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Painting Sustainability Pathways: Investigating the extent to which Kenya's Vision 2030 is contributing to the formulation of a conducive environment for visual artists in Nairobi

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ABSTRACT

Previous research has been conducted on factors that impede the sustainability of the careers of visual artists in Kenya. However research is yet to be conducted on ways in which government could support the artists to become more sustainable. I therefore purposed to contribute in addressing this research gap by investigating, the extent to which the Department of Culture (DOC) through Vision 2030 is able to advocate for the nature of support that visual artists in Nairobi need from the government to aid in the development of sustainable careers. Hence I undertook the following objectives: exploring the nature of support the artists need from the government; investigating the extent to which the Vision 2030 document is addressing the nature of support the artists need from the government; and examining the extent to which the Department of Culture includes the participation of visual artists in Nairobi in decision-making processes. I conducted the critical and philosophical analysis of the phenomenon by using Foucault's (1991) notion of "Governmentality" as the overarching lens. Governmentality is the role of the government of creating an enabling environment for the self-governance of its people (Foucault, 1991; Dean, 2010; Huff & Munro, 2013; Michael & Zhang, 2008; Schmitt, 2011). I used governmentality so as to gain insight on the relationship between the state and the artists with regard to the governance of the VA

subsector. I then engaged with Arnstein's (1969) concept "ladder of citizen participation" to analyse the nature of engagement the visual artists have with the DOC in relation to their level of participation in decision making processes. Finally I applied Holden's (2006) concept of "cultural value" to investigate whether and the extent to which the DOC embraces the notion of governmentality so as to enable the promotion of cultural values which are important to the visual artists in its advocacy for the VA subsector through Vision 2030. My research was qualitative, and I triangulated my data sources by conducting in-depth interviews with visual artists, experts and the DOC in correlation to the Vision 2030 document. I found that the ability of the DOC to advocate for the nature of support the visual artists need in Vision 2030 is limited because the artists are often excluded from the DOC's decision-making processes. Therefore they lack the power to affect the decisions. Factors that lead to the exclusion of the participation of the artists are: inadequate resources; mistrust and a poor working relationship between the department and the artists' association; differences of understandings of participatory policy making; and the duplication of roles between the national government (DOC) and the county government. Furthermore, because the artists are not included in matters of governance the cultural values which the DOC and the visual artists hold with importance are not understood as being complementary. Due to all these issues the DOC is unable to advocate for some of the needs of the visual artists in Vision 2030 like: the refurbishment of community social halls; adult continuing education programs; the formulation of a cultural policy for county government; and the legitimisation of the Kenya Visual Artists Association (KENVAA).

Key Words: *Kenya's Vision 2030, Visual Arts, Governmentality, Citizen Participation, Cultural Values.*