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Policy terminology, administrative interpretation, and cultural and creative industries governance: evidence from Vietnam's transitional policy context

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This article examines how policy terms with different administrative status are interpreted in Vietnam's governance of cultural and creative industries (CCIs). The study draws on seventeen documentary sources (sixteen official policy/administrative texts and one independent field assessment), eight official speeches, public statements, and policy announcements, and ten focal participant records generated through semi-structured interviews and field-based consultations or observations. Cultural industries is the clearest codified national category: it makes the field administratively legible but does not resolve jurisdictional overlap. Culture-oriented language is interpreted through established cultural-policy mandates, while broader or hybrid terms function chiefly as shared vocabularies for cross-organisational discussion rather than evidence of coordinated funding, implementation, or decision-making. Creative-city and creative-hub language widens the range of participating actors without demonstrating a restructuring of formal authority. On this basis, the article distinguishes four interpretive processes—delimiting, legitimating, coordinating, and reconfiguring—and separates formal codification from implementation and practitioner vocabulary. The case is most relevant to the digital and social/institutional dimensions of the triple transition; the data do not support a separate green-transition finding.

KEYWORDS

administrative classification, cultural and creative industries, governance, institutional positioning, policy terminology

Introduction

Cultural and creative industries (CCIs) now sit across cultural, economic, innovation, and urban-development agendas. UNESCO and World Bank reports connect the field to employment, innovation, sustainable development, and cultural expression. The 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions also strengthened culture's place in development cooperation and cultural governance (Richieri Hanania, 2014; De Beukelaer et al., 2015; UNESCO and World Bank, 2021; UNESCO, 2022). This policy expansion has not produced a settled administrative vocabulary. CCIs span arts and heritage, media, design, digital production, software, entrepreneurship, tourism, and urban creativity, raising practical

questions about classification, institutional responsibility, and communication across organisational boundaries.

Terminology matters because cultural industries, creative industries, and creative economy are not analytically interchangeable. Cultural industries is commonly associated with arts, heritage, media, and public cultural value, whereas creative industries more often extend towards design, digital media, knowledge-intensive production, entrepreneurship, and innovation (Garnham, 2005; Flew and Cunningham, 2010; Hesmondhalgh, 2013). Creative economy broadens the frame further by linking creative activity to economic development, investment, and cross-sector policy. A term does not allocate authority by itself. Once adopted or repeatedly used in policy settings, however, it can become a reference point for classifying heterogeneous activities and interpreting existing institutional responsibilities.

Research on CCI naming and policy mobility shows that internationally circulating concepts are selectively translated rather than transferred intact (Prince, 2010; 2012; Keane, 2013; Kong, 2014; Vlassis and De Beukelaer, 2019). This literature explains how terminology reflects changing policy rationalities, imaginaries, and development priorities. Less is known about the administrative life of a category after it enters official policy arenas, especially where sectoral boundaries and organisational responsibilities remain only partly settled. The question here is therefore narrower: how does official terminology become a classificatory and interpretive reference point for jurisdiction, institutional positioning, and cross-organisational communication?

Vietnam provides a useful setting for this question. It is treated here not simply as a transitional economy but as a transitional policy context in which established administrative structures coexist with market reform, international integration, technological change, innovation policy, urban experimentation, and growing participation by non-state actors (Gillen, 2011; Schwenkel and Leshkovich, 2012). Decision No. 1755/QĐ-TTg formally introduced cultural industries as a national policy category in 2016. Since then, digital transformation, the digital economy, science and innovation, entrepreneurship, cultural development, and creative-city initiatives have evolved across neighbouring policy domains (Prime Minister of the Government of Vietnam, 2016; Prime Minister of the Government of Vietnam, 2020a; Prime Minister of the Government of Vietnam, 2020b; Prime Minister of the Government of Vietnam, 2022a; Prime Minister of the Government of Vietnam, 2022b; Gasparin and Quinn, 2021a; 2021b). This overlap also connects the case to the triple transition. The digital dimension appears where cultural policy meets technology, digital-economy, and innovation agendas; a social/institutional dimension appears in wider local and cross-sector participation around creative-city and creative-hub initiatives (Labbe et al., 2022). The study addresses these two dimensions but does not treat green transformation as a separate empirical outcome.

The article asks three questions: (1) How are different CCI policy terms used to classify the sector within Vietnam's administrative structure? (2) How are these terms interpreted in relation to institutional mandates, jurisdictional overlap, legitimacy, and cross-organisational coordination? (3) What does the Vietnamese case reveal about the administrative significance of official policy

terminology in a transitional policy context? The article does not propose a general theory of policy language. It treats official terminology as a potential administrative reference point and examines four recurrent interpretive processes: delimiting, legitimating, coordinating, and reconfiguring. These processes organise evidence about classification and interpretation; they are not assumed to produce governance outcomes independently.

Literature review and theoretical framework

Debates over the naming of CCIs have long reflected disagreements about the boundaries and purposes of the field. Earlier accounts of cultural industries foregrounded symbolic, aesthetic, and public value, particularly in relation to the arts, media, heritage, and cultural expression (Hesmondhalgh and Pratt, 2005; Hesmondhalgh, 2013). The creative-industries paradigm broadened this scope to include design, software, digital media, entrepreneurship, and innovation, linking cultural production more explicitly to knowledge-economy and urban-competitiveness agendas (Pratt, 2005; 2009; Flew and Cunningham, 2010). The move from cultural to creative terminology therefore involved more than lexical variation: it altered which activities and policy rationales were foregrounded.

Critical scholarship has shown that these shifts can privilege different values and policy justifications. Garnham (2005) argues that creative-industries discourse strengthened economic rationales for intervention relative to earlier cultural and social rationales. Miller (2009) cautions that the creative-industries framework can blur distinctions among symbolic, economic, technological, and creative activities, while Banks and O'Connor (2009) question whether the newer discourse displaced earlier understandings of culture without resolving tensions between public cultural objectives and market-oriented policy. These debates establish that policy categories are neither neutral nor self-evident; they select and organise particular understandings of the field.

Comparative studies further demonstrate that the meanings attached to CCI terminology vary across political and institutional settings. In China, creative-industries discourse became linked to state modernisation and media reform (Keane, 2013). Singapore successively emphasised cultural industries, creative industries, and creative economy as policy priorities changed (Kong, 2014). Lee (2016) likewise shows that creative-industries discourse is shaped by national institutional conditions, while O'Connor (2015) highlights the role of policy imaginaries and Vlassis and De Beukelaer (2019) describe creative economy as a versatile policy script capable of accommodating different institutional interests. Policy-mobility research complements these findings by emphasising selective adaptation rather than direct transfer (Prince, 2010; 2012).

Research on Vietnam points to a similarly heterogeneous governance field. Gasparin and Quinn (2021a), Gasparin and Quinn (2021b) describe fragmented institutional arrangements and continuing tensions among organisations involved in CCI policymaking. Labbe et al. (2022) show that creative spaces in Hanoi operate across cultural regulation, entrepreneurship, urban development, and community experimentation. Le (2008) and Tran (2024) likewise situate cultural policy within wider processes of economic reform and continuing negotiation between paradigmatic

ideas and pragmatic governance requirements. These studies help explain why CCI governance cannot be reduced to a single administrative domain.

Existing research is strong on conceptual change, policy discourse, policy transfer, and the localisation of international CCI models. Much less work follows official terminology through its administrative use in strategies, decisions, plans, and implementation settings. In emerging cross-sector fields, a formally adopted category may be interpreted through pre-existing mandates, while related vocabulary circulates in public statements and local initiatives without acquiring the same administrative status. Keeping these uses separate is necessary to avoid conflating conceptual discourse, formal classification, and institutional authority.

Boundary work provides the principal theoretical lens for this administrative problem. Boundary-work scholarship treats categories as institutionally consequential because they help define domains of expertise, authority, and responsibility (Gieryn, 1983; Lamont and Molnár, 2002). Abbott (1995) likewise treats jurisdictional boundaries as negotiated rather than permanently fixed. Applied to CCIs, this perspective directs attention to how labels such as cultural industries, creative industries, or creative economy make activities and institutional relationships more or less visible. A category does not itself assign legal authority; it offers a classificatory resource through which existing or emerging responsibilities can be interpreted.

The concept of boundary objects adds a second element that is particularly relevant to cross-sector communication. Star and Griesemer (1989) show that a shared concept can remain sufficiently stable for actors to communicate while retaining enough interpretive flexibility to accommodate different priorities. Hybrid or broad CCI vocabulary may therefore be useful in inter-organisational discussion even where actors do not agree on sectoral boundaries, leadership, or implementation responsibilities. In this study, such communicative usefulness is analytically separated from substantive coordination in funding, decision-making, or implementation. Evidence that actors share a vocabulary can support a claim about communication or coordination-oriented interaction; it does not by itself demonstrate coordinated administrative action.

Institutional-work scholarship complements boundary work by locating terminology within broader practices through which institutional arrangements are maintained, negotiated, and adapted. Lawrence et al. (2009) define institutional work as purposive activity involved in creating, maintaining, and transforming institutions, while Zietsma and Lawrence (2010) emphasise continuing negotiation over practices, identities, and boundaries. This perspective prevents an overly linguistic account of governance. Terminology may become relevant within institutional work, but governance outcomes remain dependent on legal mandates, organisational capacity, political priorities, resources, and the strategies of multiple actors.

Interpretive policy analysis provides a broader intellectual context for this approach. Work on policy discourse, problem representation, and discursive institutionalism demonstrates that language contributes to how policy problems, responsibilities, and legitimate interventions are understood (Gusfield, 1981; Hajer, 1995; Fischer, 2003; Schmidt, 2008; Bacchi, 2009; Schmidt, 2010).

Narrative approaches similarly show how stories and causal accounts organise policy meaning and contestation (Roe, 1994; Jones and McBeth, 2010). These perspectives are important, but the present study asks a more restricted question. It does not analyse policy language in its full discursive sense; it focuses on specific policy terms and the administrative interpretations attached to them.

The approach is related to, but distinct from, research on policy instruments. Legislation, regulation, funding, and organisational design can directly structure action because they embody assumptions about policy problems and authority (Lascoumes and Le Galès, 2007; Howlett, 2024). Terminology is less directive: it does not command behaviour, allocate budgets, or establish jurisdiction on its own. Its possible administrative significance lies in classification and interpretation, for example when actors connect an emerging issue to existing mandates or communicate across organisational boundaries. Translation and policy-mobility scholarship also shows that such meanings are context-dependent rather than inherent in the terms themselves (Callon, 1984; 2007; Prince, 2010; 2012; Pham, 2011; Clarke et al., 2015).

These literatures place terminology within broader institutional and discursive processes. Boundary work clarifies classification and jurisdiction; boundary objects explain communication across difference; institutional work situates interpretation within organisational practice; and interpretive policy analysis explains why meaning-making matters. The analysis asks how official categories become administratively meaningful while reserving causal claims about institutional change for designs that can trace decisions, resources, authority, and implementation over time.

The four-dimensional framework emerged iteratively from theory-informed interpretation and open qualitative coding, with the analytic procedure reported in Materials and Methods. Sensitising concepts concerning boundaries, institutional fit, cross-organisational communication, and participation guided the first stage of interpretation. Empirical coding then refined these concerns into four overlapping dimensions: delimiting, legitimating, coordinating, and reconfiguring. The dimensions are neither purely deductive categories nor claims that emerged independently of theory; they are lenses for making the movement from policy terminology to administrative interpretation explicit.

The analysis distinguishes three evidentiary statuses. Formally codified administrative categories are terms explicitly adopted in strategies, executive decisions, plans, guidelines, or comparable policy instruments; they can support claims about classification and officially assigned scope. Official implementation vocabulary includes terms used in public statements, implementation initiatives, local programmes, and related public-sector settings without necessarily having the same codified status. Such evidence can illuminate interpretation, communication, and participation but is not treated as equivalent to formal codification. Terms found only in participant or practitioner discourse are used as evidence of interpretation unless a documentary source independently establishes formal status.

Delimiting concerns classification: what activities are understood to fall within the policy field, where its sectoral boundaries are drawn, and how a category makes a heterogeneous domain administratively intelligible. The central evidence for this dimension is the wording and scope of formally

adopted policy categories, supplemented by actors' interpretations of those boundaries. Delimiting is analytically distinct from institutional legitimacy because it asks what the field contains rather than why a particular organisation is considered an appropriate participant.

Legitimizing concerns perceived institutional fit and normative justification. Terms associated with culture may invoke heritage, identity, public value, and established cultural responsibilities; creativity may foreground innovation, experimentation, and entrepreneurship; economy may emphasise markets, investment, and competitiveness. The dimension asks how such associations are used to interpret the appropriateness of institutional participation. It does not imply that terminology confers legal authority or legitimacy in a formal sense, both of which depend on existing laws, mandates, and organisational arrangements.

Coordinating concerns the communicative use of sufficiently shared terminology across organisations with partially overlapping responsibilities. A flexible category may allow actors to discuss the same policy domain while retaining different institutional priorities. For analytical purposes, this dimension is restricted to shared vocabulary, policy dialogue, and coordination-oriented interaction unless the evidence documents concrete implementation, funding, or decision-making arrangements. The label coordinating therefore identifies an interpretive and communicative pattern rather than presuming successful inter-agency coordination.

Reconfiguring concerns changes in the composition of participation around the policy field. It tracks whether particular vocabulary becomes associated with the involvement of actors or policy domains not previously central to the field, such as local governments, universities, businesses, creative communities, urban-development actors, or technology-oriented organisations. In this study, reconfiguring is used in the limited sense of widening participation and cross-sector engagement. It does not, without additional temporal and institutional evidence, denote a structural reorganisation of governance.

Because a single term can classify activities, invoke policy values, support cross-organisational discussion, and accompany wider participation, the four dimensions can overlap. They remain analytically distinct by asking different questions: what is included or excluded (delimiting); why participation appears institutionally appropriate (legitimizing); how actors communicate across organisational boundaries (coordinating); and who becomes involved (reconfiguring). Where a passage addresses more than one question, co-coding is retained, and contradictory or non-fitting evidence is treated as substantively relevant.

The framework is context-sensitive because the administrative significance of terminology depends on the institutional setting in which it is used. In this article, a transitional policy context refers to a governance environment in which multiple policy logics coexist and responsibilities remain only partially consolidated across organisations. This definition is descriptive rather than comparative: the study does not claim that terminology is more influential in Vietnam than in more consolidated systems. Institutional ambiguity is treated as a contextual condition that makes administrative interpretation empirically visible, not as a demonstrated causal explanation of terminology's effects.

Table 1 summarises the four dimensions, representative vocabulary, analytical focus, and illustrative actors. **Figure 1** shows the same architecture from source status through administrative interpretation to the four lenses and the patterns supported by the evidence. Its arrows indicate an analytical sequence, not a causal pathway. The framework is intended to trace classification, perceived institutional fit, cross-organisational communication, and widening participation while keeping interpretive association separate from institutional effect.

Materials and methods

Research design and analytical scope

This study uses a qualitative interpretive case-study design to examine how policy terminology is codified, used, and interpreted within Vietnam's evolving governance of cultural and creative industries (CCIs). The unit of analysis is not the intrinsic meaning of a term, but the relationship among source status, administrative classification, actors' interpretations, and institutional context. The design is therefore suited to tracing patterns of meaning and institutional association, but not to establishing that terminology causes changes in legal authority, budgets, organisational structure, or implementation outcomes.

The bounded empirical corpus comprises three complementary source types: seventeen documentary sources (D1-D17), eight official speeches, public statements, and policy announcements (S1-S8), and ten focal participant records (P1-P10). The documentary corpus contains sixteen official policy or administrative texts and one independent field assessment (D17). Official policy and administrative texts provide the strongest basis for identifying formal codification, administrative scope, and implementation arrangements. D17 is used only as an independent contextual assessment of implementation barriers, not as formal policy evidence. Official speeches and statements show how institutional actors publicly articulate policy vocabulary, while participant records provide contextual evidence about terminology, jurisdictional overlap, coordination, and participation. Triangulation compares these source-specific interpretations rather than treating the sources as interchangeable forms of proof.

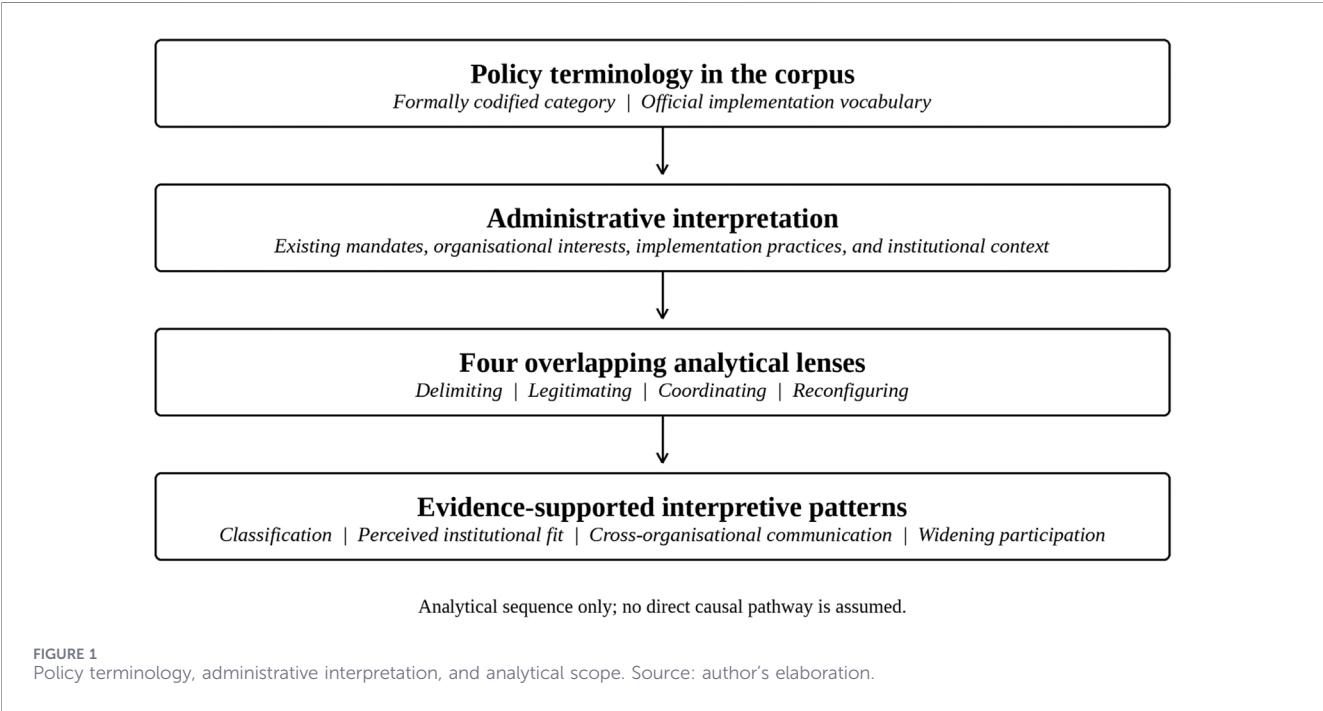
Documentary corpus and source selection

The documentary corpus begins in 2016 because Decision No. 1755/QĐ-TTg formally introduced cultural industries (công nghiệp văn hóa) as a national policy category and specified twelve constituent sectors. The source register contains seventeen texts (D1-D17): sixteen official national, ministerial, and local policy/administrative documents and one independent field-monitoring assessment. D15 is the Hanoi People's Committee and Department of Culture and Sports internal review of UNESCO Creative City implementation for 2019–2023 and its 2024 action plan; D17 is a distinct independent field-monitoring report on the gap between the creative-city policy framework and the operation of creative hubs in Hanoi. This separation prevents an official municipal implementation record from being conflated with a critical

TABLE 1 Analytical dimensions of policy terminology in Vietnam’s CCI governance.

Analytical dimension	Representative terms/ vocabulary in the corpus	Primary analytical focus	Illustrative institutional actors
Delimiting	Cultural industries; sectoral lists and classifications in official policy documents	Classification of what falls within the policy field and how sectoral boundaries are interpreted	MCST; other agencies whose mandates intersect with the classified activities
Legitimizing	Culture-, creativity-, and economy-oriented policy vocabulary	Perceived institutional fit and normative justification of participation; not formal legal authority	MCST; cultural-policy organisations; innovation and economic-policy actors
Coordinating	Cultural-creative industries; creative economy; other shared or hybrid policy vocabulary	Cross-organisational communication and policy dialogue; not assumed implementation, funding, or decision coordination	MCST; MOST; MPI; other organisations with overlapping responsibilities
Reconfiguring	Creative city; creative hub; related implementation vocabulary where documented	Widening participation and cross-sector engagement; not assumed structural reorganisation of governance	Local governments; universities; creative communities; businesses; public-private actors

MCST, ministry of culture, Sports and Tourism; MOST, ministry of science and technology; MPI, Ministry of Planning and Investment. Source: author’s analytical framework.



independent assessment. [Supplementary Table S1](#) records source type, provenance, and analytical status for each item.

The official-document subset was constructed purposively rather than as a systematic-review sample, but the retrieval process was documented. The main search was conducted from 15 January to 10 March 2024 and updated in May 2024 after Hanoi issued Plan No. 129/KH-UBND. Searches covered the National Database of Legal Normative Documents (vbpl.vn), Thu Vien Phap Luat and LuatVietnam, the Government Portal, the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism portal, and Hanoi government and cultural-agency portals. Search terms combined formally established vocabulary (“công nghiệp văn hóa,” “Chiến lược 1755,” “phát triển văn hóa”) with emerging or adjacent terms (“kinh tế sáng tạo,” “công nghiệp sáng tạo,” “thành phố sáng tạo,” “không gian sáng tạo,” “trung tâm sáng tạo,” “creative city,” and

“creative hub”). Duplicate copies retrieved from multiple portals were reconciled by statutory number and issuance date. D17 was identified separately from the legal-document search and is analytically separated from the official sources.

Materials were retained when they formally defined or classified the CCI field, specified institutional or implementation responsibilities, or provided necessary adjacent-policy context for interpreting culture-, creativity-, innovation-, digital-, tourism-, or urban-oriented terminology. Materials were excluded when they were primarily technical regulations without a broader governance or classificatory role, fell outside the 2016–2024 analytical window, or contained only incidental keywords unrelated to CCI governance. Because public legal repositories return large volumes of raw results for generic terms such as culture and development, the study did not treat raw search-hit counts as a meaningful sampling frame and did

not use a PRISMA-style protocol. The final corpus is therefore a bounded purposive set of seventeen documentary sources, not an exhaustive inventory of all Vietnamese policies touching on culture or creativity.

Official speeches, public statements, and policy announcements

The second source type consists of eight official speeches, public statements, and policy announcements by national or local institutional actors. Source details are available for all eight materials. S1 is an independently archived government announcement associated with the 2016 policy shift but distinct from Decision No. 1755/QĐ-TTg (D1); S2-S8 comprise speech, conference, workshop, or official reporting records. They are used as evidence of official interpretation and public articulation, not as formal codification unless a corresponding policy instrument establishes that status.

The items are assigned identifiers S1-S8 and listed in [Supplementary Table S4](#), which records date, speaker and institutional affiliation, occasion, source location, available page or timestamp anchors, and analytical relevance. Separating these materials from D1-D17 prevents public statements from being used as evidence of formal codification while preserving their value for examining how policy vocabulary is publicly interpreted and connected to institutional priorities.

Participant sample and analytic inclusion

The ten focal participant records analysed in this article were generated between 2022 and 2024 and were drawn from a broader research programme on cultural policy and CCIs undertaken between 2019 and 2024. The earlier 2019–2021 period therefore refers to the broader programme, not to the focal evidence analysed here. Inclusion required direct relevance to at least one of the study's focal issues: CCI terminology, sectoral boundaries, institutional responsibilities, cross-organisational coordination, creative-city or creative-hub initiatives, digital transformation, or the relationship between cultural policy and innovation-oriented agendas.

Recruitment was purposive and role-based. The ten participants were selected from a broader 2019–2024 interdisciplinary programme and network involving more than forty-five public, expert, international, and creative-sector actors. Three criteria guided inclusion: direct involvement in policy formulation/implementation or creative-sector operation; coverage of contrasting institutional interests; and first-hand experience of administrative overlap or governance friction. Publication-facing role labels were broadened to reduce deductive-disclosure risk. The final register comprises three state-sector actors (P1, P2, P4), one research-sector scholar (P3), one international policy adviser (P8), and five non-state creative/business/network actors (P5, P6, P7, P9, P10). The core semi-structured guide covered terminology, sectoral boundaries, institutional responsibilities, coordination, creative-city/hub initiatives, digital transformation, and changing state-non-state collaboration. Participant roles, sectoral distribution, and evidence status are summarised in [Supplementary Tables S2, S3](#).

Evidence provenance was recorded separately from participant identity. Verbatim audio-transcript excerpts are available for P1, P6,

P8, P9, and P10 and may therefore appear as direct quotations. Relevant evidence from P2, P3, P4, P5, and P7 derives from contemporaneous or near-verbatim fieldnotes, rapid field conversations, post-forum dialogue, or observational records and is reported only in paraphrase. Exactly four additional candidates were formally excluded or declined participation (Rec-04, Rec-12, Rec-19, and Rec-27): two bureaucratic actors declined because of confidentiality concerns surrounding land-use or budget discussions, while two non-state candidates were excluded because their experience did not address the governance focus of the study. No claim of theoretical or data saturation or statistical representativeness is made.

Coding procedure, evidence provenance, and negative cases

Analysis proceeded iteratively in Vietnamese. First-cycle open coding identified policy terms, sectoral scope, institutional actors, mandates, public value, market rationales, administrative responsibilities, communication, participation, resource constraints, and governance difficulties. The initial working template followed a three-step policy-transfer sequence (importation, interpretation, localisation). It proved too linear once interviews and public statements revealed jurisdictional conflict, resource bottlenecks, and divergent meanings that could not be represented as a simple transfer process. The four-dimensional coding framework was developed by moving between this empirical material and the theory-informed sensitising concepts.

Coding was conducted by the author. Because the study follows an interpretive rather than reliability-oriented content-analysis design, no inter-coder reliability coefficient was calculated. Code memos established boundary rules among the four dimensions. Passages about whether an activity belonged to the field were coded as delimiting, whereas passages about which organisation should lead, finance, license, or implement an activity were coded as coordinating. Legitimizing was differentiated between traditional/public-value justification and innovation/market-oriented justification. Negative codes were retained for passages in which participants explicitly prioritised mandates, resources, or legal rules over terminology. The coding record also distinguished evidentiary status—verbatim transcript, near-verbatim fieldnote, reconstructed fieldnote, official administrative text, or independent assessment—so that quotation marks are used only where the underlying record supports direct quotation.

Passages were not forced into mutually exclusive categories. Material could be co-coded where it addressed more than one analytical question, but the primary interpretive question was recorded: what is included in the field (delimiting), why participation appears institutionally appropriate (legitimizing), how actors communicate and attempt to coordinate across organisational boundaries (coordinating), or who becomes involved (reconfiguring). Contradictory and non-fitting material was retained as evidence rather than treated as coding error. This included direct disagreement over culture-versus-market rationales, cases in which terminology failed to resolve funding or jurisdiction, and field-note episodes in which broad creative-city or digital terminology obscured rather than clarified responsibility. [Table 2](#)

TABLE 2 Operational codebook for the four analytical dimensions.

Analytical dimension	Inclusion rule	Contrast/exclusion rule	Illustrative evidence
Delimiting	Passages that define, list, classify, include, or exclude activities or sectors, or that explicitly locate the scope of a policy field	Do not code a passage as delimiting merely because it names an institution or invokes a policy value without addressing field boundaries or classification	D1: Decision No. 1755/QĐ-TTg classifies twelve cultural-industry sectors; P1/P3 interpretations of sectoral scope
Legitimizing	Passages linking terminology to policy values, historical mandates, public value, heritage, identity, innovation, entrepreneurship, or other rationales used to interpret institutional fit	Distinguish perceived or normative fit from formal legal authority. A passage that only lists the responsible agency without a justificatory association is not sufficient	D2: Cultural-development objectives linked to national identity and public value; P1/P2 interpretations of established cultural responsibilities
Coordinating	Passages describing shared vocabulary, policy dialogue, cross-organisational communication, or coordination-oriented interaction among actors with overlapping mandates	Shared terminology or co-presence does not by itself demonstrate coordinated funding, implementation, or decision-making. Such stronger claims require separate process evidence	P8/P9 accounts of hybrid terminology in common policy discussion; D3/D6/D7 provide adjacent innovation/digital policy contexts
Reconfiguring	Passages associating terminology with the involvement of additional actor groups, governance levels, or policy domains not previously central to the field	Do not infer structural reorganisation of governance from widening participation alone; temporal changes in mandates or authority require separate evidence	D13-D15 on Hanoi cultural-industry/creative-city implementation; D17 as independent contextual assessment; P4/P10 on local and creative-hub participation

Source: author’s coding framework.

presents the operational coding rules and the principal contrast criteria used to preserve these distinctions. Provenance and reporting rules for the three administrative episodes used below are summarised in [Supplementary Table S5](#).

Translation and research credibility

All coding and primary interpretation were conducted in Vietnamese. English translation was undertaken only after the relevant passages and concepts had been interpreted in their Vietnamese administrative context. Analytically consequential terms are therefore retained in Vietnamese alongside their English equivalents where necessary, including công nghiệp văn hóa (“cultural industries”), công nghiệp sáng tạo (“creative industries”), kinh tế sáng tạo (“creative economy”), and thành phố sáng tạo (“creative city”). Direct interview quotations in the manuscript are restricted to passages supported by verbatim transcripts; evidence retained only in fieldnotes is translated and presented as paraphrase. Official-document quotations were checked against the archived Vietnamese source text and page/section locator before translation.

No independent back-translation or external bilingual validation was undertaken, and the follow-up contacts were not treated as formal member-checking of the article’s interpretations. The author instead maintained reflexive mapping notes on semantic shifts between Vietnamese administrative terms and internationally circulating CCI vocabulary and checked English renderings against the original Vietnamese records. Three targeted follow-up contacts were used to clarify factual questions about administrative practice: P1 by secure email in March 2024,

P9 through a documented field consultation in April 2024, and P10 through a recorded follow-up exchange in May 2024. These contacts were used only to clarify institutional facts and were not treated as independent validation of the interpretive framework. The underlying records are securely retained by the author and are subject to the confidentiality provisions described in the Data Availability Statement.

Results

The results are organised around the four analytical dimensions developed above: delimiting, legitimizing, coordinating, and reconfiguring. Evidence is reported according to source status. Formally codified policy instruments are used to establish administrative categories and policy scope; adjacent strategies and implementation documents are used to situate those categories within wider institutional settings; and interviews are used to show how identifiable actors interpreted terminology in practice. These source types are not treated as interchangeable. In particular, terminology appearing in interviews, public statements, or implementation settings is not taken as evidence of formal codification unless a policy instrument establishes that status.

Participant-level claims are reported only when an individual can be linked to the evidence, and qualifying material is retained where the documentary record shows that classification, communication, or participation remained institutionally incomplete. Broad frequency formulations are avoided unless the available evidence supports them. The findings concern patterns of administrative interpretation in this corpus, not consensus among

all ten participants, and they do not establish causal effects of terminology on governance outcomes.

Delimiting the field: formal classification without settled jurisdiction

Decision No. 1755/QĐ-TTg (D1) provides the strongest delimiting evidence because it formally adopted cultural industries (công nghiệp văn hóa) as a national policy category. The decision states that “the cultural industries are an important constituent part of the national economy” (author translation of “Các ngành công nghiệp văn hóa là bộ phận cấu thành quan trọng của nền kinh tế quốc dân”). It also identifies twelve sectors: advertising, architecture, software and digital entertainment, handicrafts, design, film, publishing, broadcasting, performing arts, visual arts, photography, and cultural tourism (D1; [Prime Minister of the Government of Vietnam, 2016](#)). Later ministerial statistical and reporting instruments (D10–D12) continued to place related activities within established cultural, sports, tourism, and administrative reporting systems. These records establish cultural industries as a formal classificatory anchor rather than merely a circulating policy expression.

Interview evidence both supports and qualifies this administrative reading. Four participants addressed delimiting directly. P1 described Strategy 1755 as providing “a clear legal basis” for placing cultural industries in statistical categories and annual planning, while P3’s field record characterised the term as an administrative categorisation that made an economically productive field more visible to the state. P5 similarly described the category as giving hybrid creative businesses a clearer institutional identity when dealing with licensing and tax authorities. P6, representing a large digital creative enterprise, supplied a verbatim counter-case: “We produce digital content, distribute it through apps, combine it with e-commerce and AI—so which sub-sector do we belong to? The administrative system cannot classify us” (P6; author translation). Formal naming improved legibility for some actors but remained poorly fitted to emerging digital business models.

The documentary record and field notes reinforce this qualification. The twelve sectors listed in D1 cut across portfolios that cannot be contained within a single traditional cultural-administration boundary: software and digital entertainment intersect with technology and digital policy, while cultural tourism, architecture, advertising, and handicrafts cross other sectoral mandates. In one local implementation meeting concerning a proposed Digital Art and Urban Design Week, the cultural authority claimed responsibility for artistic content while the information-and-communications authority claimed authority over the digital infrastructure and AR/VR components. Neither accepted responsibility for a single-window approval process, and the issue was referred upward to the city government. Rather than settling the boundary, the language of “digital creative space” exposed how a hybrid activity could trigger competing sectoral jurisdictions.

Delimiting is therefore best understood here as formal classification without complete jurisdictional closure. Cultural industries supplied the clearest codified vocabulary for grouping activities and making the field administratively visible, but the P6 counter-case and the implementation episode show that

classification could become least adequate precisely where digital, commercial, and cultural functions were combined. Terminology provided a reference point for sectoral scope; it did not by itself allocate exclusive authority or guarantee that novel activities could be placed unambiguously within the existing administrative architecture.

Legitimizing institutional fit: cultural-policy continuity and competing rationales

The second pattern concerns institutional fit rather than formal legal legitimacy. The Cultural Development Strategy to 2030 (D2) links cultural development to national identity, cultural values, social development, and sustainable development while retaining cultural-industry development within a national cultural-policy framework ([Prime Minister of the Government of Vietnam, 2021](#)). It gives the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism a central implementation role while distributing responsibilities across other ministries, sectors, and local authorities. The documentary record therefore supports continuity with established cultural-policy institutions without establishing exclusive cultural jurisdiction.

Participant evidence shows several ways in which policy language was used to establish institutional appropriateness. P1 explained that new CCI terminology had to be anchored in heritage, national identity, public value, and established cultural responsibilities to be administratively acceptable. P2’s fieldnote recorded a tension between that public-value mandate and financial autonomy: the institution had to retain an official language of cultural responsibility while adopting the vocabulary of commercialisation and digital application. P7’s project-monitoring fieldnotes documented strategic translation across audiences. With local authorities, the coordinator foregrounded cultural revitalisation, local heritage, and community service; with investors, the emphasis shifted to entrepreneurship, innovation, digital value chains, and sustainable business models. Because the P2 and P7 records are fieldnotes rather than verbatim transcripts, both accounts are reported in paraphrase.

D2 also qualifies a purely culture-centred interpretation because the strategy includes digital transformation, creative-city objectives, and inter-agency coordination. Participant material similarly shows that legitimization was not a simple culture-versus-market choice. Public organisations and hybrid actors moved between normative repertoires depending on the audience. Culture-oriented terminology could sustain continuity with established cultural-policy mandates, while innovation and entrepreneurship language provided additional justifications for new practices. The evidence does not support the stronger claim that a label conferred legal legitimacy or naturally assigned authority to the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism.

Here, legitimizing refers to perceived institutional fit and the strategic use of normative vocabularies. Heritage, identity, and public value remained important sources of administrative acceptability, but some actors translated the same project into market, innovation, or digital language when speaking to investors or non-cultural agencies. Terminology functioned as an institutional reference point whose meaning varied across audiences, not as a fixed consequence of formal adoption.

Coordinating-oriented communication: shared vocabulary under unresolved responsibilities

The coordinating dimension is supported only at the level of communication and coordination-oriented interaction, not successful inter-agency implementation. D2 explicitly calls for “especially an inter-agency coordination mechanism” (author translation of “nhất là cơ chế phối hợp liên ngành”) while assigning responsibilities across several ministries and local governments. That wording documents an unresolved need for formal coordination and, at the same time, cautions against treating shared vocabulary as sufficient evidence of organisational coordination.

Adjacent national strategies further illustrate the cross-sector policy environment in which broader creativity- and economy-oriented vocabulary circulated. The Science, Technology and Innovation Development Strategy to 2030 (D6) emphasises synchronous and inter-sectoral development, while the Digital Economy and Digital Society Strategy (D7) defines sectoral digital economy activity as digital economic activity occurring “within sectors and fields” and allocates responsibilities across ministries and localities. These documents are not treated as formal codification of creative economy within CCI governance. Their relevance is contextual: they show that innovation, digital transformation, and sector-crossing administrative responsibilities were developing alongside the cultural-industries agenda.

Four participants (P1, P8, P9, and P6) addressed coordination directly, and their accounts separate shared vocabulary from substantive coordination. P1 described creative economy and cultural-creative industries as useful “common discussion frames” for bringing cultural, planning, information, and finance actors into the same conversation, but added that “when implementation begins, everything becomes stuck on jurisdiction” and unresolved leadership (P1; author translation from verbatim transcript). P8 stressed the absence of a common funding mechanism for cross-sector creative projects. P9 described the opportunity costs created when no agency assumed final responsibility for hybrid cultural-technology projects. P6 was more sceptical, arguing that creative-economy language could become a “shell” for inter-agency discussion unless accompanied by concrete tax, digital-copyright, finance, and regulatory-sandbox instruments.

A fieldnote from a budget discussion makes this distinction concrete. Cultural officials invoked Strategy 1755 to justify support for design innovation in the handicraft sector, but finance officials classified the proposed activities as commercial rather than public cultural expenditure and placed them under enterprise-support or trade instruments. The proposal stalled because the cultural-industries category did not map onto the existing budget classification. Official statement S3 likewise used cultural-creative-industries language to widen cross-sector dialogue while acknowledging fragmented coordination and weak lead authority. The evidence supports communication around a shared policy field, but not coordinated budgets, implementation, or decision-making. Formal leadership, funding rules, and inter-agency mechanisms remained necessary.

Reconfiguring participation: creative-city and hub vocabularies and a wider actor constellation

The fourth pattern is wider participation, not structural reorganisation of governance. Hanoi’s Resolution No. 09-NQ/TU (D13) connects cultural-industry development with the objective to “build, develop and position the UNESCO ‘Creative City’ brand” (author translation). Plan No. 129/KH-UBND (D14) provides the municipal implementation framework, while the Hanoi People’s Committee and Department of Culture and Sports review report (D15) documents official implementation and performance reporting for the UNESCO Creative City agenda. A separate independent field-monitoring assessment (D17) records legal-identity, public-property, and inter-organisational barriers experienced by creative hubs; it is used for contextual triangulation rather than as formal policy evidence. At national level, Resolution No. 81/2023/QH15 (D16) places cultural industries within broader planning. These sources show an expanded policy arena while also documenting limits to its institutional depth.

Four participants (P4, P10, P7, and P6) addressed reconfiguring and disagreed about its depth. P4’s meeting notes described creative-city governance as opening policy processes to independent experts, artists, and creative businesses while leaving budgets, planning approval, and final decision authority within the existing administrative system; because the record is a near-verbatim fieldnote, it is paraphrased here. P10, an independent hub operator with a verbatim transcript, captured the opposite side of the same relationship: “we completely depend on government recognition” for hybrid spaces whose legal and licensing status remains difficult to classify (P10; author translation). P7’s monitoring notes described many collaborations as project-based and fragile rather than evidence of durable institutional redesign. P6 questioned whether creative-city and hub labels could become urban public-relations devices without changes in infrastructure, finance, or decision authority.

Widened participation took several concrete forms. P4 described an urban-art advisory mechanism in which local officials worked with independent architects, creative-space representatives, and planning experts. P10 described hubs acting as legal and organisational intermediaries between informal creative groups and district-level authorities. P7 pointed to co-produced design festivals in which public agencies contributed heritage infrastructure while non-state actors supplied capital, curation, and creative content. The 2024 Hanoi statement recorded as S8 likewise highlighted strong private, artistic, and public participation while noting that administrative decision structures and public-budget approval remained unchanged. P6 provided the strongest negative case, warning that creative-city and hub designations could become urban public-relations devices if participation did not extend to infrastructure, finance, or decision authority.

Reconfiguring is used in the restricted sense defined in the analytical framework: changes in the actor constellation and in forms of collaboration around the field. The wider participation documented here was tangible, but it remained conditional, project-based, and institutionally dependent. Creative-city and hub vocabulary accompanied new consultative and co-production

relationships, while formal authority over land, budgets, licensing, and planning remained largely within existing public institutions. The observed pattern is widened participation under continuing administrative dependence rather than structural governance transformation.

Cross-dimensional synthesis: different terms, different evidentiary status

The four dimensions do not map individual terms onto fixed governance functions. They instead expose differences in evidentiary status. Cultural industries has the strongest basis as a formally codified national administrative category (D1) and is carried into later cultural-development and planning instruments. Creative city is clearly used in national and local policy, but mainly as urban-development and implementation vocabulary rather than as the same kind of sectoral classification. Creative industries, creative economy, cultural-creative industries, and creative hub are supported more strongly in this corpus as interpretive, adjacent-policy, implementation, or practitioner vocabularies than as formally equivalent national CCI categories.

Administrative significance therefore depends on both source status and institutional context. Formal codification most clearly supports delimiting; established policy values shape perceived institutional fit; broader vocabulary can support communication across overlapping domains; and creative-city or hub vocabulary accompanies wider participation. Each pattern also has a clear limit: classification did not settle jurisdiction, normative fit did not confer legal authority, shared vocabulary did not substitute for formal coordination, and wider participation did not amount to structural governance transformation. P2 offered the most direct counter-case by treating debates over cultural industries, creative industries, or creative economy as secondary when mandates, public-asset rules, and financial autonomy remained unchanged. This structural-priority account shows that, within the study's own data, resources and authority can matter more than terminology.

Evidence for the triple transition is similarly uneven. Digital-transition evidence is concentrated in P9, P6, and P1 and in statements S5 and S7, which describe independent digital creators, game studios, cross-border platforms, hybrid streaming and interactive products, and copyright or platform-governance responsibilities that do not fit older sectoral categories. Social/institutional evidence is concentrated in P4, P10, and P7 and in S4, S6, and S8, documenting advisory mechanisms, hub-mediated representation, co-produced festivals, and other forms of state-non-state collaboration. The available evidence contains no comparably developed indication that environmental or low-carbon objectives were integrated into CCI administrative practice during the study period.

Discussion

Administrative reference points rather than governance effects

The findings do not support treating terminology as a governance mechanism. Administrative significance depends first

on source status: cultural industries has a codified national basis; creative city functions mainly as official urban-policy and implementation vocabulary; and the remaining terms are supported more strongly as interpretive, adjacent-policy, or practitioner language. The four dimensions describe how terms are interpreted around existing mandates and practices, not functions performed by the words themselves.

This reading is consistent with boundary-work scholarship, which treats categories as ways of making domains of activity and responsibility visible without fixing their boundaries permanently (Gieryn, 1983; Abbott, 1995; Lamont and Molnár, 2002). It also qualifies the boundary-object argument. A flexible term may support communication across organisations with different priorities (Star and Griesemer, 1989), yet communicative compatibility is not the same as coordinated budgets, implementation, or decisions. The 2021 Cultural Development Strategy illustrates the distinction: it uses shared cultural-development language while explicitly calling for an inter-agency coordination mechanism.

Widened participation requires the same caution. Creative-city and hub initiatives bring local government, practitioners, educational institutions, private organisations, and community-facing actors into a broader policy arena, but these relationships remain embedded in public-policy and UNESCO-related structures. The evidence supports an additional layer of cross-sector engagement rather than a reorganisation of formal authority. This interpretation accords with institutional-work scholarship, which locates categories within practices of maintaining, negotiating, and adapting institutions rather than treating language as an autonomous source of change (Lawrence et al., 2009; Zietsma and Lawrence, 2010).

Institutional ambiguity and alternative explanations

Transitional policy context is used descriptively, not causally. In Vietnam, cultural, innovation, digital, entrepreneurial, tourism, and urban-development logics coexist while responsibilities remain only partly consolidated across organisations. The study shows how terminology is interpreted under these conditions, but a single-country case cannot establish that terminology is more influential or more visible in Vietnam than in institutionally consolidated systems. Such claims require comparative designs that vary institutional conditions systematically.

Institutional ambiguity is therefore a contextual condition rather than a proven explanation of terminology's salience. The evidence also supports several alternative explanations. P3 attributed administrative rigidity chiefly to legal mandates and the historical organisation of sector-specific ministries. P1 described budget classifications that forced officials to translate broad creative-economy language back into recognised expenditure categories. P6 linked some creative-city practices to political performance incentives and organisational interests, while P8 interpreted semantic slippage partly through international policy transfer as UNESCO and other circulating concepts encountered state-centred administrative routines. D17 converges with these accounts by documenting legal-identity gaps for creative hubs, public-property constraints on longer-term public-private use of former

TABLE 3 Transitional policy conditions and bounded administrative implications.

Characteristics of transitional policy contexts	Observed administrative implications	Role of policy terminology (supported by this study)
Overlapping institutional mandates	Uncertainty regarding sectoral responsibilities	Provides reference points for interpreting administrative boundaries
Multiple policy logics (culture, innovation, economy, urban development)	Different organisations emphasise different policy priorities	Supports communication across partially overlapping policy domains
Emerging policy fields	Administrative arrangements evolve incrementally	Provides relatively stable policy classifications during institutional adaptation
Institutional ambiguity	Continuing negotiation over roles and coordination	Offers a shared vocabulary for policy interpretation rather than resolving ambiguity

Source: synthesised by the author from the analytical framework and empirical findings.

industrial sites, and siloed municipal implementation. Terminology thus operates within legal, fiscal, political, and organisational structures that can constrain or redirect its administrative meaning.

The three administrative episodes show these constraints in practice. A digital-art project became stuck between cultural and information authorities; a cultural-industries budget proposal failed because public-finance categories separated “culture” from commercial activity; and a creative-city reporting process shifted from difficult land-use commitments towards event-based indicators that a cultural agency could deliver more easily. Terminology mattered in each episode, but jurisdiction, budget rules, planning authority, and organisational incentives shaped what followed. Policy terms could classify, justify, and connect agendas, while institutional arrangements determined what could be authorised, funded, and implemented.

Comparative CCI research reinforces the value of this bounded position. Studies of China and Singapore show that creative-industry and creative-economy vocabularies acquire different meanings under different state, market, and institutional arrangements (Keane, 2013; Kong, 2014; Lee, 2016). The Vietnamese case adds a specific administrative question to that literature: how categories of unequal formal status are interpreted in relation to jurisdiction, institutional fit, communication, and participation. Whether the same four interpretive dimensions recur elsewhere, or whether different institutional conditions produce different patterns, remains a question for comparative research rather than a conclusion of the present case. Table 3 summarises the transitional policy conditions observed in the case and the bounded administrative implications supported by the evidence.

CCI governance in the digital and social/institutional dimensions of the triple transition

The case is most clearly connected to the digital dimension of the triple transition. P9 described a shift from traditional cultural producers towards independent content creators, game studios, software developers, and cross-border platforms, with policy vocabulary and pre-authorisation routines lagging behind platform-based production. P6 described hybrid streaming, ticketing, e-commerce, and immersive-content models that did

not fit established administrative categories. P1’s follow-up clarification confirmed that some digital-art projects still lacked a specific joint mechanism for cultural-technology coordination, while S5 and S7 framed digital transformation and online copyright as requiring shared responsibilities between public agencies and technology or network actors. Digital transition thus appears as a changing production environment that intensifies existing problems of classification and coordination, not as an outcome caused by CCI terminology.

The social and institutional dimension is visible in concrete organisational arrangements. P4 described an urban-art advisory mechanism that included independent professionals and creative-space representatives; P10 described hubs mediating between informal creators and district authorities; and P7 described co-produced design events in which public agencies, hybrid enterprises, and independent creative communities contributed different resources. S8 likewise recorded wider social participation while noting that formal decision and budget structures remained intact. These cases point to change at the level of consultation, mediation, and project co-production, while the architecture of public authority remained largely unchanged.

The data do not support a separate green-transition finding. Green, low-carbon, and circular-economy terminology was not systematically integrated into the CCI administrative instruments or participant concerns analysed for 2016–2024. Sustainable development appears in broader policy language, but immediate governance concerns centred on sectoral classification, public value, licensing, funding, digital transformation, and inter-agency responsibility. The article’s contribution to the triple-transition debate is therefore asymmetric: substantial for digital and social/institutional transformation and limited for the green dimension.

Theoretical and policy implications

The theoretical contribution lies in shifting attention from the conceptual history of CCI labels to their administrative life after they enter policy settings. The analysis also separates formal codification from official implementation vocabulary and practitioner discourse. Boundary work, boundary objects, institutional work, and interpretive policy analysis keep classification, perceived institutional fit, communication, and participation analytically distinct while allowing empirical overlap (Fischer, 2003; Schmidt,

2008; Lawrence et al., 2009; Schmidt, 2010). The framework traces interpretation; it is not a universal model of institutional change.

The policy implications follow directly from the observed gaps between terminology and administrative arrangements. In cross-portfolio fields, agencies should agree on terminology through inter-agency consultation rather than treat naming as a purely semantic choice. Policy instruments should state whether a term is a formal administrative category, an implementation label, or a broader communicative frame; define its sectoral scope; identify responsibilities that remain with existing agencies; and specify where joint mechanisms are needed for implementation, funding, data collection, or decision-making. A shared term should not be mistaken for a shared mandate.

Terminology also needs to be matched to implementation arrangements. Broad or hybrid labels may help cross-sector dialogue, but they do not replace leadership, accountability, resources, or coordination procedures. Creative-city and hub vocabulary can articulate a wider actor constellation, yet local initiatives still require clear rules for participation, public-private cooperation, and the relationship between project networks and formal public authority. Across the four dimensions, the distinction recurs: classification did not settle jurisdiction, perceived fit did not confer legal authority, common vocabulary did not coordinate implementation, and wider participation did not restructure formal authority.

Future research should follow policy terms through concrete processes rather than infer effects from interpretive association alone. Useful designs would trace negotiations during policy formulation, compare interpretations across ministries and local governments, and follow episodes involving budgets, programme ownership, data systems, or disputed jurisdiction. Comparative work across ASEAN or other emerging policy contexts could test whether the four dimensions recur under different institutional arrangements. Research on the triple transition could also examine whether digital, social, and green pressures create different administrative dynamics across CCI subsectors.

Conclusion

RQ1 concerns administrative status. Cultural industries is the clearest formally codified national category and provides the strongest basis for sectoral classification. Creative city is clearly present in official policy but mainly as urban-development and implementation vocabulary. Creative industries, creative economy, cultural-creative industries, and creative hub are supported more securely in this corpus as interpretive, adjacent-policy, implementation, or practitioner vocabularies than as formally equivalent national administrative categories. The classificatory finding is therefore one of differentiated source status, not interchangeable labels.

RQ2 concerns interpretation. Four bounded patterns recur in the evidence. Cultural-industries terminology makes a heterogeneous field administratively legible without closing jurisdictional boundaries. Culture-oriented vocabulary is read through established cultural-policy values and mandates without conferring legal authority. Broader and hybrid terms support communication across overlapping policy domains without

demonstrating coordinated funding or implementation. Creative-city or creative-hub vocabulary accompanies wider local and non-state participation without restructuring formal governance.

RQ3 concerns administrative significance in a transitional policy context. The Vietnamese case shows that official terminology can serve as an administrative reference point where sectoral boundaries and organisational responsibilities remain only partly consolidated. This is the study's primary contribution. It does not imply that ambiguity causes terminology to matter, or that terminology is more consequential in Vietnam than elsewhere. Legal mandates, organisational history, resources, international policy transfer, UNESCO initiatives, political priorities, and actor interests remain plausible explanations for the governance patterns observed. The framework organises administrative interpretation under ambiguity rather than offering a causal theory of institutional change.

The triple-transition contribution is similarly bounded. The evidence is strongest for digital and social/institutional change: digital-economy and innovation agendas increasingly intersect with cultural governance, while creative-city and hub initiatives broaden cross-sector and local participation. The study does not independently examine green production or environmental transition within CCIs. Future research can test whether environmental objectives create different terminological, jurisdictional, or coordination dynamics.

The policy implication is not to search for a single correct label but to align terminology with institutional design. When categories cross established portfolios, policymakers should consult relevant agencies when defining terms, distinguish formal administrative categories from implementation or communicative vocabulary, specify sectoral scope and responsibilities, and connect terminology to arrangements for leadership, funding, data collection, implementation, and accountability. Creative-city and hub initiatives likewise require clear rules for participation and for the relationship between project networks and formal public authority. Shared vocabulary can facilitate discussion; it cannot substitute for shared responsibility.

The study is limited by its qualitative single-country design and small purposive participant sample. Evidence also has unequal documentary status: direct quotations are restricted to verbatim transcripts, while contemporaneous or reconstructed fieldnotes are paraphrased. The three administrative episodes come from direct observation, participant retrospective accounts, or formal meeting minutes rather than longitudinal process tracing, and the study does not reconstruct how individual terms were first selected during formal policy formulation. Documentary authority also varies; D17 is an independent assessment and is not treated as equivalent to formal policy instruments. Future work should trace terminology through specific policy and budget processes, compare ministries and levels of government systematically, and test the framework across ASEAN or other emerging policy fields.

Author's note

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communication, government communication, digital governance, social media, misinformation, digital public trust, and citizen engagement.

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/[Supplementary Material](#), further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Ethics statement

Formal ethics committee approval was not required because Thu Dau Mot University did not have an IRB or equivalent ethics committee responsible for social sciences and humanities research at the time of the study. Informed consent was obtained from interview participants before participation, and recording was undertaken only with participant permission.

Author contributions

The author confirms sole responsibility for the conception and design of the study, data collection, data curation, analysis and interpretation, visualisation, preparation of the original draft, and review and revision of the manuscript.

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Supplementary material

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