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Where Did Things Go Wrong? An Investigation of the Adoption of the Creative Industry and Creative Economy Concepts in the Malawi National Cultural Policy

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Abstract

The enactment in 2015 of Malawi's National Cultural Policy was heralded as providing the formalised guidelines that would bring together stakeholders in the arts and culture sector towards the attainment of a common set of goals and a unified vision. However, in the eight (8) years that have followed there is a perception amongst non-state actors that the National Cultural Policy contains a vision and goals that do not meet the realities on the ground, nor the needs of its intended beneficiaries. This research challenges the assumption that the failure of the National Cultural Policy is the result of the failure to reconcile the transition of Malawi's arts and culture from the margins during the Single-Party era to its alignment more centrally in national development agendas in Democratic Malawi. The central argument of this study is that the failed attempt of the government to mimic the application of the creative industry and creative economy concepts utilised with much success in the Global North, in Malawi's arts and culture sector is at the heart of the National Cultural Policy's failure. This research study investigates the failure to mimic these Global North concepts without recontextualizing them to the Malawian arts and culture landscape in the early stages of the policy's development as being the root cause for its subsequent failure. The study utilises a qualitative methodology in order to analyse the various disconnects within the National Cultural Policy and the impacts these have on the policy's implementation..

Keywords: Malawi, National Cultural Policy, arts and culture, creative industry, creative economy, Global North, Global South, recontextualization.