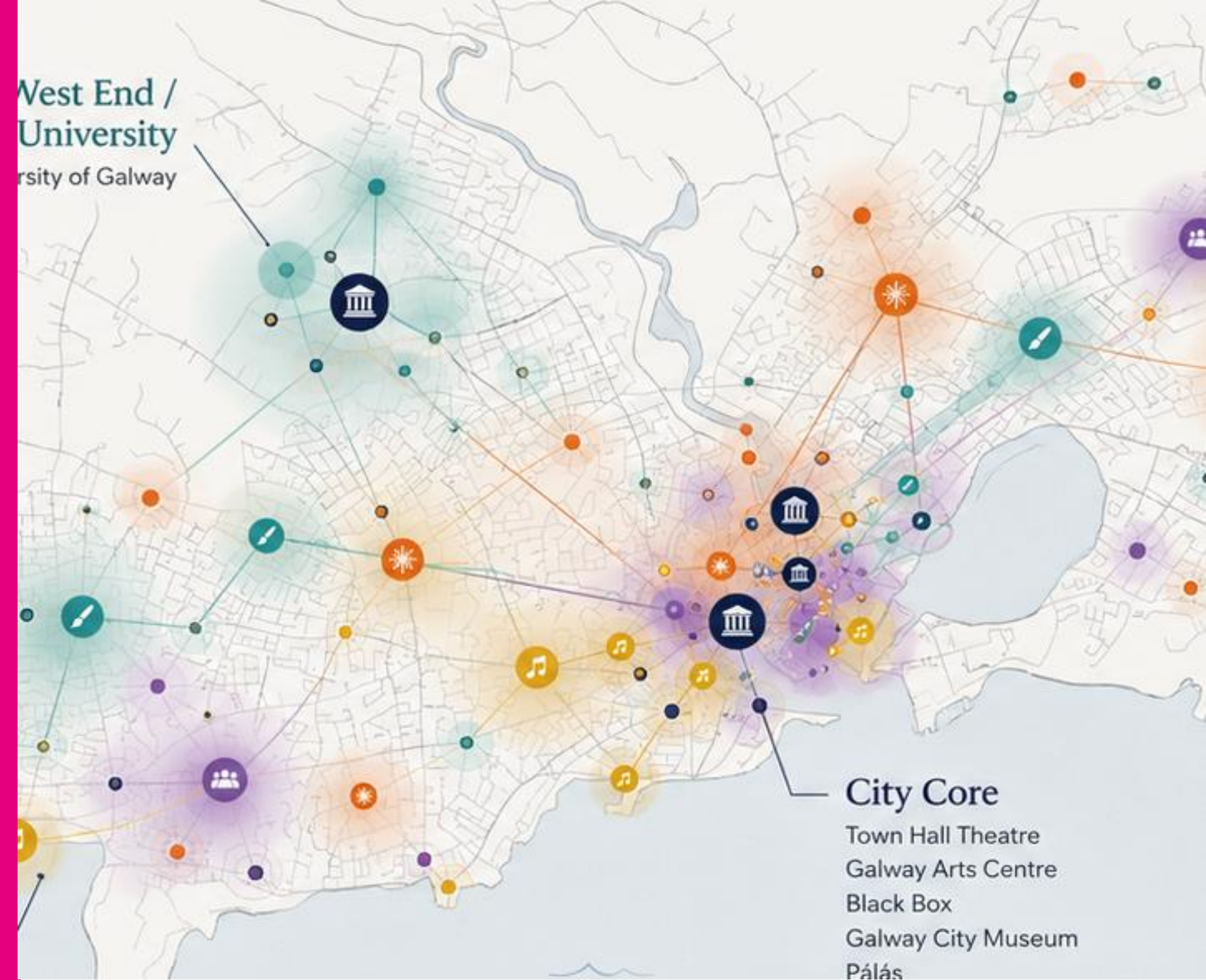




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Creative Ecosystem Change: Mapping the expected and unexpected

Cultural Planning Meeting, Helsinki, June 11.



Patrick Collins – Head of Geography and UrbanLab Galway

Contents

- My journey
- Economic Geography and understanding place
- Economic Geography of creativity and culture
- Galway
- Evolutionary Change and Ecosystems Thinking
- Ecosystems Change and the INSITU Project.
- An UrbanLab Approach

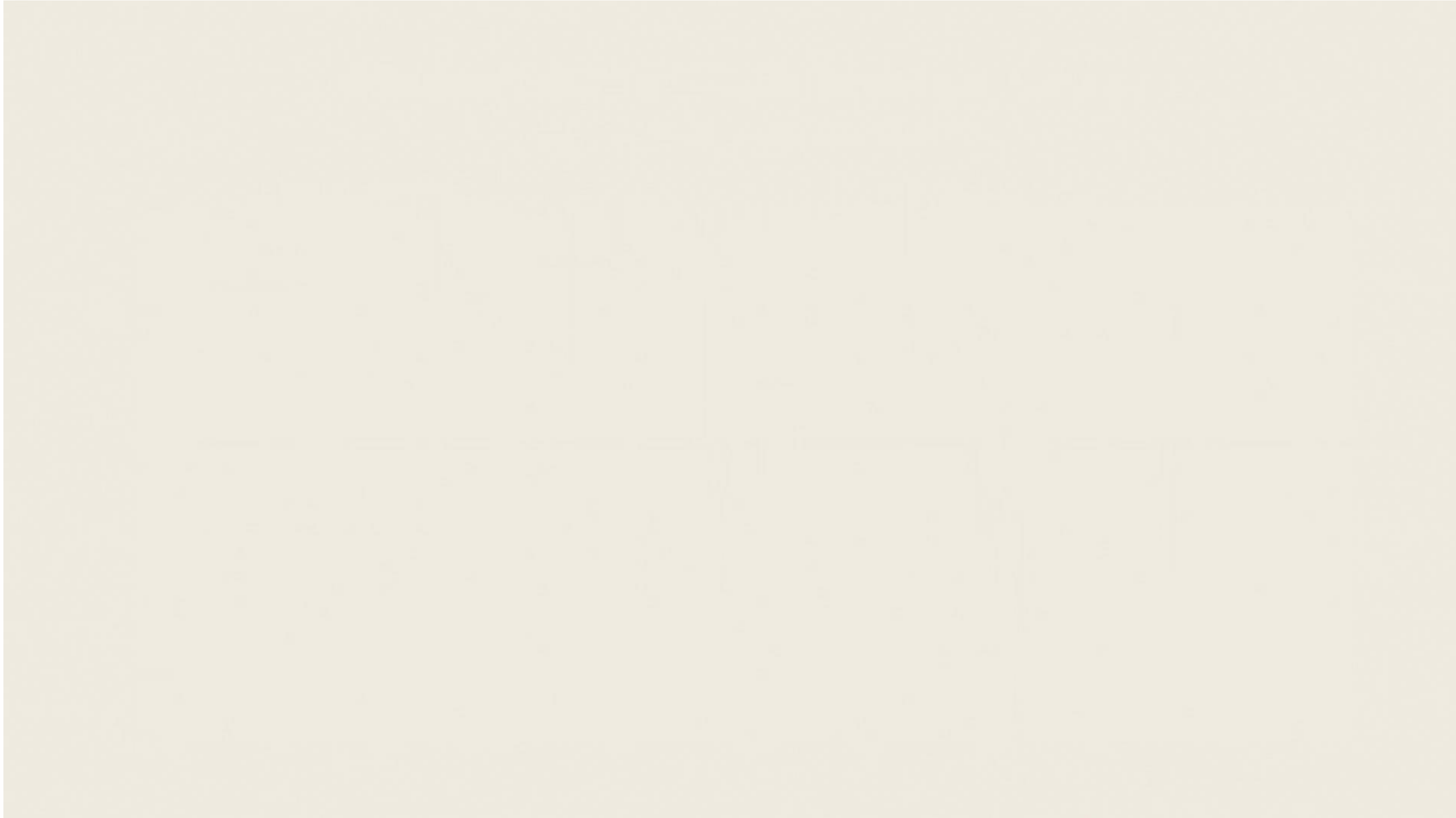


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As a Geographer...



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9 of the top 10 tech companies

- One small island nation of increasing significance within the global financial flows.
- In the midst of slippery spaces, CULTURE remained sticky.
- “There is something about this place...” “It is always easy to make the case for Ireland...” “We find it easy to attract staff from anywhere...” “Its that kind of critical creativity that helps us stand out from the rest”...

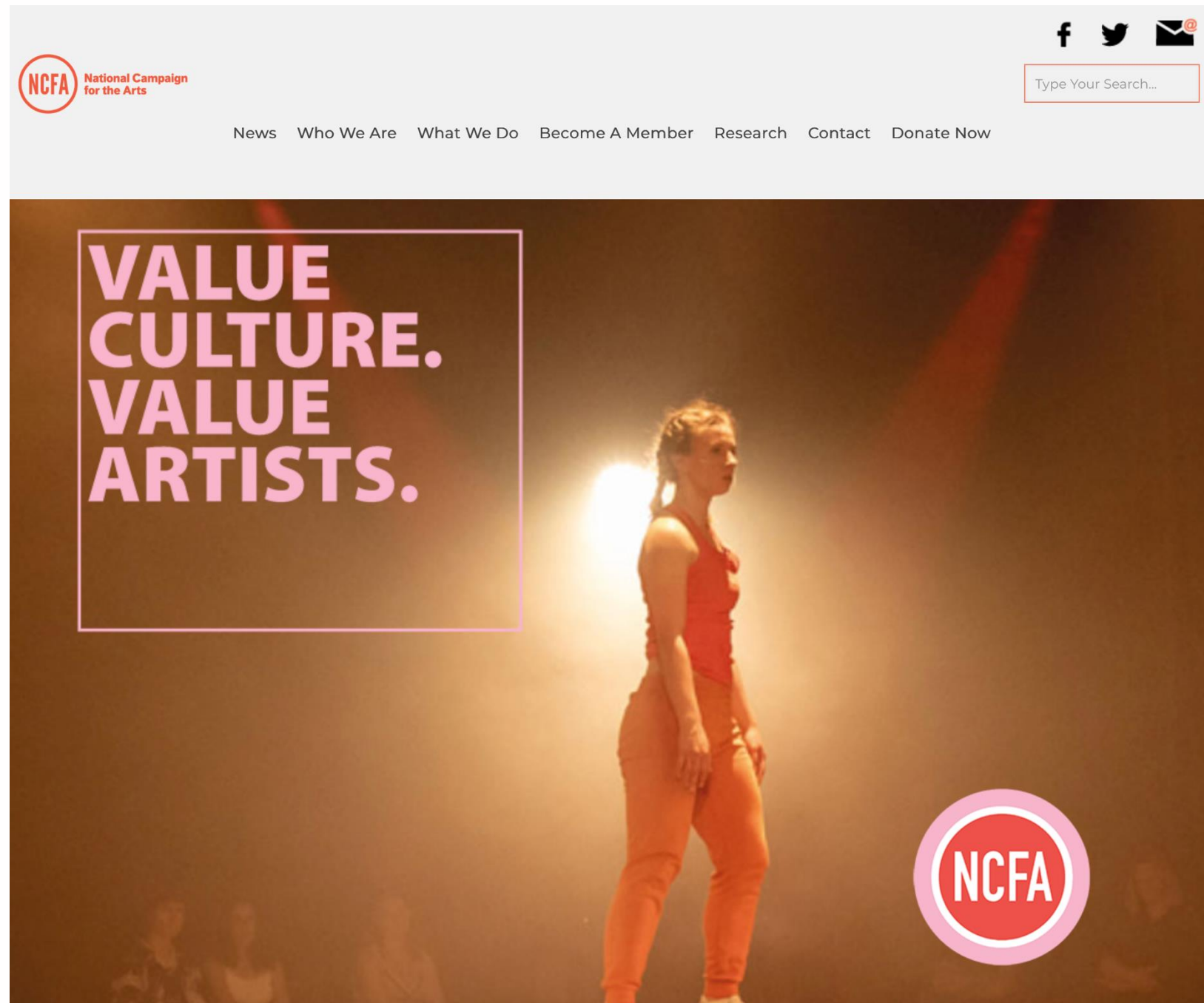


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Dublin – European HQ

New conversations about Culture...



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Start of a long search to make that case

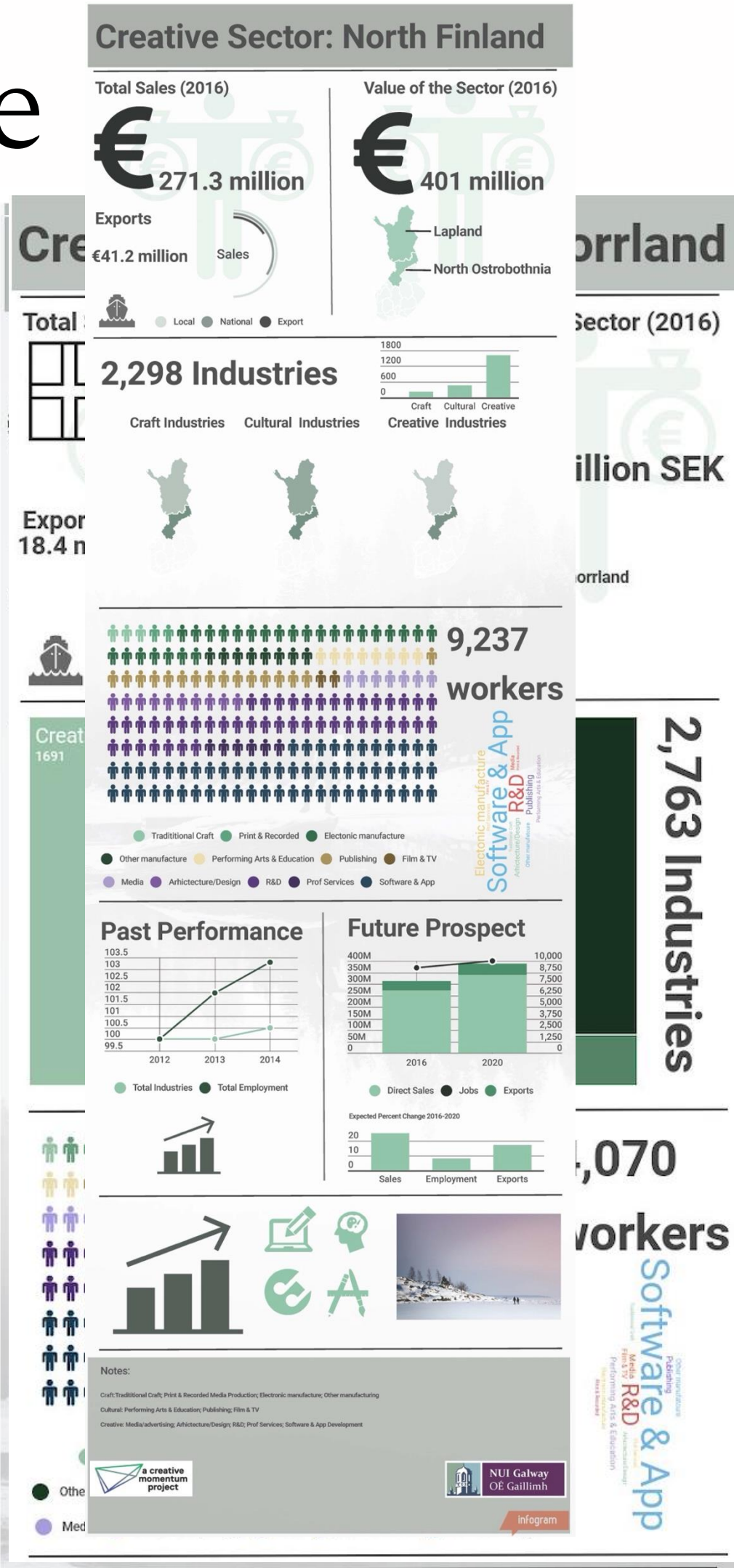
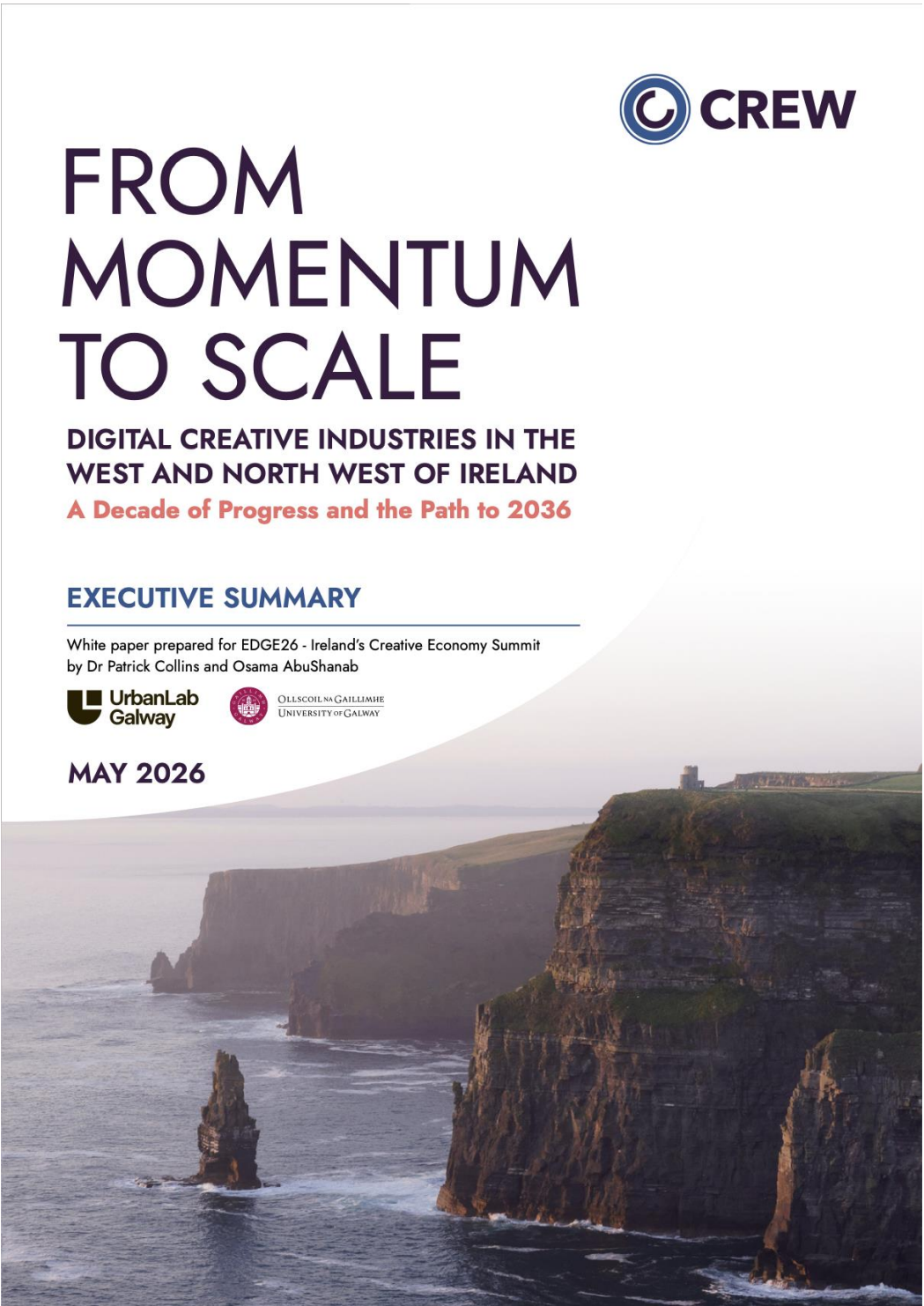
- (post 2008, the only case to be made was economic)

DIGITAL CREATIVE INDUSTRIES COUNT

0,000



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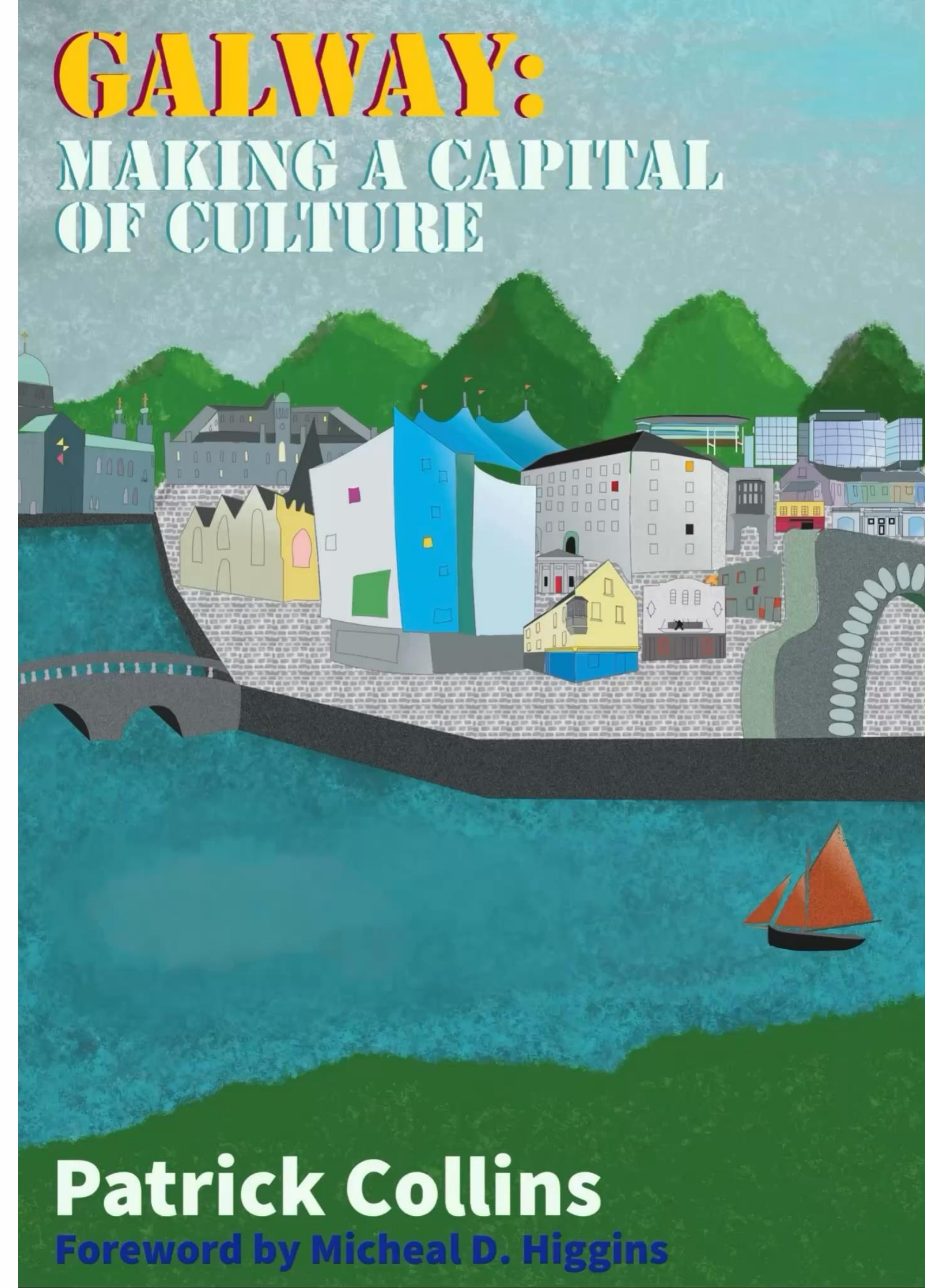


Book (2023)

- Afforded the opportunity to look deeper
- History / Landscape / Loss
- The three waves
 - 'The Real Ireland'
 - 'A site for experimentation'
 - 'The third wave'



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An ecosystems approach...

- If culture works as an ecosystem, then we need better ways to understand change within that ecosystem. Not just employment or output, but capacity, connectivity, participation, visibility, resilience, embeddedness and place-based distinctiveness. The point is not to abandon measurement. It is to measure more intelligently. Culture produces economic value, but it also produces social, civic, symbolic and spatial value. It helps places hold memory, create belonging, support experimentation and imagine futures.
- Forthcoming book "Situating Culture" with Nancy Duxbury.



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Situating culture: Exploring culture and creativity beyond the city

Nancy Duxbury
Patrick Collins
Mark Justin Rainey
(EDS.)



 **IN SITU**
place-based innovation of
cultural and creative industries
in non-urban areas

 **IN SITU**
place-based innovation of
cultural and creative industries
in non-urban areas

(GA Project 101061747)

An ecosystems approach...

The challenge is to measure cultural value in places where culture is often distributed, seasonal, relational and unevenly visible.

NON-URBAN ECOSYSTEMS ALSO DEPEND ON

- small organisations and voluntary capacity
- festivals, events and seasonal intensity
- informal networks and local embeddedness
- symbolic visibility and digital discoverability



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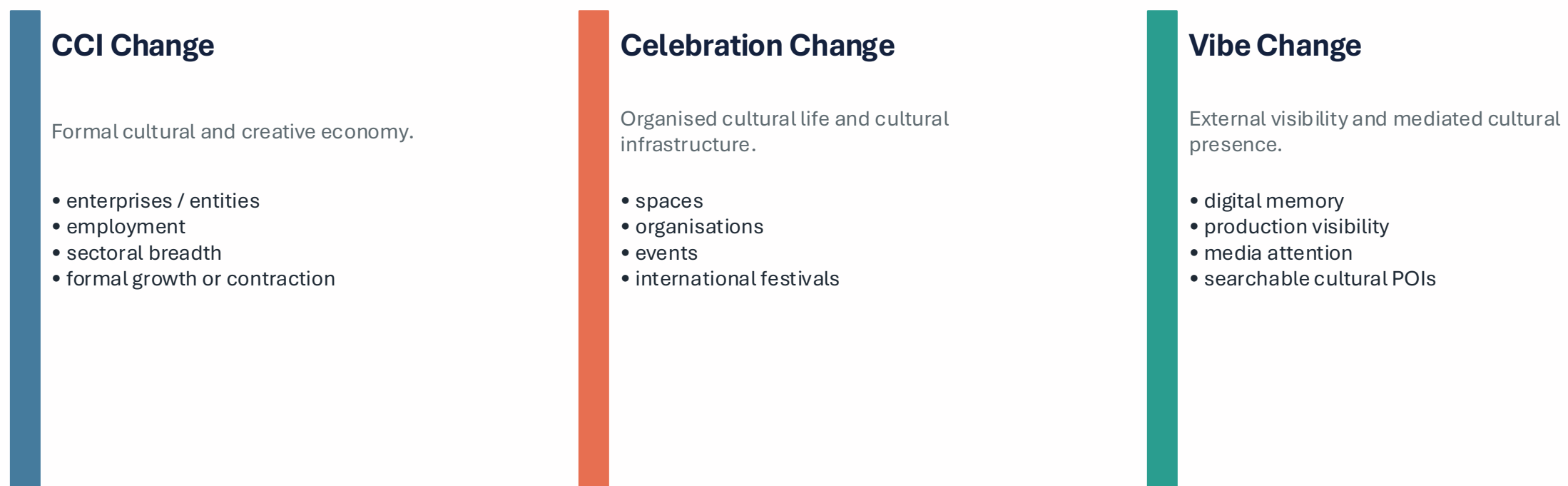
The Index widens the lens from cultural economy alone to cultural ECOSYSTEM change.



(GA Project 101061747)

An ecosystems approach...

The headline score is built from three sub-indices. Each captures a different layer of cultural ecosystem change between the 2021 baseline and 2024 endline.



The aim is not to rank cultural worth, but to distinguish different pathways of change.



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(GA Project 101061747)

From indicators to headline scores

METHOD

- 1

Establish 2021 baseline
- 2

Measure 2024 endline
- 3

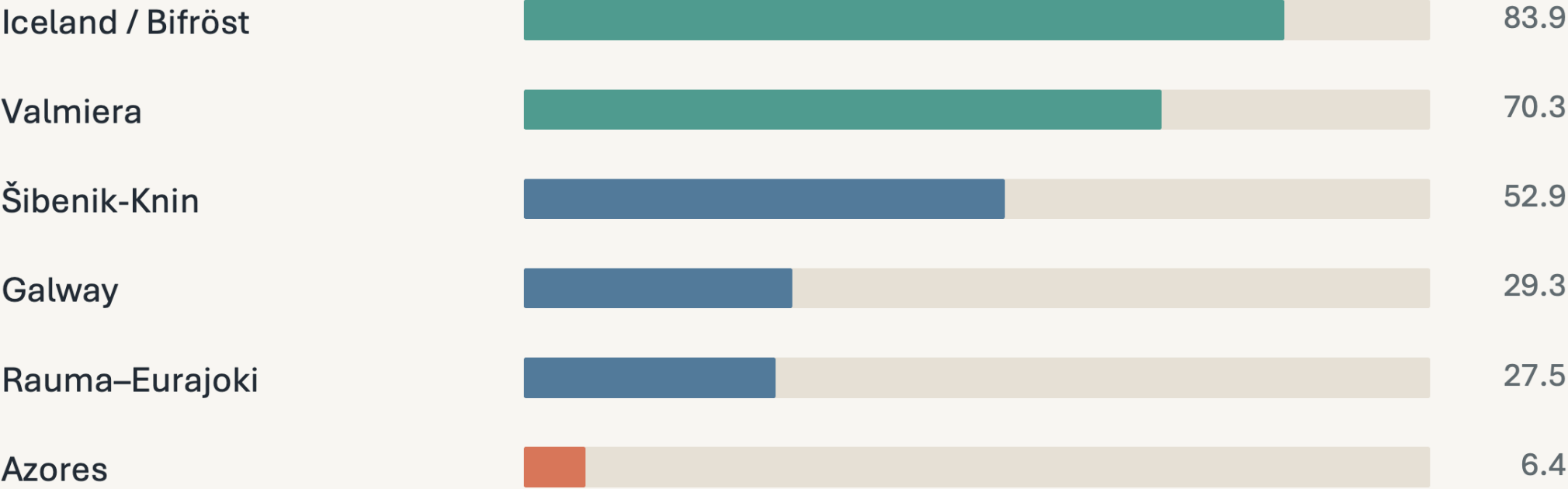
Calculate change by indicator
- 4

Aggregate into three sub-indices
- 5

Normalise each sub-index 0–100
- 6

Equal-weight mean headline score

HEADLINE INDEX



PILLAR SCORES

Region	CCI	Celebr.	Vibe	Head.
Iceland / Bifröst	87.5	100.0	64.2	83.9
Valmiera	53.3	57.5	100.0	70.3
Šibenik-Knin	100.0	43.4	15.3	52.9
Galway	55.5	18.9	13.4	29.3
Rauma–Eurajoki	45.8	36.8	0.0	27.5
Azores	0.0	0.0	19.1	6.4

The final score is a relative measure of change across the six INSITU regions, not a judgement of absolute cultural superiority.



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What the index reveals



Cultural change in non-urban regions is not one-dimensional. Different places move through different combinations of formal industry, organised cultural life and mediated visibility.

Empirical

A structured comparison of cultural ecosystem change across six non-urban European regions.

Methodological

A composite approach combining economic data, cultural infrastructure and digital/mediated visibility.

Policy-facing

A diagnostic tool for identifying whether intervention is needed in enterprise support, infrastructure, festival capacity, visibility or discoverability.

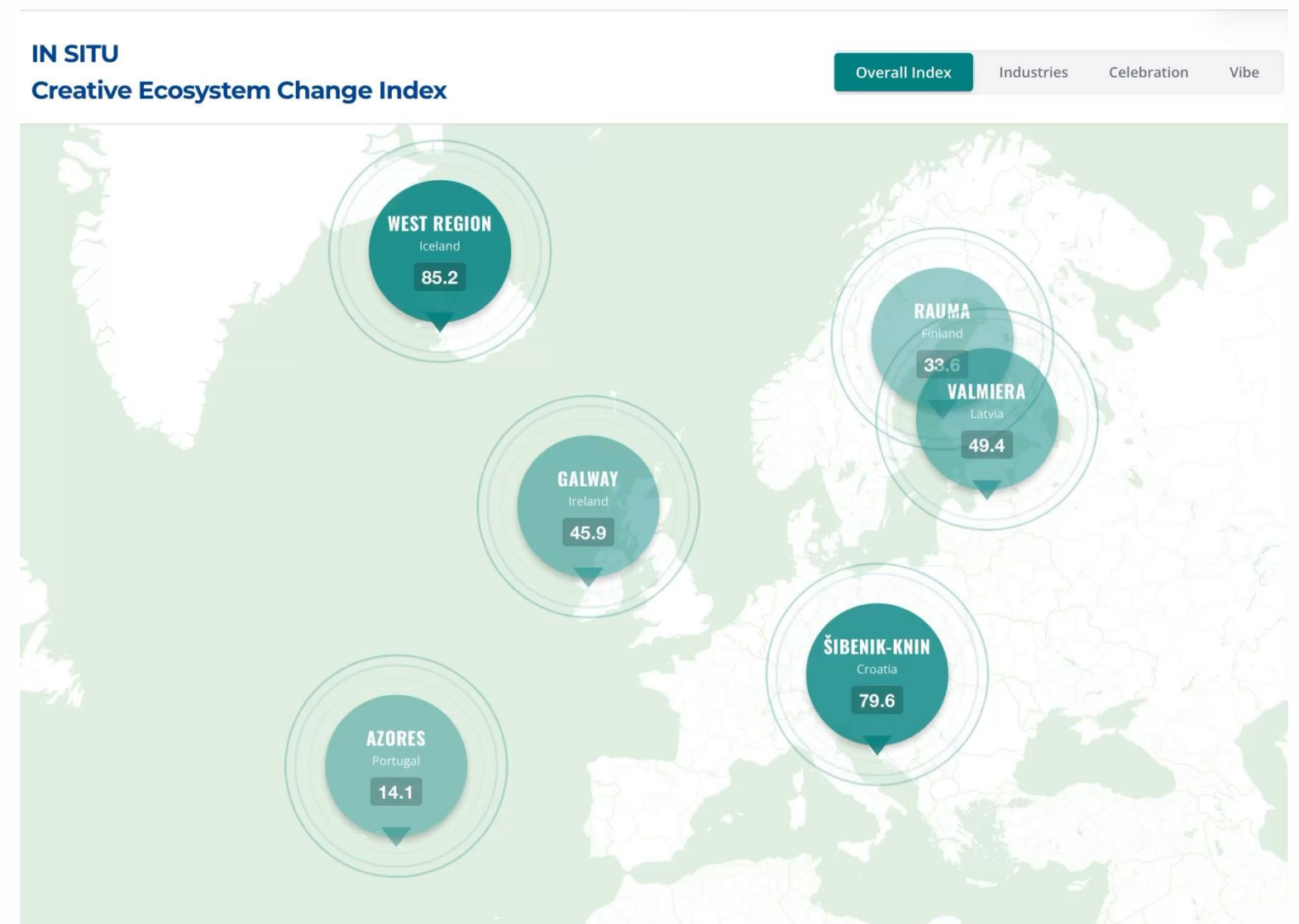
The Index does not replace qualitative interpretation; it gives us a structured way to ask better questions about cultural value, change and place.

An ecosystems approach...

- If culture works as an ecosystem, then we need better ways to understand change within that ecosystem. Not just employment or output, but capacity, connectivity, participation, visibility, resilience, embeddedness and place-based distinctiveness. The point is not to abandon measurement. It is to measure more intelligently. Culture produces economic value, but it also produces social, civic, symbolic and spatial value. It helps places hold memory, create belonging, support experimentation and imagine futures.
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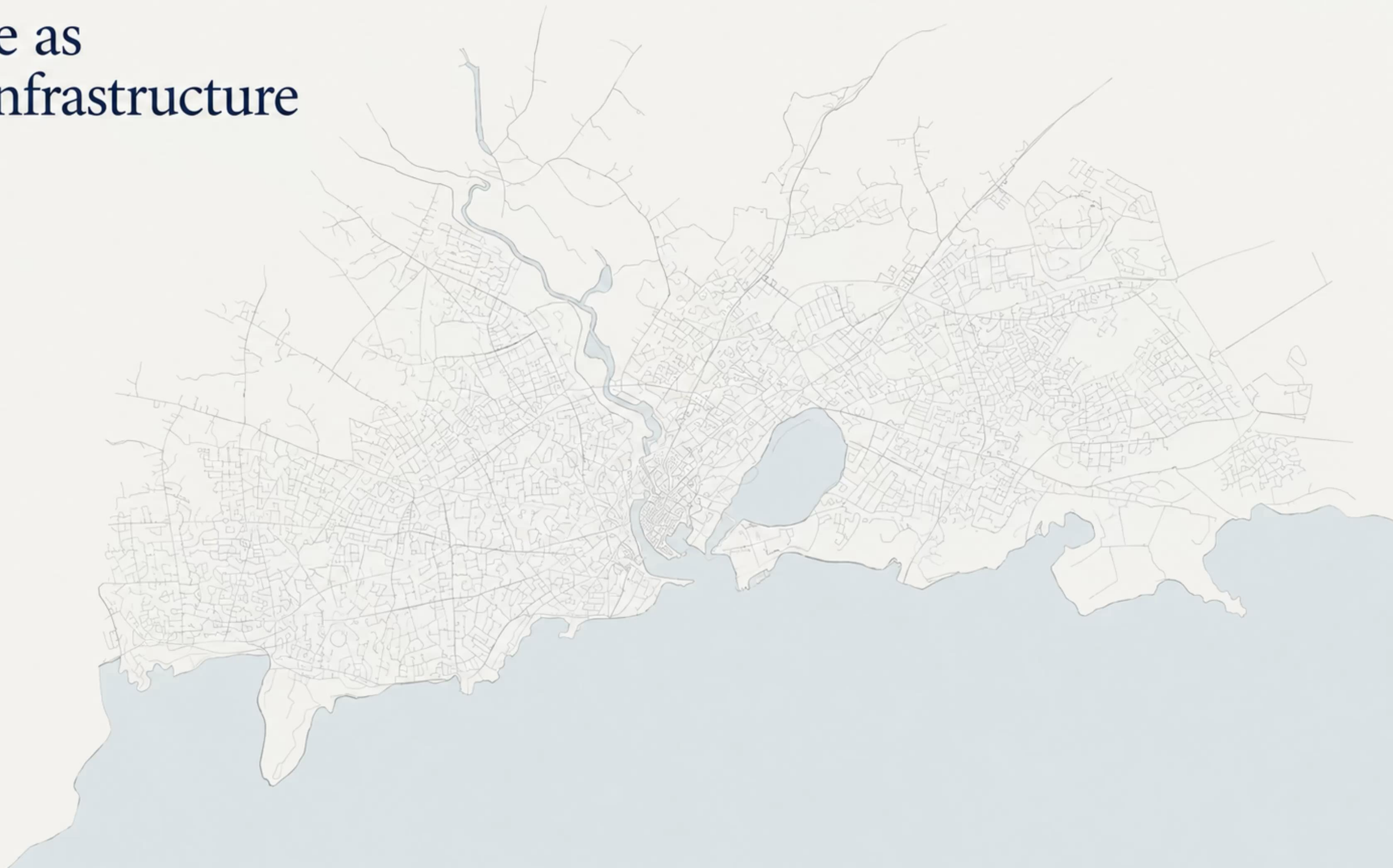


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Culture as Civic Infrastructure





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€1.1 million URDF funded building

- A new public-facing space for research and civic engagement in Galway.
- Designed to connect researchers, students, communities and policy actors.
- Moves beyond one-off outreach towards sustained public participation.
- Creates a place where knowledge can be made visible, accessible and useful.
- An open invite to help make the case for Culture!



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Thank you

Kiitos