments

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## ABSTRACT

This study utilizes bibliometric analysis and network visualizations to examine the evolution and current state of creative economy research over the past two decades. By analyzing keyword co-occurrence and co-authorship networks, we identify central themes and trace collaborative patterns among researchers globally. Our findings highlight the critical roles of urban planning, sustainability, and economic development as recurring focal points within the creative economy discourse. International collaboration networks further reveal the United States, United Kingdom, and Germany as central hubs, facilitating significant scholarly exchange and driving research innovations. Temporal trends in publication volumes exhibit a marked growth in interest until 2022, followed by a slight decline, suggesting a phase of consolidation in the field. This study underscores the importance of creative industries in urban and regional development and points towards the necessity for innovative research approaches in the post-pandemic era, emphasizing technology integration and sustainability.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past 20 years, the creative economy—an economic system in which value is predominantly produced from knowledge and creativity rather than physical resources—has drawn a lot of attention. The phrase refers to a range of fields that are fueled by human ingenuity and intellectual capital, including the arts, media, and technology [1]. The creative economy is a key component of the conversation on sustainable economic development since the advent of digital technology has further accelerated the transformation of these industries [2]. Globally, nations are realizing how the

creative economy can boost social inclusion, create jobs, and rejuvenate metropolitan areas [3].

Studies on the creative economy have revealed a complex influence on social, economic, and cultural levels. According to [4], the creative industries frequently surpass more conventional businesses in terms of economic contribution to GDP and employment. In terms of culture, the creative economy encourages innovation and is essential to maintaining cultural legacy and advancing cultural diversity [5]. Socially, it promotes individual wellbeing and community involvement by offering forums

for communication and engagement [6]. Notwithstanding its increasing significance, the creative economy still faces obstacles such as uneven income distribution, unstable employment, and the requirement for stronger legislative frameworks to encourage creative pursuits [7].

A growing amount of literature has resulted from the academic community's interest in the creative economy, which reflects its cultural and economic relevance. A methodical approach to reviewing this vast body of literature is bibliometric analysis, which offers insights on the growth, dissemination, and current areas of focus of the field's study [8]. This approach not only aids in comprehending how themes have changed over time, but it also identifies the most significant research, writers, and regions that have contributed to the topic. To fully understand the multifaceted effects of the creative economy, such study is necessary. However, the field is characterized by rapid change due to technological advancements and shifting cultural trends, which continuously redefine the boundaries and applications of creativity in the economy. These dynamics pose a challenge for researchers and policymakers aiming to keep abreast of the latest developments and to leverage the creative sectors for broader economic and social goals [9].

While there is a consensus on the importance of the creative economy, there remains a gap in comprehensive and systematic analysis that tracks its research evolution. Existing literature reviews are often limited in scope and do not sufficiently cover the interdisciplinary nature or the global spread of creative economy research. This gap hinders the development of a coherent understanding of the field and its future trajectory, which is crucial for aligning academic insights with practical policy-making. This study's goal is to map out the major themes and advancements in research over the past 20 years by performing a bibliometric analysis of the literature on the creative economy. The goal of this analysis is to pinpoint the field's main areas of research,

significant contributions, and emerging trends.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 *Overview of the Creative Economy*

The concept of the creative economy has been a subject of scholarly interest since the late 1990s, largely popularized by the works of [10] and [3]. Howkins emphasized the role of creativity in generating economic value through intellectual property, spanning various sectors such as advertising, architecture, arts, crafts, design, fashion, film, video, photography, music, performing arts, publishing, research & development, software, toys and games, TV and radio, and video games [10]. Florida, on the other hand, introduced the notion of the creative class and argued that the economic success of cities is driven by their ability to attract creative talents who foster an open, dynamic, and creative environment [3].

### 2.2 *Economic Impact of the Creative Economy*

The creative economy is not only a catalyst for generating income and jobs but also a significant contributor to GDP in many countries. According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the global trade of creative goods and services totaled a record \$624 billion in 2011 and has continued to grow [2]. This sector is particularly robust in developing economies, where it is growing at a fast pace and contributing significantly to GDP [11]. The creative industries are also linked to higher levels of innovation and have a spillover effect into other sectors, enhancing overall economic resilience [12].

### 2.3 *Cultural and Social Implications*

Culturally, the creative economy plays a crucial role in promoting cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue, thereby contributing to social cohesion and well-being. UNESCO has emphasized the role of the creative economy as a site of social innovation and a potent factor in fostering civic participation, cultural diversity, and human development [5]. From a social perspective, creative industries provide platforms for social inclusion, community

engagement, and personal development. They are particularly effective in engaging with marginalized communities and providing them with the means to express themselves and their cultural identities [6].

#### **2.4 Challenges in the Creative Economy**

Despite its growth, the creative economy faces several challenges. These include the precarious nature of work, the uneven distribution of wealth, intellectual property issues, and significant reliance on small-to-medium enterprises (SMEs) which are often vulnerable to economic fluctuations [7]. Additionally, the digital divide can exacerbate inequalities within the creative sectors, limiting access to digital tools and markets for underprivileged creators [13].

#### **2.5 Theoretical Frameworks**

##### **1) The Theory of the Creative Class**

Richard Florida's theory of the creative class proposes that the most significant economic contributions come from those who innovate. The creative class—comprising scientists, engineers, educators, writers, artists, and entertainers—is purported to solve complex problems, discover new technologies, and create new businesses, thereby fostering a competitive urban environment [3]. This theory has influenced urban policy makers worldwide to cultivate environments that attract creative professionals, thereby driving economic growth.

##### **2) Systems Approach to Creativity**

Csikszentmihalyi's systems model of creativity emphasizes that creativity results from the interaction between an individual's domain skills, the field which includes all relevant actors, and the cultural context that provides recognition to creative contributions [14]. This framework is particularly relevant in understanding how creative ideas emerge and gain acceptance within the creative economy. It highlights the need for supportive policies that cultivate creativity across all levels of education and professional development.

##### **3) The Spillover Theory**

The spillover theory in economics suggests that the benefits gained in one area of economic activity can 'spill over' to benefit other areas. In the context of the creative economy, creative industries contribute to the dynamism of urban economies by promoting greater economic diversity and fostering innovation across different sectors [12]. This theoretical perspective supports the integration of creative industries within broader economic policies and urban development strategies.

##### **4) The Dual Pathway to Creativity Model**

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Gregory Feist's dual pathway to creativity model posits that creativity results from two distinct but interrelated processes: a cognitive pathway, which involves breaking problems into manageable parts and solving them using logical reasoning; and an affective pathway, which involves using emotional experiences as a springboard for creative expression [14]. This model helps to explain the individual and psychological factors that influence creativity within the creative economy.

### **3. METHODS**

This study employs bibliometric analysis to systematically review the extant literature on the creative economy. We utilized the Scopus database to extract relevant academic publications using keywords such as "creative economy," "creative industries," and "cultural economy" for articles published between 2002 and 2023. The data collected included publication year, authorship, citation count, journal name, and geographical distribution of the research. VOSviewer software was utilized for data visualization, enabling the identification of key themes, citation networks, and the most influential authors and publications within the field.

### **4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **4.1 Yearly Publication**

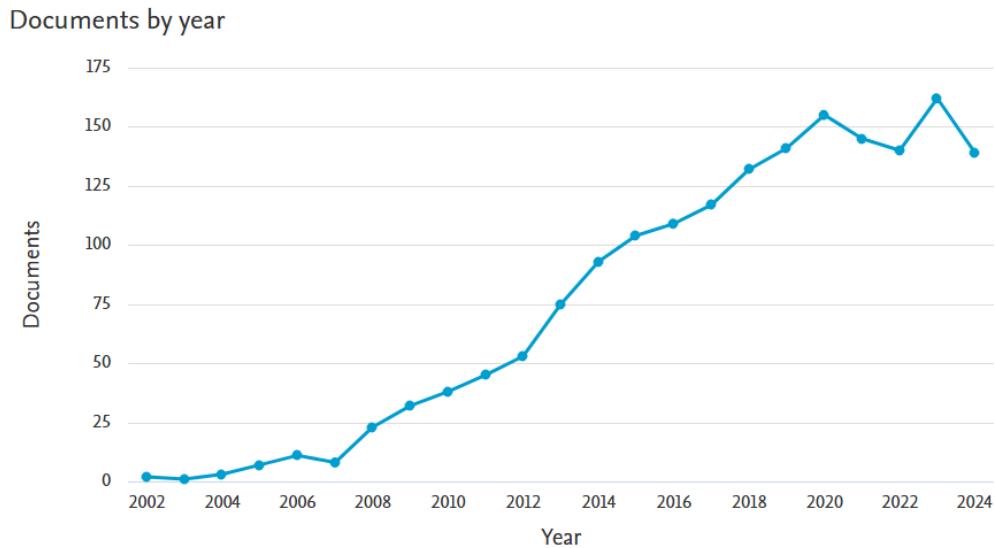


Figure 1. Yearly Publication Graph

Source: Data Analysis, 2024

The line graph presented displays the trend of document publications by year, spanning from 2002 to 2024. It illustrates a general upward trajectory in the number of documents published annually over the 22-year period, indicative of growing research interest or output in a specific field. Starting from a modest count near 25 documents in 2002, the trend exhibits a relatively steady increase until around 2014, after which the growth becomes more pronounced, peaking at just over 175 documents by 2022. However,

the graph shows a slight decline in publications in the subsequent years, dropping to just under 150 documents by 2024. This could suggest a saturation of research interest, shifts in academic focus, or external factors influencing research output. Overall, the graph highlights significant growth in research activity over the observed period, with a recent mild reduction in the volume of publications.

4.2 Keyword Co-Occurrence

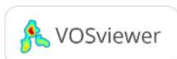
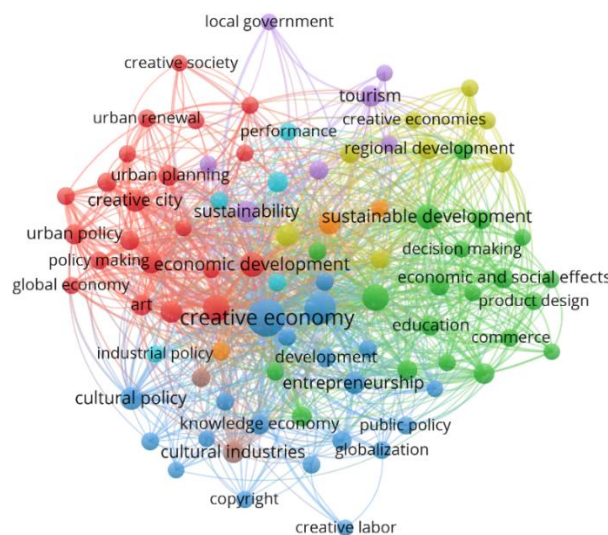


Figure 2. Network Visualization

Source: Data Analysis, 2024

A bibliometric network study of research subjects in the creative economy is

represented by this visualization. A particular study topic or phrase is represented by each

node (circle) in the network, and the size of each node shows how frequently or how important the topic is in the data set that was gathered. The connections or co-occurrences between these subjects in academic publications are shown by the lines joining the nodes. Clusters of linked subjects are distinguished by color, indicating thematic groupings that have been common in study on the creative economy.

The red cluster primarily focuses on urban-centric themes, including 'urban policy', 'urban planning', and 'urban renewal'. This suggests a significant emphasis on how cities are central to the development and policy-making in the creative economy. These topics are linked with 'sustainability' and 'economic development', indicating a strong narrative on how urban areas evolve with a conscious integration of sustainable practices and economic planning to foster creative industries. The green cluster revolves around 'cultural policy', 'knowledge economy', 'cultural industries', and 'entrepreneurship'. This indicates a scholarly focus on the

underlying economic and policy frameworks that support the cultural aspects of the creative economy. This cluster is closely linked to the development of policies that support entrepreneurship within cultural industries and the broader implications for global economic structures, such as 'globalization' and 'public policy'. The blue and yellow clusters seem to incorporate elements related to 'education', 'tourism', 'creative labor', and 'regional development'. These connections highlight the multidisciplinary approach to creative economy research, linking educational strategies, labor market dynamics, and the role of tourism in regional economic strategies. The network also suggests an integration of creativity into broader economic and social planning, reflecting the diverse impacts of the creative economy on various aspects of regional and global development.

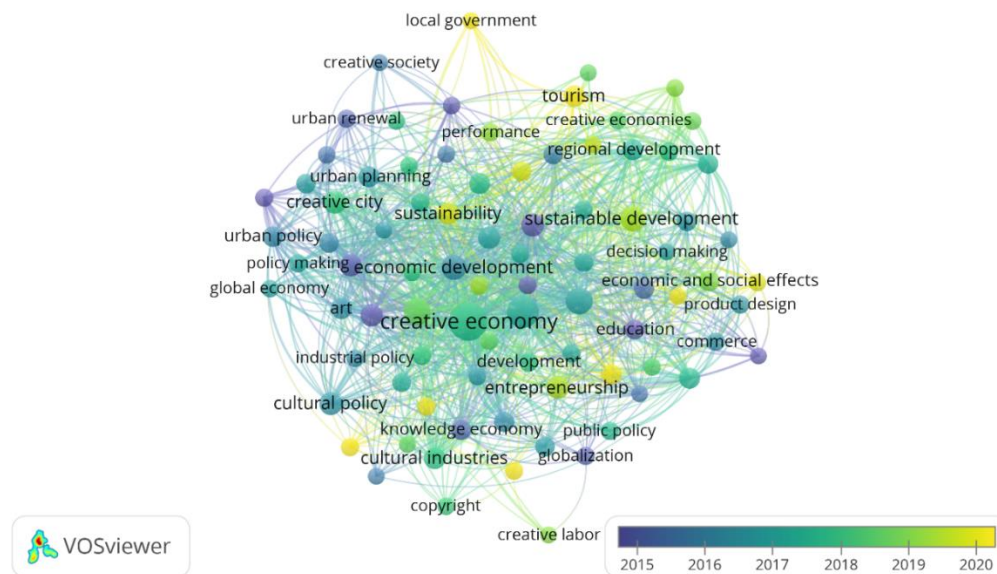


Figure 3. Overlay Visualization

Source: Data Analysis, 2024

In the visualization, the shift from blue to yellow across certain nodes suggests that newer topics or those gaining traction are increasingly linked to 'education', 'tourism', and 'regional development'. This trend indicates a growing scholarly interest in

exploring how the creative economy impacts regional economic strategies and how educational frameworks can support creative industries. Furthermore, the proximity of 'tourism' to 'sustainable development' and 'economic and social effects' highlights a

significant interdisciplinary focus, suggesting that tourism-related research in the creative economy increasingly considers sustainability and broad socio-economic outcomes. The network also underscores the enduring centrality of 'creative city' and 'sustainability'

themes in creative economy research. These areas, showing a consistent research interest over time, indicate a robust academic focus on urban development and sustainable practices within creative industries.

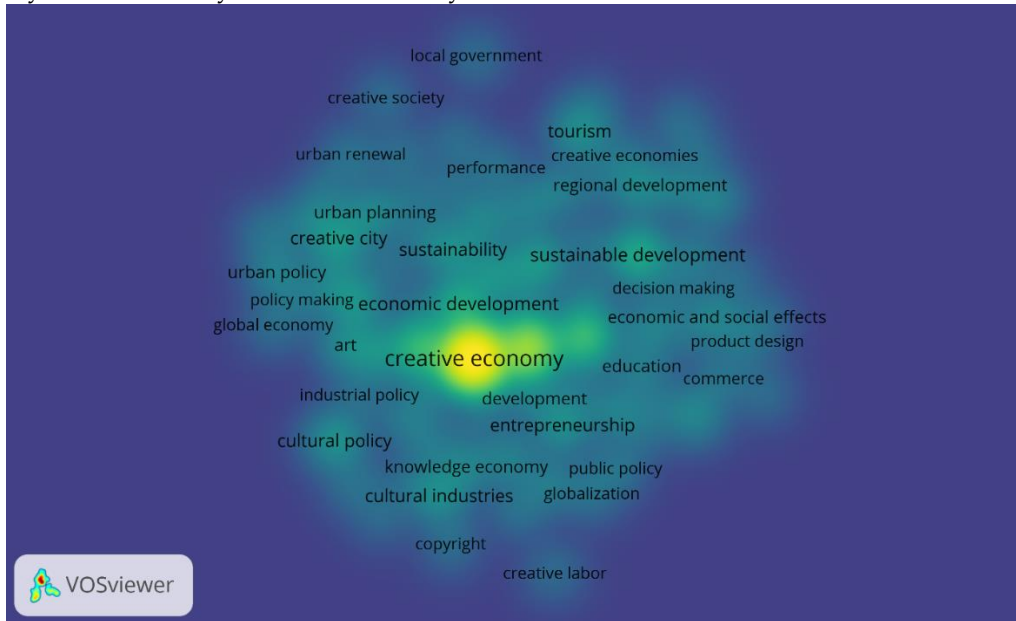


Figure 4. Density Visualization  
Source: Data Analysis, 2024

This heatmap visualization provides an analysis of keyword co-occurrence within the realm of creative economy research. The distribution of nodes across the visualization illustrates the interconnectedness of various themes, with the central node labeled 'creative economy' indicating it as the focal point of the discourse. Surrounding this core are clusters of closely related topics such as 'economic development', 'sustainability', 'urban planning', and 'creative city', which are prominent in current research. The clustering of these terms highlights a strong thematic focus on the integration of creativity within urban development and policy-making

frameworks, emphasizing the role of creativity in fostering sustainable and economically vibrant urban environments. The outer nodes such as 'tourism', 'education', 'commerce', and 'globalization' suggest broader applications of creative economy principles, extending into global commerce and education sectors. The visualization indicates that while 'tourism' and 'regional development' are closely associated with 'sustainable development', they also connect with 'economic and social effects', demonstrating a multidimensional impact on regional economies.

4.3 Top Literature

Table 1. Top Cited Literature

Citations	Authors	Title
550	[15]	Cultural tourism: A review of recent research and trends
484	[16]	(Not) getting paid to do what you love: Gender, social media, and aspirational work
347	[17]	Rules of the game: The place of institutions in regional economic change
269	[18]	Behaviour, preferences and cities: Urban theory and urban resurgence
264	[19]	The creative industries: Culture and policy
252	[20]	Looking for work in creative industries policy



234	[21]	Rethinking the creative city: The role of complexity, networks and interactions in the urban creative economy
234	[22]	Defining the creative economy: Industry and occupational approaches
215	[23]	Creative small cities: Rethinking the creative economy in place
195	[24]	Creative and cultural work without filters: Covid-19 and exposed precarity in the creative economy

4.4 Co-Authorship Network

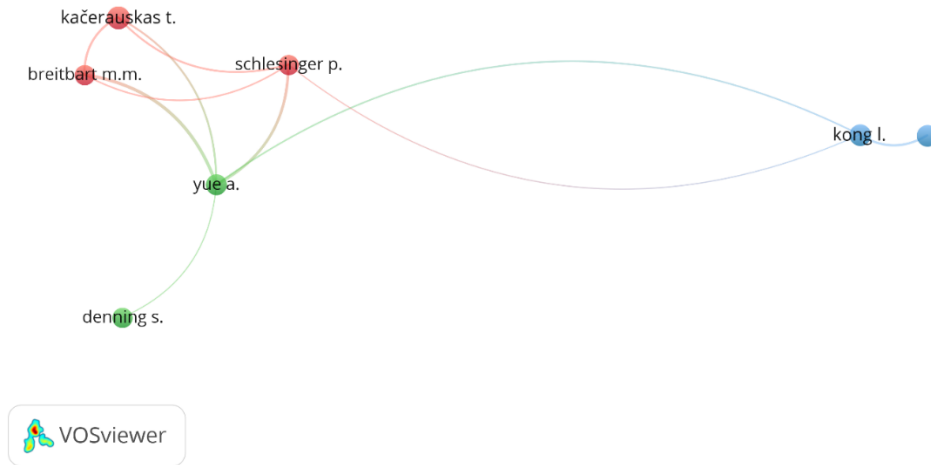


Figure 5. Author Visualization

Source: Data Analysis, 2024

This visualization depicts a bibliometric network analysis of co-authorship within a specific academic field, as illustrated by the mapping of connections between various researchers. Each node represents an individual researcher, and the lines between them signify co-authorship relationships on one or more publications. The distinct node 'Kong L.', isolated on the right side of the visualization and connected to the main cluster by a single line, indicates a

collaboration with one of the central figures in the network, possibly 'Schlesinger P.', but remains otherwise peripheral to the main cluster of co-authors. This suggests that while 'Kong L.' has engaged with the core research group, his or her collaborations are not as integrated as those among the central cluster, which includes 'Yue A.', 'Breitbart M.M.', 'Denning S.', and others.

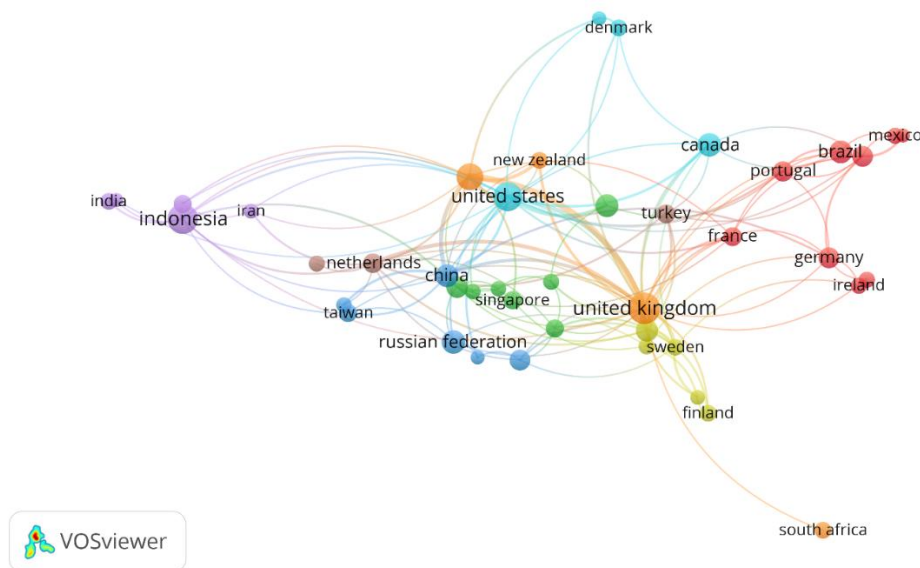


Figure 6. Country Visualization

Source: Data Analysis, 2024

This VOSviewer visualization illustrates the international collaboration network among various countries based on shared research publications. Nodes represent individual countries, and the lines between them indicate collaborative relationships, with the thickness of these lines suggesting the volume of co-authored publications. The United States, United Kingdom, and Germany, indicated by larger nodes, serve as central hubs in the network, implying a high degree of international collaboration. This centrality suggests that these countries are key players in global research, contributing extensively to and drawing from international academic partnerships. The diverse range of connections, such as those extending to China, India, and Brazil, highlights the global nature of scientific research and the importance of cross-border collaboration in advancing knowledge. The different colors may represent geographical regions or different clusters of research collaboration, showing how countries within certain regions or with specific mutual interests tend to collaborate more closely.

## DISCUSSION

### *Key Themes in Creative Economy Research*

The visualizations of keyword co-occurrence reveal that the core focus of research in the creative economy revolves around the integration of creativity with urban planning, sustainability, and economic development. Central terms such as 'creative economy,' 'urban policy,' 'sustainability,' and 'economic development' are not only frequently explored but are also pivotal to the discourse, indicating an ongoing emphasis on how urban environments can harness creative industries for broader economic and social benefits. This aligns with literature that identifies urban centers as catalysts for innovation and economic growth within the creative sectors [3]. Furthermore, the connection between 'tourism' and 'regional development' emphasizes the role of the creative economy in enhancing regional attractiveness and economic diversity. This

suggests a growing scholarly interest in exploring sustainable tourism as an integral component of the creative economy, which supports broader regional development strategies [25].

### *Global Research Collaborations*

The network visualizations of country collaborations in research publications highlight the United States, the United Kingdom, and Germany as central nodes. These countries are not only leaders in creative economy research but also act as pivotal connectors in international scholarly networks. Their central role in the network demonstrates their capacity to foster substantial international collaborations, which are crucial for the advancement of global knowledge in the creative economy. The visualizations also illustrate the broad geographical diversity in collaborations, with significant participation from countries like China, India, and Brazil. This reflects a global acknowledgment of the importance of the creative economy and suggests a universal shift towards embracing creative industries as a vehicle for sustainable economic and social development.

### *Co-Authorship Dynamics*

Analysis of co-authorship networks provides insights into the collaborative nature of creative economy research. Researchers such as Kong L., although less central, show connections to primary clusters, indicating selective but potentially strategic collaborations that could bridge different research clusters or introduce interdisciplinary perspectives to the field.

### *Temporal Trends in Publication Volumes*

The trend analysis of documents by year indicates a steady increase in the number of publications from 2002 to 2022, with a slight decline thereafter. This could be attributed to various factors including shifts in research funding, changes in publication practices, or a natural plateau following a period of intense development in the field. The initial growth phase reflects a burgeoning interest and the establishment of the creative economy as a significant area of academic inquiry. The



recent decline might suggest a maturation of the field or a temporary saturation in topics explored.

#### *Implications for Future Research*

The findings from the bibliometric analysis and network visualizations suggest several implications for future research in the creative economy. First, there is a need for continued exploration of how creative industries can be integrated with urban development and sustainability initiatives, particularly in non-traditional settings or emerging economies. Second, the role of digital technologies and innovation in transforming the creative sectors appears to be underexplored, particularly in the context of post-pandemic recovery and adaptation strategies. Moreover, the slight decline in publication numbers suggests that there may be new opportunities to explore untapped or emerging topics within the creative economy. These might include the impact of global crises on creative industries, the role of artificial intelligence and automation in creative processes, and the exploration of new models for creative entrepreneurship that emphasize social and environmental sustainability.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The comprehensive bibliometric analysis and network visualizations conducted in this study highlight the dynamic and evolving landscape of creative economy research. Central themes such as urban development, sustainability, and economic growth underscore the significant role of creative industries in fostering innovative, economically vibrant, and sustainable urban environments. The robust international collaborations, particularly involving key nodes like the United States, the United Kingdom, and Germany, reflect the global importance of the creative economy and underscore a widespread recognition across diverse geographical regions. The temporal publication trends reveal a maturation of the field with a recent slight decline in outputs, suggesting potential shifts in research focus or emerging saturation points. As the creative economy continues to integrate deeper into global economic strategies, this study provides crucial insights for future research directions, emphasizing the need for innovative approaches to harness the potential of creative industries for sustainable development. Moving forward, embracing interdisciplinary methods and exploring new technological impacts within the creative sectors will be vital in addressing the complex challenges of contemporary economic landscapes.

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