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# The Cultural Economy of China and Africa: International Summer School Proceedings

**Joffe, Avril; Chatikobo, Munyaradzi ; Mavhungu, Johanna; Pyper, Brett**

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# INTERNATIONAL summer school

Hosted by Wits School of Arts' Cultural Policy & Management, and Peking University's Institute for Cultural Industries

Online | 1 - 4 March 2021

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UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND JOHANNESBURG

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*Creating the worlds we want: The Vrystaat Kunstefees and Cultural Self - Agency in Global Networks*
Ricardo Peach (2020)

*Cultural and creative work in rural and remote areas: an emerging international conversation*
Nancy Duxbury (2020)

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The peer reviewed papers included in the publication are:

*Chinese Contemporary Artists as an Epistemic Community for Creative Industries Policy*
Xin Gu

*Confucius Institutes in South Africa: Language Education as a Cultural Access Point*
Elroy Bell

*Arts-culture Economic Institutions: A Review of the Kaleidoscope of Complexities in Rethinking Southern African Music Commodification with Digital Considerations*
Traver Mudzonga

*Im4theArts as a Lens to the Dynamics of Transformation in the South African Cultural Sector*
Akhona Ndzuta

*COVID-19 Economic Impact on African Creative Sector: Lessons for Cultural Entrepreneurs*
Ribio Nzeza Bunketi Buse

*Funding Cultural Entrepreneurs in Crisis during COVID-19: The Case of the Presidential Employment Stimulus Programme Managed by the National Arts Council of South Africa*
Cobi Labuscagne

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Ms Avril Joffe
*International Summer School convenor, Postgraduate coordinator, Cultural Policy and Management*
*Wits School of Arts*

INTERNATIONAL summer school

# The Cultural Economy of China and Africa: International Summer School Proceedings

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# Day One:

# *Culture and Creative industries in China and Africa*

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Panellists:
**Elroy Bell, Traver Mudzonga, Akhona Ndzuta**


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# Introduction to the e-conference proceedings of the International Summer School



*Avril Joffe*

*Coordinator of the Cultural and Policy Management (CPM) Postgraduate Programme*

*Avril Joffe is the coordinator of the Post Graduate Programme (and former head) of the Cultural Policy and Management Department at the Wits School of Arts, University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. She is an economic sociologist with experience in the field of cultural policy, culture and development and the cultural economy, specialising in mapping and measurement, programme design, implementation, stakeholder relations and evaluation. Avril is an active member of UNESCO's Panel of Experts for Cultural Policy and Governance (2011-2022). She is a member of the Global Cultural Economy Council of the Policy and Evidence Centre (UK) and the external international advisory panel for IN SITU - Place-based innovation of cultural and creative industries in non-urban areas coordinated by the Centre for Social Studies at the University of Coimbra, Portugal, (European Commission under the Horizon Europe programme). She is a Guest Lecturer at numerous universities from Antwerp to Serbia. Her research and policy spans fields such as Informality and the cultural economy in the Global South (PEC), Promoting Decent Work for the African Cultural and Creative Economy (ILO), Socio and Economic Rights and the Status of Artists (UNESCO) and Fair International Cultural Collaboration (EUNIC). In South Africa, she has been a board member of the National Arts Council and a panel member advising the Minister of Arts and Culture on cultural policy.*

The decision to host an International Summer School in Johannesburg in March 2021 in conversation with our Chinese partners, the Institute of Cultural Industries and Peking University, Beijing (PKU), was prompted by my participation at the 10th International Summer School hosted by the School of Arts at Peking University in Beijing on arts management and cultural industries in 2019. I was privileged to be one of the keynote speakers at their Summer School and was inspired by the engagement of all the PKU graduates attending (both MA and PhD candidates) and how the International Summer School was able to frame some key concepts in the field for them right at the start of their semester. I wanted to provide a similar 'induction' into the world of culture, creativity and the economy for our new CPM postgraduate cohort.

During my stay in China as a guest of Prof Xiang Yong (Hardy), I was fortunate to accompany other international guests and PKU's graduate cohort to experience the rural festival in Prof Hardy's hometown, Baima Town in Dazhou, Sichuan. This festival was a true celebration of and for the local community and hosted excellent artistic performances from more urban parts of China, showcased indigenous local cultural expressions performed by people in the village and encouraged all of us to participate in this celebration.

Our International Summer School was intended to host Prof Hardy and some of his students and to participate in the cultural vitality of our city. Equally important to reciprocating the exceptional hospitality from Prof Hardy was a desire to bring the African world of excellence and deep experience from my work with the UNESCO Expert Facility and the International Council for the Policy and Evidence Council of the UK's Creative Industries into the teaching and learning programme of CPM.

The target audience for the four days of conversation was principally

our new postgraduate students, our current Honours, MA and PhD students as well as our alumni. We wanted all our students from Wits and PKU to hear from some of the leading theorists in our field, learn from leading African cultural professionals and cultural organisations and become immersed in some of the key topics of our curriculum. The International Summer School also presented an opportunity for peer reflection on research by CPM and PKU staff, alumni and current students as budding cultural economy scholars.

The city of Johannesburg is usually our 'playground' where, through excursions, encounters and engagements, we get to understand the intersection of culture, creativity and the economy. Each of these terms is contested and their coming together as cultural policy or cultural diplomacy, cultural and creative industries or cultural and creative economy even more so. The International Summer School, however, took place in the midst of a global pandemic and thus had to become an online conference proceeding. We could also not ignore the impact Covid 19 had on the cultural and creative sector. At the same time, it underscored how culture and the arts helped us negotiate the human condition in crisis, grief and mourning.

We wanted the conversations and presentations during the four days to challenge us to reimagine and reinvigorate the relationship between culture, creativity and the economy. Collectively in this International Summer School we examined the state of the cultural economy in both our countries, the role that culture and creativity plays or could play in rural development, the challenges and affordances of informality in the cultural economy, and the role of entrepreneurship in societies such as ours. Our students will be reading texts written by many of our keynote speakers and panelists in the weeks and months to follow.

In these e-conference proceedings there is an introductory text for each of the four days as each had a particular theme starting with keynote presentations followed by a panel of academics, practitioners and public intellectuals. Each day also had an afternoon panel where students presented their work in relation to the day's theme. Given the embryonic nature of these presentations, we have not included these in the e-conference proceedings.

## Keynote speakers

It was only fitting to begin with the presentation of a new text on creative industries in China by authors well known to CPM students, Prof Justin O'Connor and his co-author, Dr Xin Gu. Justin O'Connor is a leading theorist who has written extensively on the contested nature of these terms and with whose work our students engage throughout the CPM programme. O'Connor and Gu recently co-authored two books, ***Red Creatives: Culture and Modernity in China*** (Intellect) and also, with Mike Kho Lim, ***Re-imagining Creative Cities in Twenty-First Century Asia*** (Palgrave). Xin Gu is a fellow member of the UNESCO expert facility on cultural policy and governance and a programme director of the Monash MA in cultural and creative industries (CCIs) where I have had the honour of being a visiting guest lecturer for five years.

O'Connor and Gu presented their work from ***Red Creative: Culture and Modernity in China***, outlining extensive research with multiple threads covering a history of Chinese civilization and opening up questions about the creative economy through the lens of its creative hub of Shanghai. The book takes a long-term historical perspective and surfaces important questions about the nature of contemporary creative capitalism and the universal claims of Western modernity. In their talks, O'Connor and Gu offer new ways of thinking about cultural policy in China.

Underpinning this is the idea of creativity which O'Connor describes biographically from his work in cultural industries since the early 90s – mostly in cities, cultural industry policy based in Manchester with a UK national organisation and working across Europe in various cities thinking about creative clusters and cities. From 2004 O'Connor started travelling to China, specifically Shanghai, observed creative clusters springing up and sought to understand how China would deal with creativity. In the book O'Connor and Gu address this question of

creativity, the force and power of artistic creativity, and it occurred to them that something was going on in China that queried this pitch. They pose the question, "What underlay this idea that creativity was going to change the world – how was it being specifically rolled out in the idea of creative industries, creative cities and creative clusters?". The book provides a critical lens on creative industries discourse infused with a detailed historical and social analysis. Through investigating what China needed to do to benefit from this creativity, they explain older imperialist tropes that the West represents the modern while the non-West, or China is this case, needed to capture these narratives to prove itself. This would stimulate bottom-up, grassroots creative industries and new approaches to cities that would release the creativity of entrepreneurs on the ground, and fundamentally would entail the need for democracy for a creative milieu to develop.

They argue that the shift from cultural industry to creative industry in turn shifted the emphasis to a certain kind of economic discourse: a retooling of creative subjects in terms of individual entrepreneurs and the self, and cities as networks of entrepreneurs, and the structure of industries that would produce these networks of self-creating entrepreneurs grouping together in creative milieus. This essentially neoliberal discourse was one that fell apart very quickly when it landed in Shanghai China. They emphasise that the case-study of Shanghai reveals the limits of Western thought in understanding Chinese history, culture, and society.

The core argument presented by both O'Connor and Gu is that the creative industries discourse that is derived from artistic creativity rooted in Western avant-garde and modernist tradition has been stripped of its links to cultural values with the promise of democratising culture when adopted in very different social and political contexts such as China. The deeply Euro-centric discourse of creative industries requires non-Western Countries to engage in radical changes to polity in order to benefit from the creative industries or else face failure.

Drawing on her work in Red Creative, Xin Gu addressed the role of Chinese contemporary artists as an epistemic community (Haas 1992) for Chinese cultural policy. She considers how an epistemic community might figure in the processes of policy transfer in the creative industries policy domain and explores the extent to which the construction of the creative discourse in China was shaped by artists' beliefs. Questions posed include: 'How do artists gain acceptance as an epistemic community? How are their ideas filtered through to local policy-making? Why are some ideas more attractive than others? and How has the relationship between artists as an epistemic community and policy-makers changed during this process?'. Quoting Zhou (2001), Gu argues that Chinese cultural values are constantly informed by long established tradition, moral and collective social norms.

Gu shows how the epistemic community of contemporary visual artists in China were able to share their beliefs about Chinese creativity with decision-makers at the local government level. She argues that although this epistemic community was initially able to exert their influence with creative cluster managers, this influence could no longer be sustained once clusters were institutionalised and formalised into creative cluster development models. In their place, real estate developers emerge to be the epistemic communities in shaping CCI policy.

## The Panel Discussion

In the panel discussion following these two keynote addresses, we were able to extend our understanding of contemporary cultural policy development in China with a presentation by Prof Hardy (whose full paper is recorded in Day 2) and a focus on the role of Confucius Institutes in South Africa by CPM MA student Elroy Bell.

Elroy Bell presented his masters research on the cultural diplomacy role of Confucius Institutes in South Africa and asks what the intention is behind China's cultural presence in Africa and what the impact of Confucius Institutes are. He speaks to the soft power potential of Confucius Institutes, the fostering of a shared academy, the importance of the acquisition of Chinese as a language to promote international trade opportunities for China and the mediator role in securing links between Chinese trade opportunities

and local organisations. He concludes that the link between hard power growth as a result of wielding soft power can be measured through the number of people involved with the Confucius Institutes.

The final papers in this panel included one by PhD candidate in CPM, Traver Mudzonga, on economic institutions in the music industry and by Akhona Ndzuta, one of the CPM examiners, on the role of Im4theArts in furthering a transformation agenda for the cultural sector.

Traver Mudzonga presents a reflective autoethnography based on experience in running a pro bono arts-culture business clinic in Morija, Lesotho during 2019/20. While the arts-culture business clinic was in service to a village-based cohort of creatives, most of the work was done with a musician, a multimedia artist, a fashion designer, and a poet. His paper argues for rethinking economic institutions to facilitate effective commodification of arts-culture products-services on digital platforms. He foregrounds the music industry in his discussion. Questioning the view that the exploitation of intellectual property is the essence of the music business, he offers a discussion about the economic institutions needed by musicians to secure their livelihoods. He notes that current copyright frameworks do not serve Global South countries, how current copyright laws are more about authenticating ownership by guaranteeing moral rights and that live performances are an effective way to commodify music. Referencing authors such as Anderson, Pratt and Nwauche, he shows that although institutional mechanisms exist for copyright regimes, they are weak in the Global South. He argues for the need to craft economic institutions that are rooted in our social contexts for domestic and international audiences.

Akhona Ndzuta confronts the thorny question of transformation in the cultural sector through the lens of the Facebook group Im4theArts, and questions how its individual role players in their multiplicity of experience understand transformation beyond changing funding mechanisms. She asks, 'What for them specifically needs to be transformed?'. Ndzuta finds the group to be a 'rare lens' into broader considerations of forms of transformation in the SA cultural sector. She discusses the difficulty of developing a strategy for transformation when the disproportionate ways in which sector participants, historically and currently, access material resources are disregarded. A fundamental concern for Ndzuta is how to avoid treating the sector monolithically or ensure that the multiplicity of experience and ideology in the group translates to policy impact.

## Conclusion

These arguments are particularly important for our CPM students who are asked to question the dominant Global North narrative about economic competitiveness promoted by agencies such as UNESCO, UNCTAD, the World Bank, British Council and the Goethe Institute. Given the partnership CPM has with PKU in Beijing, it is of great importance to understand the role of China and Chinese culture, particularly on the African continent, and the role creative hubs like Shanghai play in contemporary Chinese culture and politics. As a large player in Africa, China's role in culture and the investment in cultural infrastructure, education and media is an important area of research. Elroy Bell and Prof Hardy's contribution extended our knowledge about creative industries and rural economic development in China and its role in Africa, while Mudzonga asks us to pause and question the economic institutions adopted by our cultural sector to support its growth and Ndzuta asks us to question the efficacy of civil society initiatives in furthering the transformation agenda so desperately required by the South African cultural sector.

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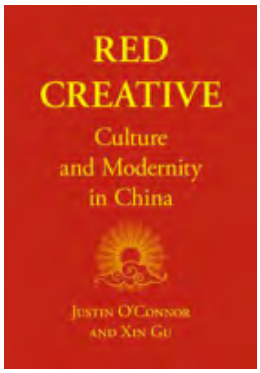
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# Red Creative: Culture and Modernity in China



*Prof Justin O'Conner,*
*Professor of Cultural Economy,*
*University of South Australia*




Justin O'Connor is Professor of Cultural Economy, University of South Australia. He is also visiting Professor in the Department of Cultural Industries Management, Shanghai Jiaotong University. From 2012-2018 he was Professor of Communications and Cultural Economy at Monash University. Between 2012-18 he was part of the UNESCO 'Expert Facility', supporting the ***2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of Cultural Diversity***.

Justin has produced Creative Industry policy reports for the Australia Federal Government and the Tasmanian State Government, and for the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DEFAT) on Creative Industries and Soft Power. Previously he helped set up Manchester's Creative Industries Development Service (CIDS) and Forum on Creative Industries (FOCI). He has advised cities in Europe, Russia, Korea and China. Under the UNESCO/EU ***Technical Assistance Programme*** he has worked with the Ministries of Culture in both Mauritius and Samoa to develop cultural industry strategies.

Justin is currently working on two ARC Discovery projects: ***UNESCO and the Making of Global Cultural Policy: Culture, Economy, Development***, with a focus on the Asia-Pacific; and ***Urban Cultural Policy and the Changing Dynamics of Cultural Production***. His completed ARC projects include ***Working the Field: Creative Graduates in China and Australia and Creative Clusters, Soft Infrastructure and New Media: Developing Capacity in China and Australia***, partnered with Shanghai Jiaotong University.

Justin is the author of the 2016 Platform Paper ***After the Creative Industries: Why we need a Cultural Economy;*** co-editor (with Kate Oakley) of the 2015 ***Routledge Companion to the Cultural Industries***; and (with Rong Yueming ) (2018) ***Cultural Industries in Shanghai: Policy and Planning inside a Global City***, (Intellect). He has recently published (with Xin Gu) ***Red Creative: Culture and Modernity in China (Intellect)***, and (with Xin Gu, Mike Kho Lim) ***Re-Imagining Creative Cities in 21st Century Asia*** (Palgrave).

**A transcription of the presentation by Prof Justin O'Conner, Professor of Cultural Economy, University of South Australia**

*Justin O'Connor presented a background to the book,* ***Red Creative: Culture and Modernity in China****, which he wrote in collaboration with Xin Gu and is the result of an engagement with China that, for O'Connor, began in 2004. Prior to that he had been working in the area of cultural and creative industries in Manchester, England, since the early 90s. O'Connor elaborated on the unfolding of events that led to the creation of this book.*

In 1998 UK's New Labour launched the creative industries as part of a new post-industrial modernisation, an agenda rapidly taken up globally. Challenging state-heavy industrial development policies, it proclaimed a new bottom-up creative economy where entrepreneurial subjects, in networked creative urban milieus, would transform the power of

creativity into an engine of economic innovation. ***Red Creative*** explores China's response to this challenge, particularly through the case of Shanghai, whose re-emergence as a cultural centre in the 1990s seemed to herald the return of an interrupted Western modernity. By contrast, the book shows how China's adaptation of the creative industries agenda was rooted in its Communist and 'Confucian' past.

***Red Creative*** places the Creative Industries agenda within the *longue durée* of China's existential confrontation with Western imperialism and its search for an alternative Chinese socialist modernity.

Rather than dismissing China's Nationalist and Communist past as an obstacle to the adoption of Western-centric creativity, the book explores the encounter between Western notions of culture and the Non-West nations forced to rapidly adapt to them. There is a strong connection between European colonialism, European modernity and the development of the cultural and creative industries which would appear to dictate that, in order to achieve creative modernisation, countries would have to adopt the Western mode of government, economy, cities and subjects. This narrative is very much a part of the British Council script. ***Red Creative*** attempts to break with that through describing how China's anti-imperialist and post-colonial histories remained of vital importance during its post-1978 'reform and opening' period, underpinning its market reforms but also its refusal of Western liberal democracy.

***Red Creative*** argues that China has had its own path to modernity. It is, of course, connected to the West but the supposition that it has to copy the ideas of the West in order to modernise and thus protect itself against the West and Japanese imperialism is questioned. The supposition that the West owns modernisation can be refuted by a study of Chinese history which contains many examples of an older Chinese modernity. Although the trajectory of the last hundred years in China might seem to be seen as a rejection of the past, it is rooted in an older political culture and system of practice that goes back more than 1000 years. China's path to modernity is therefore an encounter with the West, but also very, very different.

Although China uses the term 'creative industries' when necessary, 'cultural industries' is actually the preferred term. The different levels of Chinese Government recognise that, if you want a cultural industry, an industrial policy is required. America also refers to it as a cultural industry in order to control the industry and the resulting infrastructure through what is known there as a trade policy. South Korea's success comes not from adopting correct British Council creativity discourses but from applying power and resources, the capacity of the developmental state, to the growth of culture. China has very successfully achieved that. ***Red Creative*** explores how China began to find its way to a different kind of cultural industries policy: one based on its own traditions and its own view of culture.

***Red Creative*** also argues that the Creative Industries agenda facilitated the hollowing-out of the notion of culture as part of neoliberalism's nihilist effects. Even if seen as an industry within an economy, whether in the West or the East, it is important that the concept of culture is kept alive because it is a connection to older ideas of what binds a society together. The concept of creativity is relevant but ultimately meaningless and can be problematic in that it has the potential to destroy these older ideas. The Chinese Government is often accused of censorship, but what is positive and worth emulating is that the Chinese continue to see culture as not just an economic activity, but as absolutely crucial for social cohesion: for what it is that holds a society together. The Western shift towards a purely economic view of culture and creativity has actually begun to pull that apart and many societies are fragmenting because of that. The strength of the cultural industries lies not only in the fact that it is an economy, but that it is a phenomenon that binds us

together. The Chinese Communist Party retains a commitment to the social welfare and collective benefit, marking it off from a disoriented and demoralised individualism of Western liberal democracy, now at an historic impasse. This is the deeper context for a cold war now heating-up at a disturbing rate.

The real problem, however, lies in the over-commercialisation that occurs within the sector. China, like the West, increasingly looks to social media, driven by AI surveillance, as a way of controlling populations, no longer needing the intermediation of culture. The radical democratisation of culture, promised in a different way by the New Left in the East, now also seems stalled, the Creative Industries its dead husk. ***Red Creative*** remains a promise unfulfilled.

**Justin O'Connor** is Professor of Cultural Economy at the University of South Australia.

**Xin Gu** is Senior Lecturer at Monash University.

*"Red Creative is a stunning piece of synthetic scholarship. It's an essential overview of the limitations of major bodies of western thought in understanding Chinese history, culture and society, especially the ways concepts of culture and creativity have been mobilized in China over the last twenty years."* David Hesmondhalgh, Professor of Media, Music and Culture, University of Leeds

*"The book's scope is as remarkable as its depth. It presents an authoritative view of contemporary Chinese cultural policy and the development of the creative industries approach/agenda in China and the Asian region generally [...] It is a carefully crafted, fully researched analysis and assessment of a culture often treated as an object of fantasy by western intellectuals"* Julian Meyrick, Professor of Creative Arts, Griffith University, Australia

# Chinese Contemporary Artists as an Epistemic Community for Creative Industries Policy



*Dr Xin Gu (xin.gu@monash.edu )*
*Senior Lecturer, School of Media Film and Journalism, Monash University, Australia*

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## Abstract

This article addresses the role of Chinese contemporary artists as an epistemic community for Chinese cultural policy. Based on empirical research, the study considers how an epistemic community (Haas 1992) might figure in the processes of policy transfer in the creative industries policy domain. Evidence for collective decision making in a restricted area of cultural policy-making in China is presented here. The intent of this article is to explore the extent to which the construction of the creative discourse in China was shaped by the beliefs of artists. How do artists gain acceptance as an epistemic community? How are their ideas filtered through to local policy-making? Why are some ideas more attractive than others, and how has the relationship between artists as an epistemic community and policy-makers changed during this process?

## Introduction

The creative industries discourse in the West occurred in parallel with the expansion of capitalism to include the 'human capital' concepts of talent and creativity as part of a broader imagining of a different future from the techno-rational-administrative systems of modernity attached to Fordism (Garnham 2005, O'Brien 2013, O'Connor 2015, O'Connor 2020). This consideration allowed for the broadening of capitalism to include the knowledge and skills traditionally associated with culture and the arts (Banks and Hesmondhalgh 2009). Central to this expansion is the treatment of the cultural and creative industries as a growth sector due to rising education and leisure time. In addition, the creative industries discourse has become a new type of innovation system with catalytic effects across all social life (Innocenti and Lazzeretti 2019).

This is most visible in the development of creative cities, where creative quarters and their trendy amenities act as a window through which a new kind of society and modernity can be glimpsed. Charles Landry coined the term 'creative city' as early as 1996, and with a polished version published in 2003 started to link arts and culture with urban development, in particular the formation of advanced amenities (Landry 1996, 2003). The popularity of 'creative cities' was further advanced by Richard Florida's 'creative class' theory, which propelled him to figure consistently in various global Thinktanks. Well before this new knowledge class in culture-led urban regeneration, however, cultural experts slowly but surely found their way into different policy-making departments—departments charged with the task of finding out how to promote local creative industries and the broader impact these industries may have on the wider local economy and urban environment. A substantial body of literature focused here comes from scholars across various academic disciplines ranging from urban development (Hoffman, Fainstein and Judd 2011) to cultural geography (Storper and Scott 2009) and media studies (Hesmondhalgh 2005). Meanwhile, many cultural practitioners have acquired significant influence in shaping Western policy-making, often under the name of Working Groups, Boards of Directors and Thinktanks. One of the earliest examples of this is Tony Wilson, a renowned journalist, music producer and promoter, who was involved in the formulation of local creative industry development policy for the city of Manchester in the UK in the late 90s (O'Connor and Gu 2010).

Part of the reason for involving cultural practitioners is due to the realisation that the creative economy would require a transformed polity (McRobbie 2018). Central to this transformation would be the complex relationship between corporations and consumers, which would also form the basis of value creation. The producers must respond rapidly to market fluctuation by immersing themselves in networks, creative clusters and creative milieu as must the policy-makers faced with the much more challenging task of nurturing networking and knowledge sharing (O'Connor and Gu 2010, Ponzini 2015).

Culture, traditionally a distinct area of public policy linked to nation building and to a long-standing notion of artistic autonomy, needed to be transformed. Cultural value was no longer something that could be determined by governments, elites or cultural experts; it could only emerge from expressed preferences in the market (Potts and Cunningham 2008). This reconfiguration of cultural values in relation to the market is formed on a consumer sovereignty theory (O'Connor 2009). The equation of market and democracy, elaborated through Schumpeter's notion of creative destruction, has become the core of Western creative cities discourse (cf. Cunningham 2018).

As O'Connor and Gu (2020) argued, creative industries discourse derived from artistic creativity rooted in Western avant-garde and modernist tradition has been stripped of its links to cultural values with the promise of democratising culture when adopted in very different social and political contexts. In addition, creative industries discourse is deeply Euro-centric, and any non-Western Countries will have to engage in radical changes to polity in order to benefit from the creative industries or else face failure. This is a key issue to be discussed here.

This creative industries discourse arrived in China in the early 2000s, understood to be a new sector of the service economy for newly emerged middle-class consumers. It was soon realised that to fully incorporate such 'creative discourse' into what was a very different social and political system, China needed to further liberate the market system from the state and from the dominance of large, state-owned enterprises (SOEs). Democracy is a necessary step, as many critics have warned in this argument. Chinese socialism was in direct opposition to the self-organisation of subjects, networks and markets in a creative economy. Despite its challenges, there was great hope amongst Chinese

policy-makers that the appeal of a creative economy—the transition to a post-manufacturing advanced service economy—would elevate China's global soft power under the proposal of a 'cultural modernisation strategy'[1].

For over two centuries, Chinese modernisation has involved some relationship with the West. It has been a relationship fraught with hard choices stemming from how the 'them' and the 'us' were framed. Asking questions as to what can be mobilised from one's own tradition—what and how much to borrow from the West—is beyond copying and mimicking. It also opens opportunities to what some in the West might call a 'public sphere' (O'Connor and Gu 2006, 2020). Through observing how the 'voice' of artists is absorbed by cultural policy, I try to articulate the limitations for the Western creative discourse to contribute to a more democratic society in China. The artist critique has become an essential component of the new statecraft, rather than a disruptive force.

This is based on the observation that, on the one hand, Chinese cultural policy did use the creative industries to articulate an aspiration for Western modernisation. However, such creativity discourse was not modelled on Western values such as individualism, open societies and the free circulation of ideas. As Zhou (2001) argued, Chinese cultural values are constantly informed by long established tradition, morality and collective social norms. He also reminded us that we may need to pay more attention to the convergence of traditional cultural values and the modernisation value system. Chinese cultural policy is illustrative of the convergence of these two very different cultural value systems.

Such convergence has resulted in highly uncertain economic outcomes in the development of Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI) at the local level. Even for a global city like Shanghai, success lags behind expectations (O'Connor and Gu 2014). Despite some successes in the area of creative cluster development involving the preservation of industrial districts and restoration of heritage buildings for adaptive uses by cultural and creative businesses, many of these projects are facing an uncertain long-term financial future (Gu 2014).

It is in this context that artists' expertise is activated by decision makers in China's highly restrictive cultural policy-making sphere because CCIs are no longer just about developing a new economic sector and hoping for rapid industrialisation; instead, CCIs are about cultivating human creativity, translating the creative discourse of the West and demanding a whole new range of social-urbanistic structures that have so far been absent. In essence, CCIs have become a highly uncertain area of public policy-making, providing opportunity for policy intervention by non-traditional knowledge communities.

The following sections introduce the analytical concept of 'epistemic community' in relation to CCI policy-making in China. Focusing on a particular area of policy-making — creative clusters development —the paper articulates uncertain outcomes associated with such policy in its conceptualisation, translation, diffusion and institutionalisation. This is followed by an analysis of the role those Chinese contemporary artists played in making sense of this complex policy agenda and its subsequent institutionalisation.

## Operationalise the creativity discourse and creative cities in China

An analysis of the relationship between the state, arts and urban development process in China's most Westernised city, Shanghai, is paramount. The term 'cultural

*1 Cultural modernisation strategy – known in Chinese as 'wen hua qiang guo zhanlue' was a key national policy document, a key output of the 19th National People's Congress in 2017. This policy strategy put forward the idea that cultural development should be a key pathway for constructing Chinese socialist state. It clarified for the first time the dependency of development on culture. It put forward the idea that without cultural confidence, there would be no prosperity for the country and the revival of the Great Chinese State will be un-thinkable. http://theory.people.com.cn/n1/2018/0710/c83850-30136635.html*

intermediary' is often used to point to the role of artists as 'mediator' between the state and the culture-led urban regeneration. Ann Markusen (2006), for example, suggested that arts as an industry can be sustained by building close engagement with the idea of art from all levels of decision-making organisations—from cultural policy to urban regeneration to economic development. Analysis of the gradual shift of the role of artists in Shanghai's creative cluster development, especially artists' self-perception of their relationships with the city, seeks to explore the possibility for a shared social reality between the artists and policy-makers despite being in very different social and political contexts in China.

'Consensual knowledge' is a term used to articulate the shared understanding of a social reality between the epistemic community and policy-makers. In his theorisation of 'epistemic community', Haas (1992) argued that 'reality is socially constructed' and that an epistemic community is likely to be engaged in times of uncertainty, forcing policy-makers to seek knowledge which helps their comprehension of the crisis at hand. Epistemic communities help to formulate 'a consensual knowledge' in their domain of expertise and are able to translate such knowledge into policy terms, even though the groups carry within them fundamentally different social and political beliefs. In addition, an epistemic community can have a greater impact on policy-making in an area where prior knowledge or practices cannot be traced or followed (Haas 2007). Whilst this may give those in the epistemic community unprecedented influence in policy-making, there remain significant challenges as the two groups—policy-makers and those in the epistemic community—negotiate their 'causally informed vision of reality and their notions of validity' (Haas 1992: 22). As initially described, this epistemic community has four features:

> '1) a shared set of normative and principled beliefs which provide a value-based rationale for the social action of community members;
>
> 2) shared causal beliefs which are derived from their analysis of practices leading or contributing to a central set of problems in their domain and which then serve as the basis for elucidating the multiple linkages between possible policy actions and desired outcomes;
>
> 3) shared notions of validity, i.e., intersubjective, internally defined criteria for weighing and validating knowledge in the domain of their expertise; and
>
> 4) a common policy enterprise, or a set of common practices associated with a set of problems to which their professional competence is directed, presumably out of the conviction that human welfare will be enhanced as a consequence' (Haas, 1992: 3).

Focusing on contemporary visual artists as a special group of the epistemic community navigating the process of creative clusters development policy-formulation in Shanghai, this paper argues that there are two dominant socio-political factors that influence artists' practice as an epistemic community. One is the existing socialist political culture to which all Chinese policy-making must adhere. This has traditionally focused on efficiency and objectivity involving mostly engineers and other scientists who are believed by Chinese decision makers to be more truthful than other experts. Artists interpreting knowledge in significantly different ways to scientists face challenges in the diffusion of 'creativity' as a unique form of knowledge. The second is the 'catching up' mantra amongst Chinese decision makers who view knowledge of the West as superior to their own. In the case of creative industries policy, the UK policy is closely studied and constantly reinterpreted by both Chinese scholars and local policy-makers. This article aims to explore questions derived from these two factors:

> 1) To what extent is artists' knowledge interpreted and institutionalised? and
>
> 2) How are artists approaching 'consensual knowledge' about the creative industries through the localisation of a 'creative industries' policy?

Many scholars in China have observed a sway of economic liberalism since the Open-Door Policy in 1978. In the decades that followed, Chinese policy has been driven predominantly by the intellectual power of engineers, scientists and a workforce that is associated with Fordism and planned economy (Kaple 1994). This is clearly shaped by a unique social reality guided by the aforementioned 'cultural modernisation strategy'. The more recent inclusion of artists, their beliefs and their ideas demonstrates a broad policy shift towards the 'cultural modernisation' strategy (O'Connor and Gu 2020). The intent of this article is to explore the extent to which the construction of such social reality was shaped by the belief of artists at the local level. Several questions aid the investigation. How do artists gain legitimacy as an epistemic community? How are their ideas filtered through to local policy-making? Why are some ideas more attractive than others? How has the relationship between artists and policy-makers evolved alongside the transformation of the creative industries policy agenda?

This research focuses on interviews with artists based in creative clusters in Shanghai between 2008 and 2016, a period when many of these clusters were undergoing significant transformation from artist enclaves to real estate development engines (He 2019, Gu 2014, Wang 2011). It charts the rise and fall of contemporary visual artists as a particular 'epistemic community' integrated into China's exclusive decision-making network. I specify some of the factors that contributed to the status of contemporary art as a peak body for decision making at the beginning of creative cluster development. This is followed by an analysis of creative cluster development policy to show some of the challenges for contemporary visual artists as a knowledge group to retain their influence in this policy domain. Over 80 interviews were conducted across 50 creative clusters in Shanghai. These involved:

- identifying artists' rationale for working with decision-makers in relation to cluster development;
- determining the shared beliefs amongst artists in relation to creative clusters;
- analysing their influence on cluster development policy; and
- comparing different cluster development outcomes in relation to the artists' influence as well as the reluctance of policy-makers to collaborate with artists.

## Artists as Cultural intermediaries

Artists are not new to public policy-making. Cultural intermediaries, as noted in the introduction, have figured intermittently in the literature on cultural/creative industries since the 1980s (Nixon and Gay 2002, Maguire and Matthews 2012). In countries where the term 'cultural intermediary' was initiated, it was associated with the role artists played in the re-interpretation and re-positioning of 'culture' and 'economy' in these societies. Artists offer expertise in shaping the field of cultural consumption, challenging established cultural hierarchies, changing the relation between consumption and identity and promoting more hedonistic and 'aesthetic' consumer experiences (Maguire and Mathews, 2012). Artists also reconfigure the social reality of work in a more general sense, altering attitudes toward work, career and life-course amongst producers and bringing highly reflective and aesthetic-informational inputs into the production process.

Some have argued that artists could contribute more significantly to social change in an era of post-scarcity when the cultural hierarchies are much more fragmented and plural (O'Connor 2015). Others like Negus (2002) asked for further clarification of whose ideas and what ideas are included/excluded in this new process of

the production of consensual knowledge. Negus' research from the late 1980s on the British music industry has convincingly suggested a not-so-open industry dominated by the new cultural intermediaries (mostly white, male and educated in elite schools) with a strong tendency to maintain 'power, position, privilege and patronage', values that are established standards in the traditional class system.

To understand the role artists played in the policy domain of creative industries, we must start by registering the extent to which artists' activities and lifestyles were at odds with the mainstream, dominant culture. Chinese contemporary artists have always tried to break away from the state system; to de-stabilise the power, position and privilege gained by state patronage. Such autonomous status gained by resisting institutionalisation was important to earning trust in a global art market that prioritised values such as 'authenticity' and 'individuality'. It is within such a context that the role of artists in the domain of creative industries can be understood as a process of 'consensual knowledge' building as mentioned earlier.

Despite conflicting beliefs and interests, artists and local policy-makers shared a belief in the symbolic value of the economy. It can be illustrated by the fact that artists contribute significantly to the renewal of post-industrial cities. This process was first identified by Sharon Zukin in her 1982 ***Loft Living***, an account (still unsurpassed) of the ways in which artists and (what she did not then call) intermediaries began to turn a run-down industrial district into the height of bohemian chic. 'Working class bohemians' in Manchester in the mid-1990s were observed as highly active in transforming a derelict landscape into one which seemed to hold a different future (O'Connor and Wynne and, 1996). The successful re-zoning of SoHo witnessed a new level of contact between artists and City Hall; Manchester's music scene eventually produced an urban culture adjunct to the existing growth coalition. Cultural intermediaries not only contributed to the 'relandscaping' of urban areas and to creating new symbolic values (frequently recouped by developers), but they also worked to facilitate a meaningful interaction between these new forms of urban cultural production/consumption and policy-makers. In doing so, cultural intermediaries became part of an emergent coalition between 'urban social movements' and cultural producers (Baumann, 2007; Hollands and Vail, 2012), facilitating interaction between this coalition and established cultural policy agencies and the local development state. Since the mid-to-late 1990s, artists have increasingly operated as cultural policy intermediaries both inside and outside the formal policy process, working with and against established policy (Glinkowski 2012).

One of the tendencies identified in the earlier cultural intermediaries' literature was for particular areas of the city to become sites for the more public enactment of artists and their works. These areas had become linked to cultural or creative 'quarters' that were initially rather ad hoc and informal, but which increasingly became objects of policy. 'Creative clusters' began to emerge in aesthetically run-down parts of the urban centre, often associated with a venue or gallery or 'creative workspace'. However, there is limited attention paid to how these urban art scenes are organised around a 'consensual knowledge' shared amongst artists' communities of the importance of the urban. In the case of Chinese contemporary art, artists formed 'creative clusters' in which global flows of images, sounds, texts and ideas (and people) were accessed. They could be seen in terms of what Saskia Sassen (2002) calls 'micro-sites in a global civil society'.

Importantly for China, this creative city imagery is not just a product of the city's economic miracle, but is produced out of the encounter with (and often 'playing to') a 'West' constituted initially by cultural intermediaries like Chinese contemporary artists through their networks in the global art world. There is a sense in which these sites could attract flows of consultants, practitioners and cultural consumers in a way that could have real impact on the local imagery and

that this could be carried back to the transnational level (often via conferences/presentation slides or guest speaker invitations extended to managers/owners of these sites) (Lagerkvist 2013).

This position will be substantiated in the following discussion about how the artistic belief in an authentic way of life and freedom of creative expression is selectively incorporated in the shaping up of Shanghai's creative cluster development policy. In addition to the role artists play in the policy domain, this study focused on how the line between 'official' art and 'independent' art becomes blurred as a result of the artists' involvement in decision making. Because of the uncertainty associated with the economic outcomes of creative industries, it is argued that artists could lose their influence as an epistemic community on policy as different expectations from an ambiguous policy agenda materialise.

## Artists as an epistemic community

The urban centres present important nodal linkages with access to the art world. In China, the artist population was concentrated in the capital Beijing and in metropolitan Shanghai. Most artists ended up on the outskirts of these cities due to the unaffordability of the inner-city property market. Beijing's Song Zhuang and Factory 798 were famous art villages, attracting artists from across China.

In addition to being a nodal point in the global art market, Shanghai's creative clusters also resonate with the city's own aesthetic re-imagination of the unique path of Shanghai Modern. This re-introduction and re-interpretation of Shanghai Modern was spearheaded by local contemporary visual artists. Artists who were born and grew up in Shanghai had the local know-how that allowed them to acquire the role of cultural intermediaries in the initial stage of the dissemination of knowledge about local places and memories critical to the awakening of Shanghai's past. It was no surprise that local artists were the first group to engage in the act of protecting industry heritage buildings and turning them into vernacular creative spaces like M50 – a redundant textile factory which was turned into a cluster of art studios under para-legal terms.

It was studio artists who first imported the idea of 'vernacular' aesthetics in rapidly de-industrialising Shanghai. In Han Yu Qi and Zhang Song's book, the style of art warehouses was learnt from lessons of artist-led urban gentrifications portraying art districts in New York and London. Han documented the major urban derelicts in Shanghai as reflected in her books ***A dream of Shanghai*** (2006) and ***Light and shadow*** (2006). She showed a keen eye for industrial heritage sites in the city like 'chimneys, bridges and water towers', saying, "these industrial constructions were forgotten by us. They cannot be re-activated like the warehouses but they are important evidences of who we are and our past."

Han Yu Qi was one of many artists we interviewed as part of this research between 2009 and 2013. Her studio is a three-story warehouse located at the far end of M50; she moved there in the late 90s at a time when it was popular to move out of art colleges and into creative clusters. She became the leading force in translating the industrial vernacular into new forms of cultural capital to which Shanghai had just awakened. David Ley (2003), using the 'cultural codes of the gentrification', argued that the type of capital held by artists allowed them to acquire a dominant position in the process of urban gentrification and contribute to the popularisation of the 'vernacular' amongst society's newly emerged middle class. Such a role was clearly assumed by Han and fellow artists. Here, their role of intermediary was not just about the justification of the value of the 'vernacular' and the 'rejected' in the face of the property developer, the policy-maker and the new middle-class residents. It also coincided with the emergence of a market for arts and culture within China. The formation of art clusters was a process to facilitate the emergent post-industrial social reality within which culture occupies a prominent position. The influence

of artists as the new epistemic community in the formation of Shanghai's creative cluster development policy will be unpacked below.

### *Social networking as consensual knowledge*

It has been a key feature of the CCI policy-making process to involve small networks of specialists involving individual artists, cultural production companies, events and advertising companies and venue owners. They are assembled to discuss sector-specific issues. For example, music policy-making has traditionally been a difficult area involving multiple stakeholders, and it is a norm for government agencies in charge of setting agendas to formulate new policies by seeking out experts in the industry. In China, the lack of a sector-specific policy agenda outside of the formal policy-making channels has meant that cultural intermediaries have significant power to advance their own ideas. The fact that most of the initial policy engagement was with visual arts groups of specialists resulted naturally in a CCI policy that is organised around the needs of a particular group of contemporary visual artists. For example, the first state-owned and developed creative clusters all aimed at providing studio spaces modelled on the needs of visual artists. Moreover, the amenities within these clusters were developed to attract wealthy foreigners who would likely be the patrons of Chinese contemporary art in the early 90s and the start of the 2000s.

Missing from this early stage of consultation and learning is a careful exploration of very different 'causal beliefs' about the 'creative industries' agenda between artists and local policy-makers. Even as the initial creative industries policy in Shanghai has been influenced by the contemporary visual artists group to a significant degree, neither the artists themselves nor the policy-makers seem curious about the potential conflicts in their agendas.

Such 'negligence' was deliberate on both sides as they share another important 'causal belief' in the market value of Chinese contemporary art. The artist groups gained significant leverage not only because of their strong presence in the creative industries policy area, but also because of their ability in demonstrating the economic and, to a lesser degree the symbolic value of the Chinese visual arts industry. As pragmatism and neo-liberalism became, since the late 80s, the tone of policy-making across China, those artists who acquired market success also gained significant impact on policy. Local governments are keen to learn from their success and to direct policy supports accordingly.

Much of this knowledge sharing takes place in an informal way, through small networks within which famous artists become brokers of the art world for policy-makers. Worth noting here is the deceased artist Chen Yifei, whose name is synonymous with the well-known creative cluster 'Tianzifang'. Chen is renowned for his art featuring the authentic local way of life; the laneway life of downtown Shanghai is a primary subject of Chen's work. As Chen's art works gained popularity at international auction houses and amongst collectors, local government quickly named one of the art spaces in the area 'Yifei Art Space'. Chen and fellow artists such as Er Dongqiang became important voices in contributing to the understanding of the connection between art and the preservation of local lifestyle in the urban renewal process. This becomes a hallmark of Shanghai's creative cluster development policy[2]. By the early 2000s, Tianzifang had attracted policy-makers around China to learn about this unique Shanghai Model. This influence by the artists was not sustained when Chen and fellow artists were forced to re-locate due to

2 *In 2017, the Shanghai Government has developed - 'Guidelines for elevating innovative development of Shanghai's cultural and creative industries', known as 'the 50 agendas'. A key feature of this policy is a strong emphasis on CCI's value in contributing to the urban regeneration process. Specific mention of soft power of culture in contributing to Shanghai's global city status is just one of the examples of how CCI's value is understood to be external to the narration definition of industry sector.* http://www.xinhuanet.com/culture/2017-12/18/c_1122125097.htm

rising rent in the area a decade later.

### *Weakening of contemporary art as an epistemic community in Shanghai*

As knowledge of creative clusters grew, local policy-makers began to turn to real estate developers for advice, further moving away from artists' expertise. The global financial crisis around 2012 caused the heavy investment in creative clusters and the expertise of artists to be questioned. Furthermore, there had been a growing consensus amongst policy-makers since 2010 that artists had little knowledge of the market mechanism. The realisation that the arts as a unique business model is hardly transferrable to the broader CCI added to the crisis. During this period many privately owned clusters emerged, claiming to support more business-like creative industries, such as media.

A contributing fact to the declining influence of artists was the realisation that Chinese contemporary art had limited potential to deliver the ambitious economic targets on which the city had set its sights. Policy-makers were frustrated by the art sector's failure to deliver its promises on many fronts but, most significantly, the visual arts is a relatively small business compared to manufacturing. Suspicion began to overwhelm the collaborative relationship between artists and policy-makers - the artist critique of policy and ultimately of state power put the group at odds with public policy objectives. Chinese contemporary artists have always carried within them this resistance to institutionalisation; this was most obvious amongst emergent and experimental artists who resisted not only 'institutionalisation' but also 'commercialisation'. As a result, by 2010 many artists had moved out of the creative clusters and began to congregate in places that had little potential for marketisation. These include renting blocks of flats in a residential compound, office buildings outside of the 9-to- 5 working hours and food markets. Without a shared causal belief, which has been compromised further by the ambiguity of the term 'creative industries', specialists have limited scope to sustain their influence.

Despite their declining influence, some elements of artists' interpretations of creative clusters have been sustained, the most important of which is the connection made regarding the importance of authentic everyday culture for creative cluster development. By 2012, no one in Shanghai was talking about demolition of old laneways to make way for residential developments. Policy-makers pride themselves on adopting artistic sensitivity to restore old neighbourhoods and are fluent in translating local authenticity in any cluster development project.

Different district governments within Shanghai have reacted differently to creative cluster development. The Putuo district government, where M50 is, continues to engage with visual artists as its epistemic community for policy inspirations. This is shaped by multiple factors. One is the reputation M50 has for occupying an important position in formulating practices for which Shanghai is known nationally and internationally. Secondly, several artists and key players in the visual arts sector have found their way into local policy. Thinktanks were created during the initial phase of cluster development policy, and they continue to exert influence at the local policy level. Thirdly, the visual arts sector produces outputs in the form of publications, events and exhibitions that are powerful channels for public policy displays. This supports the idea that the influence of the epistemic community on policy making depends to a significant degree on the group's ability to diffuse and exercise knowledge and power. In the case of the Putuo district government, the success of the visual arts group comes as a result of a shared vision of joint benefits in the creative cluster model. In other places, such as in Yangpu district, the visual arts influence has been rapidly displaced by a focus on media experts who were more successful at convincing local government to build media hubs and incubators servicing the needs of graduates from nearby universities.

## Operationalising 'creative city'

Just as uncertainties are one of the key characteristics of CCI, so are policy-making and the projected outcomes thereof. In the last five years, new trends have unsettled the field of CCI; unlike the last two rounds of policy-making, this recent round is driven more by businesses in the CCI sector than by policy anxious to shape social reality. With an influx of creative businesses in the city, numerous new business models emerge, and they become the primary information seekers of advice on developing creative industries. Scholarly research in CCI has long suggested the importance of SMEs in adopting new ideas and keeping innovation afloat. The visual arts sector composed of micro-businesses has reclaimed some of its influence in this new reality as consultants who can shed light on the sustainability of creativity and innovation. Visual arts are back in the 2021 CCI policy in Shanghai. Despite significant disparity over the value of culture as an economic development tool in Shanghai, the influence of contemporary visual artists persisted. As uncertainty surrounding CCI continues, policy-making is likely to accommodate opposing values and beliefs, opening new possibilities for visual artists to engage with public policy-making.

China has sought to operationalise the creativity agenda, well aware of the ideological incompatibility this involves. It assigns to the creative industries a purely commercial value whilst retaining control over the ideology of its cultural system. This approach contributes to greater uncertainties around Chinese CCI policy agenda, resulting in a clash of economic and social priorities in the development of creative clusters, for example.

The Chinese CCI policy deviates from the Western understanding of 'creativity' engrained in individualised freedom of creative expression. The Chinese approach is about 'copying' and mastering techniques of production at scale, and is concerned more with sustaining traditional industry, such as manufacturing, than with replacing it. The evolution of the role artists play in this policy domain demonstrates the fundamental friction between two vastly different belief systems.

Despite different expectations, policy-makers and artists were able to collaborate through the formulation of consensual knowledge of what this 'creative discourse' means for China. This is only possible because the two groups shared a social reality organised around the question of whether China can have creativity without the social and political changes that the UK termed 'creative industries' seem to assume as givens.

This was translated into an economic agenda for creative industries policy materialised through the development of creative clusters. For policy-makers, 'contemporary art' has been China's fastest-growing cultural export. Shanghai's ambition for the modern and cosmopolitanism is closely linked to the sector's ability to present contemporary art as a viable market. For artists, however, the ability to sell art to wealthy patrons is only a small fraction of their expected outcome. Their engagement with this creative discourse is aimed at raising the cultural value within the highly restrictive public policy domain.

The process and practice of epistemic communities within Shanghai's CCI could also be viewed as the transformation of the local contemporary art sector in an attempt to re-establish rules, channels and markets and work through different assemblages of people, networks and resources to shape a vernacular art world in accordance with the global art market.

What made contemporary visual artists a distinguishable epistemic community during China's creative cluster development process was that they were able to share their beliefs about Chinese creativity with decision-makers at the local government level. This study argues that artists were called upon for advice during the early stages of creative cluster development due to the uncertainty about translating international CCI policy into very

different domestic conditions. Initially these artists exerted their influence through community meetings with creative cluster managers responsible for reporting back to district governments about the future of creative clusters. Gradually some of these individuals, through speeches and interviews, found their way into more prestigious and exclusive decision-making bodies in provincial and even national policy bodies. The extent to which artists sustain their influence can be assessed through a comparison between the beliefs of artists and policy-makers about the role of creativity and innovation in a changing Chinese society. Once clusters are institutionalised and formalised into creative cluster development models, artists' influences are weakened and other significant actors, such as real estate developers, emerge to be the epistemic communities in shaping CCI policy. Nevertheless, some of the practices by artists have had a lasting influence on creative industries policy organised around the consensual knowledge of the symbolic power of culture in contributing to Shanghai's global city ambition.

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# Confucius Institutes in South Africa: Language Education as a Cultural Access Point



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## Introduction

This paper positions Confucius Institutes as a Chinese cultural diplomacy tool within the context of South Africa. Through personal interviews, I outline how Confucius Institutes operate in South Africa, offer some context to the programmes in this country and what enrolment numbers at one of the Confucius Institutes in South Africa are in comparison to another African country. My research intends to understand how cultural influences from China are balanced in Africa and whether there is any equilibrium. This research specifically focuses on the relationship between South Africa and China. There is fragmented research related to aspects of Chinese cultural diplomacy in Africa. This collection of research includes China malls in South Africa (Huynh, 2018), audience analysis in relation to Chinese media influence in Africa (Wasserman & Madrid-Morales, 2018), Chinese and African film co-production (Peng and Keane,

2019) and research on the Chinese Confucius Institute more generally (Pan, 2013). This existing research does not, however, consider these aspects within a larger coherent Chinese cultural diplomacy strategy for Africa. To address this, I wish to understand what the intention behind China's cultural presence in Africa and the impact thereof is, with specific reference to Confucius Institutes.

## Soft Power Theory and Cultural Diplomacy

As I unpack the cultural diplomacy relationship between China and South Africa, it is necessary to acknowledge the power dynamic between these actors. Jora (2013) explains that, at its simplest, power is the ability to coerce or persuade (2013: 46). This definition of power is rooted in Robert Dahl's (1957) classic definition of the ability of party A to get party B to do something he would otherwise not have done. Contextually, it is seen as an extension and development of Carr's (1945) idea of "power over opinion" and Lukes' (1974) "third dimension of power" both of which shed light on how the attractiveness of a nation's culture, ideals, policies, education and diplomacy give it the capacity to persuade other nations to willingly adopt its goals.

Within cultural diplomacy discourse, Nye's theory of soft power resources becomes an integral part of this analysis. Soft power, a term originated by Nye in the late 1980s (Nye, 2004: x), "refers primarily to ways in which a nation's cultural resources constitute a form of power that enhances, or even substitutes for military and economic strength" (Zhang, 2010: 383). At the core of soft power is, as Nye (2004) explains, "the ability to obtain what one wants through co-option and attraction rather than through coercion or payment" (Pan, 2013: 23). Nye (2004) describes how "[s]oft-power resources are slower, more diffuse, and more cumbersome to wield than hard-power resources" (2004: 1). Here hard power resources refer to military and economic strength. Through this understanding of soft power theory, the link between Confucius Institutes and soft power strategy can be established. This link, the areas of influence and some of the impact on China's hard power will be elaborated below.

## The Establishment and Growth of Confucius Institutes

Since the late 1950s the Chinese government (including and after Mao Zedong) decided to use culture and trade as a means to change perceptions of China and scale back the country's isolation in the world (Liu, 2008). These decisions are linked to diplomatic and economic policy shifts over the same period, which include the implementation of Nye's soft power strategies referenced above. These shifts have had a direct effect on China's economic presence on the continent, resulting in China now holding the position as the largest trading partner for both South Africa and Africa (Mhaka & Jeke, 2018). This strategy is effectively managed to achieve China's economic goals as well as to counter the "Red Threat" narrative propagated by the Global West (Xin, 2017).

As China began expanding its economic and political muster in the world, "the state realised that foreigners' lack of Chinese language proficiency and understanding of Chinese culture were barriers that hindered foreign direct investment in China" (Pan, 2013: 25). In 1987, under the guidance of the Ministry of Education, the Chinese Language Council International (Hanban) was established. As Pan (2013) further elaborates, the Hanban was gradually expanded "to include cultural exchanges and was placed under the joint governance of 11 different ministries and commissions collectively responsible for education, culture, foreign affairs and strategic planning for long-term national development" (2013: 26). Hanban subsequently established the Confucius Institutes which partner with universities in foreign countries, teaching Chinese and offering various cultural engagements. Liu (2008) claims that as a result of its cooperative model and distinctive characteristic, the Confucius Institutes are likely the most open-minded institution in China's history. Pan (2013), counters this by explaining their

integrated structure with the Chinese Communist Party:

"Confucius Institutes are not independent institutions, but agents of the state; Hanban's chairman, Li Yandong, is also a PRC state counsellor, thus ensuring the state's close, high-level supervision of Confucius Institutes. [Additionally,] the Minister of Education (2012), provides a massive financial support to cover CI expenditures worldwide, including US$150,000 in start-up funds for each Confucius Institute and 50% of their operation and development costs" (Pan, 2013: 26).

Chinese News reported that by the end of 2007, China had spent more than 26 million USD on the global Confucius Institute footprint (Liu, 2008: 31). This relationship with the state clearly distinguishes Confucius Institutes from other semi-independent or independent cultural diplomacy organisations such as the Goethe Institut and the British Council, which operate largely at an arm's length.

Since 2004, more than 700 Confucius Institutes or Confucius Classrooms have been established around the world. South Africa has the largest footprint of this soft diplomacy strategy in Africa with six Confucius Institutes and three Confucius Classrooms at various universities and regions of the country. While they are primarily established to promote Chinese culture and language, more practically their role is "to do business and open markets or provide an effective mechanism for the scientific contribution to economic globalisation" (Hartig, 2012 in Neuwirth, 2019: 640). Fundamentally, China has never conceptually separated culture and trade; in this approach, they are not mutually exclusive and it is not necessary to separate them organisationally (Neuwirth, 2019: 634). Pan (2013) alludes to the suspicion that has arisen from this expansion when he states that "[t] he explosive growth of Confucius Institutes generated heated discussions and debates regarding their purpose, functions and the hidden agenda behind the public vision statement" (Pan, 2013: 22). It is specifically this tension and uncertainty that this research tries to understand within the context of South Africa.

When considering the work of the Confucius Institutes, literature indicates that this organisation is closely administered by the central Chinese government and that its work goes beyond the scope of language teaching. In reality, the Confucius Institutes are one of the largest foreign cultural relations institutes, operating with a wide scope of influence. As such, it is important to understand how this organisation serves both Chinese government and non-state actor interests in South Africa.

## The presence and areas of influence of Confucius Institutes in South Africa

According to Professor Wenwu Liu, Director of the Confucius Institute at the University of Cape Town (UCT), "[t]here was a lot of competition to be the first [in 2004]: one was in Kenya, the other was in South Korea. One signed the agreement first and the other announced first so it's hard to say, between the two of them who was the first Confucius Institute to launch" (Liu, personal interview: 2021). This was the moment Hanban went from being a language office that sent teachers from Chinese Universities to countries sporadically requesting Chinese language teachers, to a more formalised headquarters for Confucius Institutes. It has been set up as a stronger organisation with more financial support not only from the Chinese government but from all walks of Chinese life. "It also gets donations from Chinese society, and with this financial support, Hanban could then start a bigger project to support Chinese universities to establish Confucius Institutes in different countries" (Liu, personal interview: 2021).

The resources offered by Hanban are specific to each Confucius Institute. The structure and programme also differ slightly based on demand and the agreements between the partnering universities. At UCT, for example the Confucius Institute is located in the International

Academics Programmes Office (IAPO), while at Rhodes University, it is located in their Department of Languages. UCT's Chinese language classes are run from that university's Department of Language and Literature. UCT employs one person to head the Chinese programme at the school who then requests additional teaching resources from the UCT Confucius Institute. These teachers are sourced from UCT's partner university in China, Sun Ya-Sen University. Hanban employs the head of the UCT Confucius Institute as well as the two teachers from Sun Ya-Sen University who assist the UCT-employed head of Chinese language teaching. "We only provide teachers. We cannot decide how the programs are run, how many classes should there be, or how many students to enrol. We only provide teachers according to the demand" (Liu, personal interview: 2021).

Pan (2013) explores how soft power policies are carried out in practice, arguing that "the Confucius Institutes project can be understood as a form of Cultural Diplomacy that is state-sponsored and university piloted" (2013: 23). "The Confucius Institutes project involves soft power techniques but not full soft power capability" (Ibid). Professor Liu echoed this in his assertion of Confucius Institutes being the focus point in China's cultural diplomacy and cultural exchange strategy (Liu, personal interview: 2021). While this initiative is meant to be structured in such a way that the driver of the process is the Chinese university seeking a foreign counterpart, this is not necessarily how this works in practice. Professor Liu indicated, as the literature above details, that two universities, one foreign, one Chinese, would establish a mutual connection based on need and could then apply to Hanban for the financial and human resources, resulting in the three parties signing an agreement (Liu, personal interview: 2021). This was not the case in the efforts to establish such an institute at the University of Witwatersrand (Wits). Dr Mahomed Moolla, Head of the Wits Strategic Partnership Office, received a number of requests from the Chinese embassy in Pretoria offering to establish a Confucius Institute at Wits (Moolla, personal interview: 2021). The requests were not initiated by a Chinese university, nor was a suitable Chinese university suggested; the process was being driven by the Chinese foreign office in South Africa. Wits ultimately decided against the establishment of a Confucius Institute on their campus as a result of Dr Moolla's recommendation to the Vice Chancellor at the time. Moolla referenced a suspicion of the ulterior motives of the Chinese diplomats as well as a Wits policy to refuse government money for the establishment of research institutes as the reasons for his recommendation (Moolla, personal interview: 2021).

Interestingly, in my quest to understand the number of enrolled students at Confucius Institutes in South Africa, I found that these numbers were rather low. At UCT, for example, the Confucius Institute had only enrolled 150 students in 2020 (Liu, personal interview: 2021). It also seems that the South African example is not the rule for the rest of the continent. The enrolment numbers in a country like Nigeria seem to be oversubscribed. "In Nigeria, if a Confucius Institute would like to enrol 200 students, 2000 potential students would apply. Then the Confucius Institute would be able to select those students who are well prepared to be their students. But in South Africa, if we intend to enrol 200, hopefully we can get 100 applicants" (Liu, personal interview: 2021). Professor Liu offered two possible reasons for the low interest in Chinese language in South Africa. Firstly, South Africa has 11 official languages. "[T] hey first have to learn their own languages so foreign languages have to be put aside"(Liu, personal interview: 2021). Secondly, in other African countries students who learn Chinese would be able to seek work in China or be employed at a Chinese company based in that African country and earn double or triple what they would without having learnt Chinese. Given South Africa's relatively strong economy, learning Chinese would not similarly boost a citizen's earning potential or likelihood to be employed (Liu, personal interview: 2021). To compensate for these lower

university enrolment numbers at the Confucius Institute, the UCT Confucius Institute runs outreach projects at local schools. Currently they teach at four schools in Cape Town, reaching 2000 learners in 2021 ranging from Grade R to 12 (Liu, personal interview: 2021).

"[Confucius Institutes] lay the foundation for the People's Republic of China to promote China's cultural traditions, way of life and foreign policies" (Pan, 2013: 28). This is done through organising cultural events, foreign arts and performance tours (Ibid). This is true in South Africa as well, with the UCT Confucius Institute establishing a number of cultural events such as the Chinese Spring Festival, lantern festival and mid-autumn festival to name but a few. The intention is to share what Chinese people do during this time, what they eat and how they celebrate, teaching students with hands-on activities related to the celebration (Liu, personal interview: 2021). Chinese cultural delegations are invited to offer performances such as paper cutting, embroidery or Kung Fu. Professor Liu indicated that attendees at these cultural days are generally students or teachers at UCT, along with some family and friends. Should these cultural programmes be hosted at one of the outreach schools, they would be attended by local communities (Liu, personal interview: 2021). This is a considered approach as these activities continue to work in similar contexts, encouraging interest in Chinese language and culture, all the while demystifying the otherness of Chinese people within local communities.

Confucius Institutes also target elite classes including presidents of universities, politicians and foreign Confucius Institute partners. "In 2010 Hanban invited about 300 university presidents and 2000 Confucius Institute directors and teachers to visit the Shanghai World Expo" (Pan, 2013: 28). Between 2006 and 2010, Hanban organised five Confucius Institute conferences to facilitate exchanges and cooperation among CIs in different parts of the world" (Pan, 2013: 29). Quite simply Confucius Institutes are the diplomatic response to the perception of China's strength. "Cultural diplomacy can be seen as an effort to counter the external crisis arising from the 'China threat theory'" (Ibid). "[The] Confucius Institutes project can be seen as a complex soft power technique, using language, education, cultural events, conferences and tourism as non-military and non-economic means to exert China's influence abroad" (Pan, 2013: 30). Pan reminds us of Nye's (2004) core focus on soft power as that of co-option and attraction and argues that "[t]he expansion of CI's around the world, however, heavily relies on payment, specifically massive financial support by the Chinese Government without which the overseas institutions could be neither established nor maintained" (Pan, 2013: 30). This reliance on government funding is similar to cultural relations arms of other states such as the British Council. It is clear, however, that Confucius Institutes do not operate at the same arm's length distance.

Liu (2008), believes that "the Chinese government's use of cultural diplomacy within Africa, however, is rather lacking in a clear cultural strategy, [indicating] that the dominant role for cultural diplomacy [is] in economic development and politics, instead of in culture in its own right" (Liu, 2008: 35). When pressed on the political nature of Confucius Institutes in South Africa, Professor Liu was emphatic: "It's never about politics" (Liu, personal interview: 2021). The Confucius Institutes do not only service university and school communities, however. While not directly forging trade connections between Chinese and South African companies, seminars and symposiums are sometimes offered. These are mostly to promote the relationship between the two countries and often deal with "how to do business in China or how to do business in the host countries" (Liu, personal interview: 2021). Additionally, there is some direct involvement between Confucius Institutes in South Africa and Chinese business in South Africa through language and cultural programmes. South African employees working in Chinese companies are offered the opportunity learn Mandarin, "so that they can do better and cooperate

better with the Chinese employees" (Liu, personal interview: 2021). As an example, the employees of the Chinese company, Huawei, based in their South African offices are offered such opportunities for similar reasons (Ibid).

"For China, the ancient and imperial past is a space in which its image can be constructed to appeal to Western values" (Bound et al, 2006: 58). This alludes to the specific historical exhibitions and generally traditional art forms which are toured internationally as well as to the naming of the Confucius Institute as articulated in Pan's (2013) paper.

"Sustainable development and climate change are major bones of contention. Memories of Tiananmen Square linger and there are sporadic reminders in the Western media that pull on the conscience of westerners seeking to cooperate with China. The vilification of the Falun Gong movement and the public and ritualistic shaming and imprisonment of prostitutes without trial in Shenzhen in late 2006 were covered with headlines like 'China witnesses a '70s flashback'. Culture is a space that China wishes to keep separate from this image. Ancient and imperial culture, in particular, presents foreigners – and especially those from North America and Europe – with a framework within which they can approach China without confronting contemporary issues. Laying emphasis on a certain part of its cultural tradition is therefore an important feature of China's image management" (Bound et al, 2006: 58).

It is prudent to note that Confucius Institutes are not the only points of intersection for academy between South Africa and China. Currently Wits is in the process of establishing its own Africa Centre for Global China Studies in Johannesburg (Moolla, personal interview: 2021). This is intended to be the first school of its kind on the continent and is to be established with privately funded money, not tied to any government, in order to preserve the integrity of the academic output of the Centre. There is no South African institute based in China doing similar work to the Confucius Institutes. That imbalance in institutional cultural representation is echoed in the plans to establish this Centre at Wits. While South Africa is in the process of establishing its first school on China studies, there are currently six African studies academies and schools at various universities in China (Forum on China-Africa Cooperation: online).

## Final Conclusions

It can be seen how the presence and work of Confucius Institutes directly seeks to address perceptions of China within host African countries. This work and influence is present within the host country's university community, school communities and in some business communities and has strong soft power potential which can be measured through the opinions people have of the work China does in a country and through the willingness to encourage Chinese involvement in local or global issues or the apathy to challenge it. The work and influence of the Confucius Institutes also has the potential to encourage an affinity for Chinese products, contributing to hard power economic growth for China.

The presence of Confucius Institutes in African countries speaks to Chinese investment in and partnership with local partners which fosters a shared academy, research colleagues and an expansion of both direct and indirect resources. This addresses the concerns identified in literature about the lack of Chinese language speaking foreigners correlating to the lack of international trade opportunities for China. As a language teaching and cultural institution, it directly impacts shifting perceptions of China within host countries, whether through language students or cultural exhibitions hosted by the Institutes. Furthermore, their role as a mediator in establishing links between Chinese trade opportunities and local organisations has been discussed above. Confucius Institutes facilitate hard power growth through the wielding of soft power and the extent of this influence can be measured through the number of people involved with the Institutes or the Institutes' events.

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# **Arts-Culture Economic Institutions:** a Review of a Kaleidescope of Complexities in Rethinking Southern African Music Commodification with Digital Considerations



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Mudzonga presented a reflective paper as part of ongoing PhD research titled: *Formal and Informal Economic Institutions in Music Business: a comparative inquiry into the impact of digital technologies experienced by seven South Africa based Afro-pop/African music bands in commodification of music between 2015 and 2020.*

## Introduction

What kind of arts-culture Economic Institutions does the Southern African region, more specifically music business on digital platforms, require as a timely response to current digital impact? The paper seeks to answer this question by drawing from the music business in South Africa for cases. Desktop review and autoethnography methods are employed. The paper adopts *Economic Institutions as social constructs* as its thesis statement. This thesis statement centres Economic Institutions as a conceptual framework to explore the aforementioned question.

I argue that Economic Institutions are socially constructed. The first part of this paper combines a desktop review and autoethnography based on over a decade of practice in the visual-performance arts across Harare, Johannesburg, and Maseru to profile current Economic Institutions through art-culture policy approaches. The arts-culture policy approaches highlight the social construct aspects. It is important to clarify that, within this context, 'social' does not necessarily refer to the general society and/or democratic process but rather to an intersection of loosely defined relationships of common interests for economic gains. Granovetter (1992) argues that the society is made up of a group of individuals with clear goals, often economic gains, which then set up the principles upon which Economic Institutions are structured. EconLib (2019) states that the Economic Institution, in economics, is about a combination of property rights, honest government, political stability, a dependable legal system, and competitive and open markets. Economic Institutions are shaped

by public and private stakeholders (Granovetter, 1992; Bennett et al., 2017; EconLib, 2019).

### *Economic institutions, and arts and culture policy considerations*

**"Africa is not a jungle."**
Black Coffee [1].

In framing arts-culture Economic Institutions, this paper is biased towards the commodification of arts-culture while appreciating the various intangible values that arts-culture creates. Policy considerations are taken as the social construction driven by the public, represented by policymakers as part of a diverse group of stakeholders. This section uses a desktop review to map an arts-culture policy framework of Southern Africa because it is policies that shape economic institutions and the general commodification of arts-culture.

As Southern African cases, Lesotho and South Africa's policy framework approaches highlight that the policies directly linked to arts and culture are not primarily about the commodification of arts and culture products and services. However, aspects of these polices, which include the Revised National Cultural and Heritage Policy of Lesotho, the National Development Programme of South Africa (NDP, 2013) and the Revised White Paper[2] of South Africa (RWP, 2017) in particular, present a deliberate shift towards influencing arts and culture trade. Although not specific to Lesotho and South Africa, the first section of this paper presents a jarring gap as it becomes clear that economic concepts and perspectives are framed within Global North contexts. What does this mean? Southern Africa's Economic Institutions are rooted in former colonial economic development based on extractive institutions and legal traditions largely imparted through the colonisation process (Bennett et al., 2017). Throsby (2001 & 2010), O'Connor (2010), Pratt (2005) and Towse (2010a) present an overall argument that cultural policy approaches are also viewed as instrumental in contributing towards national economies. It is therefore important to appreciate the notion of Economic Institutions as driven by a group of people which, in the case of policymaking, is comprised of those who constitute a government.

Granovetter (1992: 3) argues for Economic Institutions as Social Constructions with an "emphasis on how economic activity comes to be coordinated by groups of people rather than carried out by isolated individuals". This section focuses on the concept of "Economic Institutions" and explores digital technologies directly linked to the commodification of music as part of a wider economic activity. The South African National Development Plan 2030 (NDP, 2013: 24) highlights the need for "financial and ICT support for artists", and incentives for "commercial distribution networks to distribute and/or host art". It is important to note that South African Economic Institutions are complex and reflective of colonial and apartheid epochs [3]. Although not writing specifically from a South African context, Granovetter (1992) suggests that Economic Institutions are built upon the embeddedness of economic goals and activities within socially oriented goals and structures. This appears to align with the South African policy framework approaches[4] . Granovetter (1992: 4) offers three classic sociological assumptions as a more solid

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2 *One of the core values of South Africa's Revised White Paper (2017: 9) is economic; "by generating wealth, contributing to direct and indirect economic growth and creating sustainable employment".*

3 *From the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP, 1994) to the Revised White Paper (RWP, 2017), South Africa's policy framework acknowledges the struggle of correcting the deliberate, systematic and institutionalised segregation leading to an economic framework ensuring only the European citizens and residents were well resourced. This extended to European arts and culture, of interest to this inquiry music - leading to the current approach of driving the concept of South African music.*

4 *Pre-1994 economic institutions privileged Europeans in line with the colonial and apartheid rule, and now the attempt to allocate resources across races and cultures in line with the 1994 democratic dispensation.*

foundation than those offered by a neoclassical economic framework. Firstly, "the pursuit of economic goals is normally accompanied by that of such non-economic ones as sociability, approval, status and power" Granovetter (1992: 4). This can be applied to the music business where music bands are often expected to have fame, fortune, celebrity status and, at times, be role models to a society. On the South African policy approach front, this can be inferred through the drive for government agencies to redress inequalities in the music industry by providing funding and capacity building for Black[5] music professionals (RWP, 2017: 17-18). Secondly, "economic action is socially situated, and cannot be explained by individual motives alone; it is embedded in ongoing networks of personal relations..." Granovetter (1992: 4). This resonates with the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP, 1994) highlighting that pre-1994 South African economic activities under apartheid rule ensured that well-resourced farmers of European descent were assisted to practice commercial farming, whereas under resourced, non-Europeans of African descent were forced into being 'bantustan' peasant farmers. Why offer a landrelated example in a paper about arts-culture? A simple answer would be to point out that a major aspect of Economic Institutions is centred around property rights, with land being a clearer example of property. This phenomenon is a relevant way to contextualise the history of intellectual property such as music because this South African scenario extended to music, with European culture-based music being well-resourced and supported to become the dominant South African music industry; a travesty the Revised White Paper (RWP, 2017: 14-18) is burdened with correcting to date. The third classic sociological assumption by Granovetter (1992: 4) "is that economic institutions do not rise automatically... but are socially constructed[6] ". The essence of Granovetter's (1992) arguments and assumptions for the concept of *Economic Institutions as Social Constructions*[7] is that every revolutionary economic problem requires a social institution to solve it. This presents a gap within the South African context.

Current policy framework approaches are crafted for socio-political and broader economic problems and the music business is not being accorded the status given to more traditional industries because mining, manufacturing and agriculture are the "strength" of the South African economy (RDP, 1994: 10). This gap is at art-culture policy level and driven by the public. Although not writing about the arts-culture sector, Bennett et al. (2017) argue that post-colonial economic institutions in former colonies have their origins in the colonisation process which reflects the former colonisers. However, anecdotal shifts can be observed in the way private sector stakeholders organise and strategise while closely watching their profit margins. Here, Economic Institutions are about "neoclassical growth theory and its extensions, which stress the accumulation of physical and human capital and technological changes as the ingredients for economic growth" (Bennett et al., 2017).

Granovetter (1992) argues that modern economics can be integrated with a social constructionist account of Economic Institutions which considers social and economic division of labour. This is in direct opposition to classical economics and Adam Smith's[8] views on the role of relations in economics. Granovetter (1992: 5-6) highlights the concepts of over-socialisation

5 *Black in the South African context denotes people or groups considered as non-European during the apartheid rule and is inclusive of people of African and Asian descent. It is more a political construct than racial, as Black in the racial context then excludes South Africans of Asian descent and mixed races. Usually, context clarifies which Black is being used, mostly government programmes aimed at redressing inequalities automatically point to the opposite of European-centred apartheid.*

6 *This assumption is rooted in the Social Construction work by Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1966). This is a reference to their book, "The social con-struction of reality." New York: Anchor (1966).*

7 *Part of Granovetter (1992) publication title.*

8 *Adam Smith's "The wealth of nations" published in 1776 earned him the recognition as 'the father of economics" and led to the mod-*

and under-socialisation in human actions. Here, over-socialisation "assumes that people follow customs, habits or norms automatically and unconditionally", a position taken by "nearly all economists' treatment of 'norms' and discussions of 'conventions'" (Granovetter 1992: 6). This concept is important for this paper because it has direct implications for the processes of music commodification. Over-socialisation is applied within the current sectoral consultation processes in Lesotho for the cultural policy review, and in South Africa for the Copyright Amendment Bill (2017). On the other hand, under-socialisation, which refers to an individual's pursuit of self-interests without being influenced by ongoing social relations, can be argued to be more at play in boardrooms and music agreements which fall under Contract Law (Granovetter, 1992: 6). These two concepts of human actions in economic decision are of importance to this paper as they present an appreciation of the personas music commodification is centred on and the decision-making processes influencing the target market and/or music industry stakeholders.

Bennett et al. (2017) state that Economic Institutions and a nation's policies "reflect the protection of private property, free trade, market allocation, and minimal policy-induced price distortions". Granovetter (1992) posits that Economic Institutions are essentially about organising a mobilisation of resources for collective action. "Economic Institutions are constructed by individuals whose action is both facilitated and constrained by the structure and resources available in social networks in which they are embedded" Granovetter (1992: 7). Granovetter (1992) argues that interpersonal trust to delegate authority or resources to others is vital as the lack thereof will stymie economic activity. An appreciation of these interpersonal relationships as part of a "larger and more social frame of reference" provides an understanding of how certain social structures create behaviour that follows certain economic approaches (Granovetter, 1992: 7-8). The processes of organising are therefore built around trust, interpersonal relationships, creating alliances, acquisitions and/or pushing out competition (Granovetter, 1992). This presents points of inquiry on how the South African music industry is organised: its financing, the commercialisation of music copyrights and related rights, the economics of digital platforms upon which music is streamed and other commercial aspects involved in the commodification of music by South African based music bands. Consequently, the commodification of music or "rent creation" (Andersen et. al, 2000: 9) in the wider arts and culture services, is a collective process. What does this mean for the South African music industry when it is dominated by the international big four of American origins [9]?

While this paper adopts the concept of Economic Institutions as a framework for bringing together a kaleidoscope of important aspects in appreciating the arts-culture economic and policy frameworks, it is not an economic paper. Granovetter's (1992) Economic Institutions as Social Constructions argument can be applied to arts and culture contexts. Pratt (2005: 3) argues that current approaches towards Cultural Policy present a tension between the traditionally funded arts, mass culture, and the commercially oriented arts and culture industries of which the music business is a part. This predicament, argues Pratt (2005), is rooted in fiscal pressure. Pratt (2001 and 2005) and Hesmondhalgh & Pratt (2005) posit that the traditional Cultural Policy approach has four hallmarks. These are:

1) the concept of an isolated creator;
2) the notion of culture as a pure public good to be equally available to all;

*ern-day capitalist economic approach.*

*9 Dominated by market international share, the international big four are EMI, Sony Music Entertainment, Universal Music Group, and Warner Music Group.*

3) the assumption that the true value of art is transcendent and can only be determined by an expert; and

4) an idealistic, humanistic notion of culture as having intrinsic value for the community and civilisation.

Here, the social constructionist account of Economic Institutions is translated into policies directly linked to arts and culture. However, Hesmondhalgh and Pratt (2005) argue that these traditional approaches to Cultural Policy side-line the commercial aspects of arts and culture, thus generating part of the tension. These arguments and observations are further substantiated by Handke's (2018: 58-61) advocacy for the adoption of applied economics, specifically for effective intellectual property and Creative Industries policy-making.

Another reason for the tension in current Cultural Policy approaches is that there are gaps in definitions that adequately encompass the whole circuit of production necessary to produce cultural goods and services (Pratt, 2005 and Hesmondhalgh & Pratt 2005). Pratt (2005) posits that traditional Cultural Policy approaches attempt, but are not always successful in practice, to address the tension between the commercial and non-commercial aspects of art and culture by situating it all under a broad-based government department. This can be viewed as a government's way of constructing an Economic Institution informed by contextual social needs. On the other hand, this can be viewed as aligning to Bennett et al.'s (2017) argument that current post-colonial Economic Institutions and legal frameworks reflect former colonisers. Pratt (2002) notes how the United Kingdom administration changed their Department of Heritage to encompass an expanded field of Media, Culture and Sports in 1997. This can be likened to the Department of Sports, Arts, and Culture in South Africa, and Lesotho's Environment, Tourism and Culture. This brief literature review highlights the need for contextual analysis and an appreciation of concepts behind source data and is, in part, an invitation to start thinking of how to contribute towards Economic Institutions for flourishing local arts-culture businesses.

Another Economic Institutions perspective extended to the arts and culture sector can be observed through Towse's (2010) argument where he posits that Cultural Policy is shifting towards the inclusion of a wider view of arts and culture industries beyond the traditional cultural sector. This shift, asserts Towse (2010), is more prevalent among European Union member states and United Nations' agencies. In what appears to be an adoption of Pratt's (2005) fiscal pressure observation, Towse (2010) attributes this current shift in Cultural Policy to the recognition of arts and culture industries as a source of economic growth. At this point, I draw attention to how international organisations like the UNESCO support arts-culture as a driver of development in Global South countries such as Lesotho and South Africa. Thus, Cultural Policy is being employed to address fiscal pressure by creating an environment for a thriving Creative Economy. Handke (2018: 58) calls this phenomenon a cost-benefit analysis in applied economics. Towse (2010) asserts further that Gross Domestic Product (GDP) contribution and employment statistics are being used as evidence upon which cultural policies are based. To validate this, Towse (2010) points at how national governments and supranational organisations are collecting data from what were not previously considered as sectors to measure size and contribution to GDP, employment and international trade; some of these sectors are game and software designs. Towse (2010) argues that the concept of arts and culture industries has widened the scope by combining what was previously known as Cultural Industries with the sectors of both arts and "innovation" [10]. This part of the literature review is important because it highlights how the global phenomena of arts-culture Economic Institutions and policy frameworks assist in answering this paper's primary question.

10 *Innovation is taken as digital, technologies-driven creations such as game design and digital platforms based on application-code designs. These digital, technologies-based creations are expected to improve with technological advancement. The Cultural Times (2015) report attributes the growth in European advertising industry to this innovation.*

Economic Institutions, as results of social constructions, call for an appreciation of their conceptual and/or theoretical differences as they inhabit a complex playing field. While highlighting the tensions and gaps, my reflection invites a rethinking of arts-culture Economic Institutions which fully grasps both the informal and formal nature of arts-culture businesses in Southern Africa. This can be done through investing in both academic and practical research, development, and innovation. The concept of simply looking at Global North research and development and then adapting it for implementation in Southern African contexts might not be the best way of achieving flourishing arts-culture businesses. My specific interests, for the purposes of this paper, lie in the commodification of music on digital platforms. Part of the rethinking calls for empirical, evidence-based policy and legal framework reviews geared at driving economic outputs cognisant of both Southern African contexts and global considerations. In part, answering the primary question of this paper calls for Southern African countries to consider policies which ensure that digital platforms benefit the country of origin and are not used merely as conduits of financial outflow to the Global North. In the case of music streaming platforms, for example, Southern African countries can begin to formulate approaches which ensure that international companies are motivated to invest the spend of local customers within local financial systems instead of simply debiting their customers and wiring the money elsewhere. This thought is framed around the notion of curating an environment where Southern Africa can be a general tax and financial haven. This calls for robust, effective, and efficient financial systems and institutions to be an integral part of the wider arts-culture Economic Institutions.

This section's literature review illustrates my premise that Economic Institutions are social constructs, which becomes the overall thesis statement of this paper. In Southern Africa, Economic Institutions govern the way trade, property rights, policies and legal frameworks drive economic outputs and minimise policy-induced price distortions (Bennett, 2017; Granovetter, 1992). I use the term Southern Africa broadly here, understanding that while each country's way of life, consumer perceptions, politics and psychosocial reality might be similar at urban metropolitan cities levels, they may differ vastly in their willingness to spend or in how they consume arts-culture goods and services within rural-village contexts. How then do we begin to rethink the commodification of arts-culture goods and services such as music while remaining mindful of current Covid pandemic induced circumstances which are drastically changing notions around digital technologies? In the next and last section of this paper, I reflect upon the commodification of music with digital considerations.

## *Commodification of music with digital considerations*

"Music is spiritual. The music business is not."
Van Morrison[11].

The previous section highlights a kaleidoscope of important and complex phenomena as part of framing arts-culture Economic Institutions as social constructs. This is based on document review and anecdotes from my professional experiences of autoethnography as the mixed methods for this paper. In order to determine the kind of arts-culture Economic Institutions required for commodification of local music on digital platforms, this section argues for empirical, evidence-based considerations. The considerations are framed within the concept of Economic Institutions as social constructs.

EconLib (2019) expands the definition of Economic Institutions to include "Well-established arrangements and structures that are part of the culture or society, e.g., *competitive markets, the banking system, kids' allowances, customary tipping, and a system of property rights are examples of economic institutions*".

*11 Van Morrison an Irish singer-songwriter; his biography is available on his official website https://www.vanmorrison.com/about/biography*

This definition, when taking Granovetter's (1992) perspective that trust among society members is crucial to building Economic Institutions into consideration, highlights the formality and informality associated with social constructions behind each Economic Institution. This is important to note because the autoethnography method I employ for this paper reflects on some of the dynamics I have witnessed and that contributed in part towards my practice over the course of a decade.

I cite a personal example of including the principle of trust when, in 2008, I worked as an Artist Liaison for an international festival of the arts. I was hired for two reasons: one, I was recommended by my then boss, a Director of Theatre and, two, unbeknown to me, the Stage Production Manager on one of our shows had taken the festival's Executive Director on a backstage tour of the show. These two reasons highlight the role that the trust of these two professional relationships contributed towards a career move for myself that would mark the beginning of over seven years of working for the festival in different technical and planning capacities for a specific theatre venue. It was during one of the festival's runs that I met a technical assistant who would later hire me to do technical work for a music festival they managed back in their home country. In South Africa there is a limited pool of live events technical professionals. The Economic Institutions organise various types of festivals with a Southern African economic impact, and global in the case of the international one. While this brief example highlights the technical side, the financing and economic output sides are relatively similar. One may be tempted to read this as unmerited patronage, when not considering that this example is based on a pool of craft-competence and craft-literacy experts. The nature of regional festivals hardly provides room for on-the-job training for technical staff, unlike the Box Office-Front of House department. This personal experience is a simplified case of how the social constitutes itself in the private sector, often referred to as talent hire and or collaboration. This coming together then shapes different kinds of Economic Institutions, some of which are curated around seasonal events like arts festivals. This constituting of the social, in the sense of stakeholders, can be extended to the music business with special reference to the roles that record labels, among others, play as a society behind driving trends which are then instilled into the structure of Economic Institutions within the industry.

Writing specifically in the context of arts marketing, Hill, O'Sullivan and O'Sullivan (2003) state that intangibility, heterogeneity, perishability, and the inseparability of product and consumption are characteristic of artistic products and services such as music, which is the subject of this inquiry. These characteristics are important to this paper as they highlight the nonlinear nature of the commodification of music. This section focuses on commodification of music and the implications of digital technologies. Here, commodification of music focuses on 'commercialisation' of arts and culture both in broad terms and with specific reference to music. Commodification of music, in this paper, acknowledges South Africa's diverse music genres and cultural contexts within which music is created. The Revised White Paper (RWP, 2017) calls for what it terms South African music at policy level, yet the reality is music is diverse and at times rooted in multiple cultural references. The paper focuses on music within the context of being a commodity for trade. Music as a commodity exists within a complex sphere which is reflected in the way Southern African countries attempt to balance their arts-culture related policy framework approaches and the existing global tensions between different economic concepts and perspectives as highlighted in the previous section.

Commodification involves two sociological processes: 'diffusion' and 'defusion'. This paper explores how these two processes transform music from being a mere cultural symbol to a commercial product. Diffusion is a process of interaction whereby an object is taken to potential audiences in order that

they be influenced to consume it as a product (Fine & Kleiman, 1979; Connell & Gibson, 2004). Here, digital streaming platforms such as Apple Music and Spotify play a crucial role in providing instant access to audiences via mobile phones and other devices. Diffusion is not a new process; it is a phenomenon radio stations have been facilitating for decades. However, the extent to which digital music streaming platforms are contributing to economic gains for musicians in South Africa and Southern Africa by extension is not yet intricately appreciated. There is a need for further collection of empirical evidence and research to be done in this field. This is not to say that the data does not exist. Platforms like Spotify provide comprehensive analytics which even break down the number of streams each music track gets. In order to answer part of this paper's primary question, aggregation of big data from various digital platforms is required to be done. This big data aggregation will in turn facilitate the collection of empirical evidence that can be analysed in order to determine consumer trends, popular genres, and actual time listeners are spending on these platforms. This information will provide guidance regarding the kinds of Economic Institutions to be crafted.

Based on my limited interactions with musicians from Lesotho, South Africa and Zimbabwe, their slow uptake of commercialising music on digital platforms is rooted in a low return on investment when compared to potential income from live shows and paid partnerships in the form of endorsements. This can be linked to the fact that current intellectual property laws and royalties' collection regimes are being viewed as ineffective and inefficient in these countries, a position endorsed by Nwauche (2018) when observing the general African territories. It is important to highlight that UNCTAD (2010) and the DCMS (1997) respectively argue for the role of intellectual property as central to the wider Creative Economy and Creative Industries. However, my research of Johannesburg based creatives indicates that current doctrines of intellectual property regimes best serve big business (Mudzonga, 2019). This can be said to account for why musicians contracted to big labels seem to fare better than independent ones on digital platforms.

On the other hand, as the name entails, defusing is a process of taking what would be a politically unacceptable object and packaging it into an acceptable norm; a form of dilution and appropriation (Alleyne, 2000). This can be seen within the Kwaito[12] music genre in South Africa. Boom Shaka [13], a South African music band considered to be one of the genre's pioneers, commodified songs of great cultural significance into music products critical of societal norms and celebrated freedom of expression among the younger generation of the 90s and early 2000s. A more popular case of defusing as part of commodification of music are Reggae and 'World Music' genres commercialised for Euro-American audiences through the dilution of political messages, focusing rather on aspects of the 'exotic' (Alleyne, 2000). 'Diffusion' and 'defusion' are sociological processes which can be embedded in music marketing strategies in order to influence potential audiences to consume, thus turning the commodity into capital. Marx (1956: 83-89) locates commodification within a capitalist production system where products are transformed into commodities whose value can be turned into capital. Although writing in the context of commodification of education, Greaves, Hill and Maisuria (2007, 43-45) claim that commodification has become about social class: an assessment of human value and worth based on increased exposure to media and capitalist society norms. These different

12 *For a succinct introduction to Kwaito and its pioneers in South Africa, visit Sisa Zekani's (Twitter handle, @Titanbaddie) Thobela Thursday posts on Twitter accessed on 15 Aug 2020 at https://twitter.com/Titanbaddie/status/1294633894927532035*

13 *More on Boom Shaka: Lwando Xaso's article put into perspective how they normalised questioning culture especially their version of Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrica, a song of cultural significance across Southern Africa and also part of the South Africa's national anthem: https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/opinionista/2019-07-31-on-boom-shaka-and-dancing-to-the-national-anthem/*

definitions of commodification situate this paper within the commodity-capital aspect of music, focusing on digital implications as experienced by music bands based in Southern Africa. When it comes to the nature of digital technologies, with particular reference to South Africa, the Revised White Paper (RWP, 2017: 17) is crafted to address "the existing digital divide where the market in South Africa is still using many traditional platforms, with local business not yet ready for international digital innovations".

Kulesz (2017: 26) states that digital technologies have impacted on creativity and the status of creatives by facilitating visibility through new channels of dissemination and enabling consumers to be potential artists or 'pro-sumers'. Digital technologies offer greater opportunities for music as a commodity and through increased market share potential, thereby "creating a fundamentally new source of value" (Lucas et al., 2013 and Piccinini et al., 2015: 1642). Global[14] digital connectedness is leading the emergence of rallying points to celebrate, promote and protect cultural diversity, building wider channels for collaboration which have a direct impact on the Global South Creative Economy (Mbaye, 2014 and Culture and Creative Cities Report, 2017: 118). This post-industrial arts and culture entrepreneurship phenomenon, as Raffo, Lovatt, Banks and O'Connor (2000) state, harnesses innovation, high skills, high-tech, high knowledge intensive and high value-add. The impact of digital technologies is not exclusive to arts and culture, yet the paper only focuses on their implications for the commodification of music. The reason this paper focuses on digital technologies' direct impact on commodification of music by musicians based in Southern Africa rather than digital streaming services in general, is that it is not merely fixated on the consumers' point of digital interface. Instead, the paper seeks to appreciate a more nuanced understanding of the impact of digital technologies on the commodification of music by Southern African based musicians. This is inclusive of music digital streaming platforms as part of a wider digital impact directly linked to the commodification of music. Thus, in answering the paper's primary questions, arts-culture Economic Institutions must be crafted taking both local and global considerations into account. Local musicians, and the wider music business community, find themselves competing on global platforms and for global audiences due to the ability of digital technology to facilitate global digital connectedness. Countries that invest in research, development and innovation are therefore able to curate arts-culture Economic Institutions which place their music business community at an advantage and move them beyond being mere consumers.

The nature of the music business, as with all arts and culture sectors, involves the commodification of cultural assets and services, with the production of these cultural commodities being increasingly subjected to laws of capital (O'Connor, 2007: 7; DCMS, 1998; Throsby, 2013; RWP, 2017). It is important to review trends in commodification of music as part of collecting and analysing data specific to Southern Africa. Andersen, James, Kozul, and Kozul-Wright (2000: 17) suggest that commodification of music is "generating rents in the music industry", a collaborative process involving highly specialised assets and market expansion in the "creation of musical ideas". This concept of collaborating to create "rents in the music industry" (James et. al, 2000: 17) also comes up in Scott's (2012) research on alternative forms of capital within the New Zealand music industry. However, Scott's (2012: 250) research subjects were young musicians with little or no disposable income, assets, or capacity to access adequate private loans, resulting in the collaborative approach to commodification of music being attributed to a relative scarcity of economic capital. Andersen et. al (2000: 17) argue

14 *The global phenomenon presents a collapsed territorial boundaries perception yet posing a highly competitive music business space with threats of market share domination by the big four international record labels at the expense of diversity and independent music bands.*

that the role of "copyright as rules of access to musical ideas, much like other intellectual property rights", is essential to the process of rent creation. Rooted in this argument by Andersen et. al (2000: 4) is the notion that the music business is part of what they call "core copyright industries which include printing and publishing industries, recording, radio, computer industry, television and advertising". Here, two things come in to play: the notion of capacity to collect, aggregate and analyse big data pertaining to local music business, and the rethinking of the role intellectual property regimes currently play in Southern Africa.

The role of copyright, and by extension intellectual property rights, may be essential in the Global North but empirical data in the Global South, specifically in South Africa, is yet to be collected as indicated in the South African Cultural Observatory (2018) report. From my limited professional practice across Botswana, Lesotho, South Africa and Zimbabwe, live shows and a once-off copyright sale are the high earners, whereas the current copyright laws are more concerned with authenticating ownership by guaranteeing moral rights. Andersen et. al (2000: 4) conceded that both the music business and the effectiveness of the copyright regime remain "under-researched with insufficient information or reliable economic performance data" in the wider Global South. This concession resonates with Pratt's (2016: 11) claim that current copyright frameworks do not serve Global South countries where, he argues, live performances are an effective way of commodifying music. Andersen et. al (2000: 5), Pratt (2016: 10-11), Nwauche (2018: 86-87) state that a lack of institutional mechanisms and, where they exist, weak institutions associated with copyright regimes, are a hallmark of Global South countries. What does this mean for the argument that exploitation of intellectual property is the essence of the music business? Does the society that constitutes the local music business stakeholders have an appetite to craft intellectual property regimes best suited for Southern African needs, resulting in a different brand of arts-culture Economic Institutions that do not merely reflect the Global North and or processes of colonisation?

## Conclusion

Arts-Culture Economics Institutions are social constructs. Unless local societies of music business stakeholders reorganise and craft systems and institutions for present and future economic development, post-colonial arts-culture Economic Institutions will continue to reflect extractive processes of colonisations while only privileging a few. What kind of arts-culture Economic Institutions does the Southern Africa region in general, and the music business on digital platforms in particular, require as a timely response to current digital impact? Sadly, there is no simple answer within the kaleidoscope of complexities that is the context of Southern African arts-culture commodification. However, this paper does not claim to be a preserve of Southern African contexts. This paper is a reflection piece and an invitation to rethink arts-culture Economic Institutions as empirical, evidence-based flourishing businesses not merely reflecting extractive processes of colonisations. The temptation is to further widen inequality by implementing approaches which simply focus on urban centres and formal practice while ignoring the rural-village and informal constituencies. I do not have answers or the capacity to make sweeping recommendations here. However, this paper is part of what I am currently grappling with in a PhD journey and would like to invite those invested in Southern Africa arts and culture to reflect and work collaboratively. The first section on Economic Institutions and arts and culture policy considerations highlights that the collaborative approach must be both public and private. The second section on the commodification of music with digital considerations only begins to grapple with the notion of what Southern African music business needs to craft. It is time to collect our own context-based empirical data, analyse it, and craft arts-culture Economic Institutions that are rooted within our social contexts but also relevant to both domestic and international audiences.

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# **Im4theArts** as a Lens to the Dynamics of Transformation in the South African Cultural Sector

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## Introduction

In a 2005 Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) retrospective about the first ten years of democracy, an article by Maree (2005) surveyed the state of the arts and cultural institutions in South Africa (SA) and suggested that there was much discontent about the slow pace of transformation in the sector. This was despite new legislation between the 1990's and early 2000's and other forms of policy enactment intended to drive the kind of transformation that would redress the unequal access to resources, which had favoured western arts and white artists, inherited from the apartheid administration (Maree, 2005). The article also suggested that beyond new democratic policies that were about inclusive funding mechanisms at the time, there was no fixed multi-layered strategy implemented to address transformation in the sector (ibid.). In 2021, almost three decades after SA became a democracy in 1994, transformation still forms a

large part of our public debate about the kinds of change needed in the cultural sector.

These conversations about transformation continue to be held with each new ministerial administration, never really achieving any resolution. Instead, occasionally, an event which interrogates the optics of representation in the sector which include merit, entitlement, legitimacy of power, the self-aggrandising nature of the idea of empowerment, equity, which artistic disciplines tend to make an impact abroad, etc., goes viral (Meersman, 2007; Thamm, 2015; Maponya, 2019; Van Graan, 2019; Ndzuta, 2021). Depending on how much traction the issue gains, the cultural minister at the time responds to reassure the populace that efforts have been channelled by the Cultural Ministry towards transforming the sector (Mthethwa, 2019). After some time, however, the conversation receives less attention and disappears into the ether. As such, the SA cultural sector keeps returning to the point where it repeatedly asks itself what transformation actually means to the sector, and what transformation means in the context of SA's social, political and economic reality when the cultural sector is part of this greater fabric. Consequently, as has been evident in online cultural-sector-mobilisation platforms like *Im4theArts*, the sector also periodically grapples with questions of what its individual role-players in their multiplicity of experience understand transformation to mean beyond the changing of funding mechanisms. What, for them, specifically needs to be transformed?

## Conceptual Approach

Transformation fundamentally means change in ways that relate to the structure of something: its appearance, the way it works or its environment. The qualitative and quantitative measures of change, however, also tend to be contestable within different contexts. If one looks at the system of apartheid and the multi-layered generational forms of dysfunction it created amongst different social groups, and the skewed development and inequality it produced and reproduced across multiple generations even after democracy, it is clear that complex change related to policy, practice, etc., is necessary to reverse its aftermath (Madlingozi, 2007). It has been stated that even though democracy "brought political change, it has not done much to tackle poverty and inequality, which is an all-too-common lived experience of the black majority" (ibid.; Heleta, 2016, 1). As such, complex change is crucial for SA to cultivate an innovative, progressive, more equal, and prosperous society and to reverse the structures of apartheid conditioning. Such transformation would need to happen across all sectors and involve an investigation of the root cause of inherited problems that compound each other. Transformation would also need to involve systems that fundamentally engage the economy and labour practice, structures of authority, access to resources such as health and education and how SA tells its story, amongst others, in a more interrelational manner for the change to be meaningful (de Haas et al., 2020). For purposes of this paper, I will focus on my understanding of transformation in its traditional sense as multidimensional "large-scale and long-term changes from politically top-down and technocratic transitions" and involving changes that are co-and-interdependent enough to shape a society (Hölscher et al., 2018, 1; de Haas et al., 2020).

The multidimensional aspect of transformation is important here as it means that change should incorporate co-and-interdependence and should not be limited to a few systems, populations or happen only top-down for that matter. Transformation is broad and should involve citizenry at all levels and generate conversation and action in various directions. It makes sense then, that any form of change in the SA context should involve the complex diversity of SA society, "from the individual to the institutional", and beyond a single limited axis of thinking (Cho, Crenshaw and McCall, 2013, 787-788). Marginalised individuals and groups, institutions and frameworks of thinking would need to be engaged with in order to undo the damage of apartheid and move SA towards a transformed country with multiple

levels that speak to each other; all directions and levels of engagement would need to acknowledge and recognise each other.

Due to the kinds of divisions, inequality and erasure achieved by colonialism and apartheid, the concept of intersectionality may be useful in reckoning with the dynamics of transformation in SA and how power and identity play a role. Using a labour context, Atewologun (2018) describes intersectionality as "a critical framework that provides us with the mindset and language for examining interconnections and interdependencies between social categories and systems" and that the framework "enhances analytical sophistication and offers theoretical explanations of the ways in which heterogeneous members of specific groups (such as women) might experience the workplace differently depending on their ethnicity, sexual orientation, and/or class and other social locations" (p. 1). The framework asks for "open-ended investigations of the overlapping and conflicting dynamics of race, gender, class, sexuality, nation, and other inequalities" (Cho, Crenshaw and McCall, 2013, 788). Intersectionality insists, for instance, "on examining the dynamics of difference and sameness" and has facilitated "consideration of gender, race, and other axes of power" in various disciplines (ibid., 787). As a theory, it has "exposed how single-axis thinking undermines legal thinking, disciplinary knowledge production, and struggles for social justice" (ibid.). Furthermore, it posits "knowledge as situated, contextual, relational, and reflective of political and economic power" (Atewologun, 2018, 1). Involving this concept in this discussion, therefore, may highlight how the transformation project may be thwarted in the cultural sector, as a space of labour if:

- what power does to identities is not managed;
- various forms of discrimination are not recognised or are reduced to only being produced in particular contexts;
- the historic ways in which knowledge is produced are ignored;
- inequality is not perceived to be reproducible; and if
- erasure is not seen to perpetuate other types of social and institutional problems.

Employing intersectionality in this discussion is also useful in considering what transformation means in the SA cultural sector and how such change could be pursued in the context of SA's historical social stratification.

Atewologun (2018) also suggests that intersectionality is beneficial for bringing sensitivity to differences and that it "enhances insight into issues of social justice and inequality in organisations and other institutions, thus maximizing the chance of social change" (ibid.). There is "emphasis on individuals' experiences and within-group differences", and so the concept advances our understanding of "marginalised groups in the context of management, organisations, and beyond" (Atewologun, 2018, 1-14). Intersectionality, thus, asks legal and other frameworks to engage with the complexity of discrimination and what that discrimination reproduces, especially in relation to those who fall outside the spotlight of these frameworks or are otherwise blindly defined in a one-dimensional and usually group-centred fashion. It also "addressed the larger ideological structures in which subjects, problems, and solutions were framed" (Cho, Crenshaw and McCall, 2013, 791). Policy and legal frameworks are what traditionally guide change through the definition of problems and creation of solutions in government-defined sectors. The way in which they are approached in relation to transformation in the cultural sector therefore matters, whether transformation is pursued in the conventional sense or not.

## A call for transformation in the cultural sector

Some of the intricacies of transformation have been at the centre of a 2020 cultural sector rally which has become unusually loud and has so far shown no signs of ceasing. What is different about this rally is that it has come without invitation from official cultural structures or structures recognised

by the government; it has come from outside of the spaces of dialogue usually pre-determined by the Cultural Ministry or its agencies, and it has attracted attention from many areas of the customarily fragmented SA cultural sector. Instead of being confined to the parameters of sector practice gathering spaces or conferences, the call for change has reverberated throughout SA and has been hyper-public because those driving it have used social media platforms and have appeared on traditional media platforms like radio, television, and in newspapers. Participants of this rally have also been mobilised to actively demonstrate in the streets and online at various times across the country. As such, early on in its existence, the nature of this rally also indicated a form of decentralisation of power.

The rally for sector-change I am referring to culminated in a Facebook group called *Im4theArts*. In this presentation I will discuss the formation of the group, its activities, its constitution, its internal challenges, and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the group's activities. I will then draw conclusions on how the group displays some of the dynamics involved in the transformation of the SA cultural sector. I found the group to be a rare lens into the large-scale, public, and constant engagement with forms of transformation in the SA cultural sector. It is a political and labour defined space, where members use political labour to make their cultural labour visible and relevant. The group is also interesting within the wider phenomenon of mobilisation for social and political activism on social media platforms (Sandoval-Almazan and Gil-Garcia, 2014; Uldam, 2018).

In 2020, I joined *Im4theArts* to better understand sector policy and practice debates posed on the group. Throughout the year, I surveyed the conversations[1] of members on the *Im4theArts* Facebook page. I collected data from the website of the group. Since the page has much traffic related to regular concerns about sector wrongs and promotional material daily, I paid particular attention to discussions on the need for change in the sector as well as perceptions of what that change might look like. I also attended two public interventions by the group to get more insight into the workings of the group and its intentions on advocacy work. The interventions I attended were a picket at the Department of Sports Arts and Culture offices in Pretoria in February 2020[2] and a picket outside the State Theatre in March 2020.

Beyond the purposes of research, I joined the group and attended the interventions to show that I, too, agree that the sector urgently needs improved governance, visibility on political platforms and transformation. I also made occasional comments, thus participating in the Facebook conversations with the community I was researching (Cresswell, 2013). This was because, apart from being a researcher, I also have vested interests in the sector as a cultural worker who is affected by the way the sector functions. Due to this personal proximity with issues in the sector, I paint a subjective-objective reality about the group (ibid.). As such, I approached this qualitative inquiry through participation as well as observation (ibid.).

## Formation of the group

The potency of *Im4theArts* was the result of a convergence of unique events in the SA cultural landscape where, specifically between 2016 and 2020, there was much rancour. Different and sometimes overlapping groups were frequently advocating for different forms of change through signing petitions, writing newspaper articles, forming multimedia campaigns and creating social media pages to protest what they perceived to be conditions oppositional to the growth and good governance of the sector. More specifically, within that short space of time, clusters

1 *See the Im4theArts Facebook page. A lot of the conversations on the Facebook page are driven by comments from members. A single post does not always reveal much, but really takes shape through debate in the comments bubbles when members weigh in on an issue. I quote some of the conversations in the footnotes throughout this presentation.*

2 *See the Iam4theArts website at Iam4theArts.org.za (2020a).*

of groups in various disciplines were in fervent disagreement with the government over a revision of copyright legislation which would incorporate the principle of Fair Use, which is customary in contextually different places like the USA. There was also a petition calling for the President of the country to pick the next cultural minister from civil society rather than from the ruling party, and general expression of no-confidence in the current cultural minister, Nathi Mthethwa, and his vision for the sector. Further dissatisfaction was expressed around the formulation of the Performer's Protection Bill, the implications of the 2011 Mzansi Golden Economy cultural policy strategy and the processes of consultation for the national cultural policy legislation review (Ndzuta, 2021).

Other catalysing events were two open letters sent at the beginning of 2020 to the minister of culture by two prominent arts practitioners, the actress Vatiswa Ndara and the arts administrator and vocalist, Sibongile Mngoma. The letters were, respectively, about exploitation and lack of regulation in the film industry, and a need for accountability and transparency in government funding practices. Around the time her letter became public, Sibongile Mngoma had also created the Facebook group *Im4theArts*, which within weeks had thousands of members. Both letters brought about much uncommon media focus and public commentary on the internal machinations of the sector (ibid.).

Initially this crescendo of events and their confluence seemed at one level similar to what Kingdon (2003) has conceptualised as a policy window of opportunity which occurs when processes including advocacy, collaboration and research align to create a policy impact. Coincidentally, the beginning of the *Im4theArts* moment also happened at the point of the approval of newly revised national cultural policy. However, when *Im4theArts* began, it was operating outside of sector and government-designated collaborative policy-enacting and research structures. Additionally, national cultural policy review processes had also been happening for years before its inception. The group was thus at the time not part of the streams that could influence a political agenda or policy change in the short-term, even with its public support.

## Activities of the group

*Im4theArts* came into effect at a tipping point of the displeasure of the sector with government. Viewing the group from this angle is useful in explaining its impact. For instance, the group has inspired a kaleidoscope of voices to share their individual experiences[3] and difficulties with how the administration of the sector at multiple levels affects them. At the early stages of the group's formation, members commiserated over shocking stories of exploitation, maladministration and corruption in the sector; they called out the government and its agencies. On given Fridays, members also promoted their individual ventures on the page, thus offering each other visibility and a network of support. All these activities still happen on the Facebook page.

On two occasions between February and March 2020 the group was invited to meetings to state its case at the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture. Because these meetings did not yield desirable or tangible results, pickets were announced and staged across the country by group leaders and members. At that time there was a makeshift interim team of office bearers who were not formally elected, some of whom had volunteered to their roles. As time progressed, discussions leaned towards creating formal membership, building capacity for the sector through online workshops and officially electing into office a working group[4] to advance the

*3 See the Im4theArts Facebook page. For two examples, see Yisa (2020) and Nalden (2020).*

*4 See Mngoma (2020a) on the Im4theArts Facebook page.*

interests of members. Intentions were also expressed[5] on some occasions for the group to aim at influencing SA cultural policy.

## Constitution of the group

The group has resonated with emergent sector workers as well as established and widely recognised artists. It has also been welcomed by those who are seasonal and low earners at the practice and management levels of the sector. Oddly though, it has also made an impression on those who are usually considered part of the establishment because of their proximity to political influence, those with access to local and international resources, gatekeepers, those who have membership on the boards of medium-to-large cultural institutions, or those who have at some point worked for the cultural organs of the government. The membership of *Im4theArts* is not only comprised of different economic brackets, generations, and a multiplicity of disciplines, but also defies boundaries around ethnicity, gender, and religion. As such, on paper, the group's representation of the nation is a picture-perfect representation of post-apartheid SA Rainbow Nation-ism[6]. *Im4theArts*, however, has had challenges caused by the very diversity of its membership.

## Challenges within the group

Very soon after the group tested its might at meetings with representatives of the Cultural Ministry, group members clashed about exactly what the legitimate problems were in the sector. It became apparent that despite a shared experience and the group's unity in diversity, it was limited in what it could achieve. At times, agreement on which matters were legitimate or not was relative to how much access to material and other intangible resources, such as networks, each member had. For instance, discussions on funding sometimes came down to whether it was more important to dispute the list of recipients of arts funding[7] due to biased funding choices or to dispute the conditions of funding altogether. It was often said that the diverse individuals in the sector were affected differently by funding mechanisms. Members were divided on this, and some felt that they were not part of the demographic that could even apply for larger project funding because of the informal ways in which they operated. Such individuals did not reflect or possess the benchmark qualities that government systems expect operators in the cultural sector to have. Funding was thus perceived by some of the members to be a big, unrelatable concept that was of more relevance to gatekeepers, institutions, organisations and other formal structures than to individual members of the sector who often did freelance work or operated much smaller entities that would only be hired by the organisations that received or could receive funding in the first place. Such perspectives on the unequal distribution of arts funding, its enigmatic and irregular conditions and how this compounds issues of social justice and social inequality may not be unique to the SA cultural sector, but the group highlighted the extent to which such issues are corrosive, lead to long-term social divisions and deserve attention (Brook et al, 2020).

Problems regarding ideological[8] concerns, however, and what was termed (in derogatory fashion) 'identity politics' were deemed less important or unsuitable[9] for the platform by members and group leaders. Because of this, problems like inadequate racial representation among the group's leadership (and therefore issues represented), sector earnings as signifiers of socio-economic status

5 *See Hardie (2020), Madlala (2020), Pissarra (2020), Van Graan (2020) and the Winter School program on Iam4theArts.org (2020b).*

6 *The idea of the Rainbow Nation was coined in the early 1990's by the Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and its premise is that SA is a multicultural society.*

7 *See posts and comments on Mohamed (2020b), Pissarra (20202c), Forbes (2020c).*

8 *See Naledi (2020), Pissarra (2020b), Mpemnyama (2020), Forbes (2020b), The Fair Digest (2020).*

9 *See Pissarra (2020b), Mngoma (2020b), Forbes (2020a).*

brackets, historical and current national race-based issues, racially unjust treatment, or inadequate representation in the workplace were seen to cause discomfort[10] and hostility when discussed by members. Because such discussions were perceived to be divisive and a cause of friction, hostility and disruption to the desired show of sector unity, they were initially censored[11] by the group's page administrators. It also did not help matters that the group office bearers at the time were predominantly white, and as such were perceived to be unrepresentative[12] of the nation's majority black experience and thus the experiences of most sector participants. The group's office bearers at the time were regarded by some members as tone deaf to the group's desire to change the status quo and to its social justice-related intentions.

As a result of these conflicts, the group came across as selective, dismissive, and unable to confront the relevance of intersectionality[13] or "the way in which various forms of inequality often operate together and exacerbate each other" (Crenshaw in Steinmetz, 2020). In this way, *Im4theArts* dismissed the history and realities of a significant portion of the SA population and denied that population a measure of legitimacy regarding its problems. Such dismissal, therefore, denies that often "structures in government and society create unequal life opportunities for certain groups or kinds of people who experience intersectional oppressions" (Spade in Cho, Crenshaw and McCall, 2013, 803). Through this dismissal, *Im4theArts* perpetuated how other SA systems have made this population vulnerable, except this time it was from within the very group that leads a narrative on change and not the badly run sector. The fostered sense of community was limited when there was friction in the group; it was limited by the perception that the cultural sector is only affected by specific contextual problems and not broader social conditions and injustice.

The denial of issues of social justice, however, is a problem that affects the wider SA social fabric, because knowledge systems at various levels of society "have not considerably changed" and "remain rooted in colonial, apartheid and Western worldviews" (Heleta, 2016, 1). In one way, therefore, *Im4theArts* is a mirror of why transformation stagnates in SA society and of how it is defined, impinging on most sectors. Heleta (2016) talks to an inbuilt inability to see racial and other forms of inequality in SA, which would imply an inability to fix such problems because they are one-dimensionally defined and oriented.

If the dismissal and denial of many injustices is customary, then it is not surprising that the group would overlook the importance of involving the upward social mobility of people of colour in SA's democratic era, which is intertwined with the limited reach of funding mechanisms. This mobility, for instance, has been thwarted or nullified by not just historical conditions of colonialism and apartheid but also by the sluggish post-1994 economic growth and other socio-political complexities like aggressive neo-liberal development policies (Madlingozi, 2007). The reality is, therefore, that despite inclusive post-apartheid laws and an equality-seeking Constitution, fewer people of colour and those further out on SA's social margins are evenly represented at all levels of industry. As such, the reality for artists and other cultural participants of colour is that they are often in positions where they have no clout or are exploited within different institutions. Of course, white SA citizens are also not a monolith, but SA citizens fundamentally still experience the country's laws and other conditions differently, depending on their race, sexuality,

*10 See comments on Sibonda (2020), Memela (2020b).*

*11 See Mphago (2020a; 2020b), Memela (2020a), Mobey (2020).*

*12 See Mphago (2020c).*

*13 See Vandenberghe (2020).*

religion, their proximity to networks, justice, the economy, etc.

In *Im4theArts* the lack of mobility of those on the social margins, those under-resourced or under-served, was also often viewed as part and parcel of the failings of the current government and not placed in the historical context of SA's in-built customary system of cheap labour, reproduced by the new regime, of which people of colour and other marginalised groups were at the receiving end. The denial of the majority of experiences in the sector by group gatekeepers, however, raised concerns about how *Im4theArts* would move forward because of a potential for the group to only tackle a limited amount of sector challenges[14]. The concern was that there was the potential for only the sector challenges relevant to those with power in the group to inform future policy inroads made by the group. Problems that were unique to the wider social fabric of SA could, therefore, potentially not be adequately addressed.

The irony in this situation though is that both the arts and culture are positioned to be drivers of social change in SA (Ndzuta, 2019). They are instrumentalised by the government to drive social cohesion in a racially and culturally diverse post-apartheid SA society, as a means to counter the policy-driven ethnic divisions advanced by apartheid. In fact, much of SA's public policy is entrenched in the idea of unity in diversity driving the post-apartheid vision of social unity. In the case of *Im4theArts*, however, the very (cultural) groups that catalyse and do the work of social cohesion are unable to undo apartheid polarities amongst themselves. In some ways this incapacity to deal with change also illustrates the limitations of change when it is not approached holistically, intersectionally and multidimensionally. The arts and culture may be used to promote social cohesion among people of different races and religions, but it is almost as if, in this group, an ideological lens is tied to understanding the politically informed social inequality in SA and how this inequality largely negatively impacts people of colour.

## The impact of Covid-19 on the group

As members of *Im4theArts* endured the consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic, however, conversations that were previously discouraged in early 2020 had to be revisited. Since loss of income has become a reality for more people because of lockdowns in most parts of the world, irrespective of which economic bracket cultural workers fall into, and funding that is usually directed at culture has had to be channelled to Covid-related causes, the group has had to face issues of work scarcity in greater numbers, discrimination, inequality[15] in the sector, the heterogeneity in how arts practitioners operate in the sector, as well as how vaguely defined and regulated the operations of cultural practitioners are amongst other government sectors. For instance, since government trade benchmarks have no means of differentiating between standard small-to-medium businesses and the variety of fluctuating operations amongst participants of the cultural sector, there was a situation where workers in the cultural sector who were eligible to receive national government-sponsored Covid-19 grants had no means to show evidence of loss of income, and only those with established reporting systems[16] were seen as small-to-medium businesses. Cultural participants or workers who operated in their individual capacity, informally, or seasonally thus lost out on an opportunity to make ends meet during the pandemic.

Fortunately, within the group, the pandemic also compelled more

14 *See a summary of the mood by Pissarra (2020b).*

15 *See Mohamed (2020a) quoted on the* Im4thearts *Facebook page. See Mngoma (2020c).*

16 *See Saunders (2020), Bester (2020).*

interrogation of what kind of infrastructure[17] there is and what is necessary to sustain the sector and safeguard the wellbeing of sector labour. It also highlighted the work of similar advocacy groups and how collaborating[18] with them could enable better campaigns and the dissemination of hard measurable evidence about the sector as well as communicating with sector participants about the policies that affect their immediate operations. Consequently, later in 2020, *Im4theArts*, in collaboration with the Trade Union for Music in South Africa (TUMSA) and various other organisations and individuals, oversaw the formation of the South Africa United Cultural and Creative Industries Federation (SAUCCIF). This collaborative step may put the group in an improved position to mobilise for and influence cultural policy.

## Conclusion

This discussion has positioned *Im4theArts* as a site for considering the possibilities and limitations of transformation in the SA cultural sector. It was interesting, for instance, to observe that the idea of unity in diversity, which is enshrined in SA's post-apartheid public policy, seems to have worked against the goals of unity within *Im4theArts*. The group thus struggled to truly represent the sector and its spectrum of experiences. In addition, it was noteworthy that despite the Covid-19 pandemic providing an opportunity for a different perspective on conversations about inequality and future sustainable change, the diversity of the sector still complicated how transformation was imagined.

Within this discussion I have also alluded to how social diversity for its own sake, in numbers and optics, is not necessarily a sign of an inclusive environment, an environment that values equality, or one that acknowledges the experiences of the bulk of its constituents. The constitutional diversity of the group has, for instance, shone a spotlight on how different types of problems are often unique to each level of involvement in the sector and based on individual proximity to economic and other resources. It is then apparent that the qualitative and quantitative experiences of different types of practitioners in the sector need to be further understood to make sense of the different types of problems that exist within the sector. Such an exploration would help *Im4theArts* better articulate the gamut of policy changes necessary for the sector if it is aiming to engage in advocacy work for the transformation of the sector.

The discussion has also brought up a few questions. The first being how a solid strategy for transformation can be devised when there is disregard for the disproportionate ways in which sector participants, historically and currently, access material resources. The next question would be to enquire how sector advocacy groups that represent diverse members can avoid the risk of treating the sector as a monolith. Another question is how the multiplicity of experience and ideology in the group translates to policy impact. The last question to ask would be what kind of tangible policy impact can *Im4theArts* make regarding the multiplicity of its members' interests, the sector changes the members desire, and the outcomes best suited to SA's social diversity?

17 *See Mngoma (2020d).*

18 *See AkaMbongo (2020), Van Oerle (2020).*

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# Day Two:

# *Rural Economic Development through Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) in China and Africa*

Introduction:
**Brett Pyper**

Keynote speakers:
**Nancy Duxbury and Yong Xiang (Hardy)**

Panellists:
**Monica Newton, PJ Sabbagha, Nametshego Khutsoane, Ricardo Peach**


1. **Introduction**
   Rural Economic Development through Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) in China and Africa
   Brett Pyper
2. Cultural and creative work in rural and remote areas: An emerging international conversation
   Nancy Duxbury
3. Theory and Method of Cultural Empowerment in Rural Revitalisation of China — Take Baima Huatian Commune as an example
   Xiang Yong
4. The National Arts Festival: Yesterday, Today & Tomorrow
   Monica Newton
5. From Forgotten Spaces, Comes Greatness
   PJ Sabbagha and Namatshego (Tshego) Khutsoane
6. Creating the worlds we want: The Vrystaat Kunstefees and cultural self-agency in global networks
   Ricardo Peach

# 1

# **Rural Economic Development** through Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) in China and Africa



*Prof Brett Pyper*

*Brett Pyper is a South African arts, culture and heritage practitioner with over thirty years' experience advancing and studying the country's cultural-democratic transition in its international contexts. He grew up between Johannesburg and the then Pretoria, where his background as a classical musician informed his efforts to open up programming as a young arts organiser in the final years of the performing arts councils. In the early 1990s, he arranged the first post-exile performances in Tshwane by returning jazz icons as well as showcasing the work of an emerging generation of 'young lions'. He also worked with singer-songwriters, choirs, Afrikaans counter-cultural artists and colleagues in related performance disciplines including dance and theatre.*

*Based on this work, as a Fulbright scholar, he earned Master's degrees from Emory University in Atlanta (in Interdisciplinary Studies) and New York University, where he earned his Ph.D. on contemporary jazz culture in South Africa in 2014. He has taught arts, culture and heritage policy and management at Wits, as well as ethnomusicology and popular music studies at Wits and Rhodes Universities. From 2008 to 2013 he was CEO of the Klein Karoo National Arts Festival (KKNK), a major festival of art, popular and vernacular culture.*

*Having served as Head of the Wits School of Arts from 2014-2021, he has re-joined the academic staff supervises postgraduate work in music, theatre, dance, heritage and cultural policy. He also serves as a mentor for The Festival Academy, which trains young festival managers internationally.*

**Transcription of the Introduction to day Two**

The papers in this section offer perspectives, often in the midst of adjusting to pandemic conditions, on how festivals also play a significant role in driving culture-led development outside of urban areas. We have retained the in-the-moment sense of some of the presentations, a year into the pandemic in South Africa, because they document what it was like for festival practitioners to have to reimagine their programmes while delivering them.

I'm going to frame this conversation about festivals in rural economies in two ways: after reflecting on my experience directing the *Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees* between 2008 and 2013, I'm going to pose some conceptual questions about what festivals are and the implications that can have for the ways in which they are looked to, to advance rural economic development. But first, by way of introduction, let me observe

that colleagues in the Wits School of Arts have, over time, had close relationships with festivals within the broader arts ecology. Both our colleague and fellow panellist, Monica Newton, and I have in fact worked between the School, our Cultural Policy and Management (CPM) Department in particular, and the festival sector in South Africa.

In 2007, when I was the head of what is now the Cultural Policy and Management Department, I received a call while sitting in my office at the Wits School of Arts asking whether I would assist with the transition in leadership of a rural festival in South Africa. This position would take me away from the School for seven years to preside over the repositioning of this rural South African arts festival. Subsequent to this, our colleague Monica Newton found herself in a rather similar position, having had a very close relationship with us in the Wits School of Arts and then later moving to become the Chief Executive of the National Arts Festival in the town of Makhanda, also a provincial centre in a predominantly rural part of the country. This almost duplicated experience seems to me to speak to the particular role that academic inquiry within the Wits School of Arts's Department of Cultural Policy and Management has come to play with the world of festival practice in South Africa. In this introduction, I am going to try to elaborate on some of those affinities.

I moved from Wits in 2007 to the





*Oudtshoorn during festival time*

town of Oudtshoorn in the rural Western Cape and ever since I returned to the School to fulfil my current role in 2014, I have been drawing on the experience of working at what is known as the *Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstefees (KKNK)*, or National Arts Festival in the Afrikaans language. That professional experience has often prompted me to reflect on the role that festivals can and do play in the development, and indeed the transformation, of the public sphere in post-apartheid South Africa.





Since 2018 I have also been very fortunate to participate in the work of the Festival Academy, which began as a project of the European Festivals Association. This organisation has taken on quite a global mandate in recent years. Ismail Mahomed, another previous Chief Executive of the National Arts Festival, and I co-hosted the first African *Atelier* for young festival managers in Johannesburg in 2018. Since then I have served as a mentor for the subsequent *atiliers*, which has brought me into contact with the emerging generation of festival leaders across the world. I am really happy that some of them are in our discussions and are attending this particular Summer School as well.

Today I am going to speak to what it entails to present a festival in rural settings. Oudtshoorn, the host town of the *KKNK*, is usually a sleepy agricultural town. It is, however, the capital of the world's ostrich industry

and about 70% of the production of ostrich products in the world centres on this rural economy. The *KKNK* has been held annually since 1995. For the period around the Easter weekend the main intersection in the town is blocked off and the town is overrun by visitors.



It is a destination festival which welcomed about 40,000 visitors at the time I was festival director. The physical presence of the festival had a positive impact on the economy, but the town still remained in a very typical South African social situation of peri-urban, rural poverty. Many people in the surrounding areas live in conditions of considerable economic precarity within an almost feudal social structure.

In this kind of landscape which is extraordinarily beautiful on the one hand but degraded in many places, it is important to not allow oneself to be overwhelmed by the beauty of the situation and the art one presents thereby forgetting rural ecological and social realities. I found myself wrestling with questions about the role of festivals in these kinds of settings and reflecting on how festivals can be both bridge builders and tension points. They are often very hopeful, almost utopian, projects that create temporary ideal communities, but they find themselves also being tension points for all kinds of social, economic and other contradictions.

Festivals bring together a wide

spectrum of the arts as well as entertainment and other forms of recreation, often in unexpected places (like the capital of the world ostrich industry), and that yields a whole set of logistical as well as artistic challenges. The logistical challenges, of course, involve having to virtually import into a rural economic and geographic setting the highly specialised skills and equipment needed to present theatre, dance, gallery work, and so on. This scenario was true of Oudtshoorn, which is about 1200 kilometres from Johannesburg and over 400 kilometres from Cape Town or Gqeberha. The logistical overheads of presenting festivals are often considerable and end up taking up a large part of a festival budget. But they do raise the opportunity, potentially, of creating a localised festival economy through the hiring of, even if not of specialised services, at least of the labour forces that assists in the delivery of those specialised services.

A typical question that arises in such scenarios entails what it demands to present an arts program in towns with very limited arts infrastructure. Oudtshoorn, unlike Makhanda which has a university, really did not have any official galleries or theatres with the level of technical provisioning that one could expect in cities. This presents a very real challenge. Festivals concentrate opportunities, they almost hyper-concentrate them, and they do so for a nationally and potentially internationally distributed arts sector and a creative industry that travels to destination festivals. Simultaneously, festivals create and concentrate opportunities for both the formal and, particularly in South Africa, the informal economies of their host communities. It is important to question what it in fact means to bring together into one rural space the likes of highly specialised lighting or sound companies, artists and their production houses, and to try and articulate those phenomena to the rural economies.

Festivals also concentrate inequalities. South Africa has the dubious distinction of probably being the place in the world with the widest Gini coefficient which implies, in terms of income inequality, the widest social inequality. This phenomenon creates a globally mobile, cosmopolitan audience and an art sector that travels long distances to support the arts, buy tickets and buy artwork but, at the same time, a rural economy hosting this activity that is vastly removed from that experience. I remember thinking to myself that the gap between our arts programme and many places in our host community that we could walk to physically was wider than if that programme had been implemented in Johannesburg, because there was no shared frame of reference, common understanding or a common language for thinking about festivals in this community.

This then means that festivals are often at the coalface of social identity formation and change, and therefore they potentially are forging more inclusive communities and ways of belonging. In the South African context, we have a history of Afrikaner nationalist festivals. They were historically among the sites in which apartheid was practiced and reinforced. From at least the 1930s until the late '80s they were, in many ways, part of the segregationist project, particularly in the parts of the South African cultural sphere that speak the language of Afrikaans. I was therefore charged with the very meaningful project of trying to mobilise that space as a space for deracialising Afrikaans and uncoupling it from Afrikaner nationalism, and articulating that to a post-apartheid creative sector.

In such a context, I often asked myself the question: What does it involve to work towards fostering creativity and excellence in the arts?

I believe that it was because of my background as a professional arts manager that I was invited to go to Oudtshoorn to do this work. I found myself in contexts of extraordinary natural splendour and cultural and culinary richness at a grassroots level in the Karoo but, at the same time, facing all the downsides of social fragmentation and extreme inequality.

In response to working in that setting, I formulated a model which

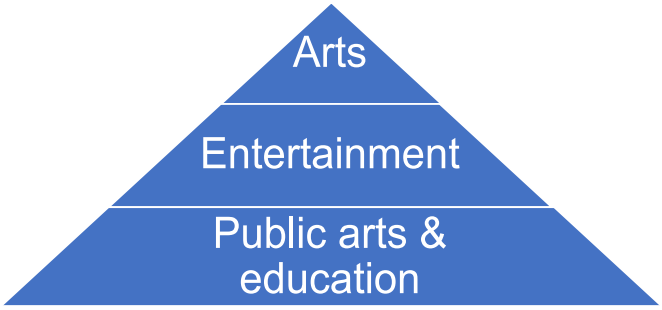
recognised that our arts program was really just the tip of a pyramid or of an iceberg.

It relied the layers on which our arts programme rested, including a substantial commercial entertainment offering. In rural South Africa this is probably the level at which most people encounter any form of artistic or cultural and creative industry. That, in turn, rests on the widest base of the pyramid which references a vastly disenfranchised and economically marginalised population. I realised that one would need to advance the public arts and education as a festival in order to be able to foster any kind of sustainability, because otherwise the arts program would really be on the top of an absolutely unbalanced, inverted pyramid that would not be economically, politically or socially sustainable. This process would need to take the local social context of extreme poverty very seriously. Part of our arts program involved working with the community to craft sites of capacity building and economic opportunity, but also to turn the lens back on the festival and look at it from below, if you like: from the position of the rural eyes of the rural poor which led us to the project of reinventing what we did.



The festival would, in short, have to be re-imagined to be able to be but one project of the arts non-profit organisation that we ran. This resulted in the creation of an arts and social development organisation around the festival which we called in the Afrikaans language *Kuns Onbeperk*, or Arts Unlimited, particularly with a view to explicitly engage the limitations and the blockages on cultural and economic participation for the members of the host communities in which we found ourselves.

My second framing comments step back from my *KKNK* case study, and ask the question of how different participants understand what a festival is. I want to raise the question of what a festival is and to denaturalise the assumption that the festival, for example, has a main and a fringe and a particular kind of business model because that, obviously, is the model that comes from Edinburgh which has a very particular history and become internationalised as perhaps the normative model of festival operations. In the context of the dialogue at the heart of the summer school, I would really be interested to know whether there are Chinese writers who are exploring the concepts of festival within the Chinese speaking sphere and the



many languages and traditions incorporated within the Chinese nation.

I would like to quote one of the classic Western European scholars on festivals, the late Alessandro Falassi, from his 1987 book *Time out of Time: Essays on the Festival*. This is an example of Fallasi thinking about the meanings of festival even within the Western European context. He also addresses the disciplines that have been drawn on in studying festivals:

> Since the last century [i.e. the 19th century], scholars from disciplines such as comparative religion, anthropology, sociology and folklore, [note the disciplinary variety there and the different paradigms that work in those disciplines] concerned themselves with the description, the analysis and, more recently, the interpretation of festivities, yet little explicit theoretical effort has been devoted to the nomenclature of festival events or to the definition of the term festival. As a result, the meaning of festival in the social sciences is simply taken from common language, where the term covers a constellation of very different events, sacred and profane, private and public, sanctioning tradition and introducing innovation, proposing nostalgic revivals, providing the expressive means for the survival of the most archaic folk customs and celebrating the highly speculative and experimental avant-gardes of the elite fine arts. (Fallasi 1987)

In laying out the terrain in this way, it is clear that festivals have come to incorporate not only wide ranging but potentially even contradictory cultural expressions. In the case of the KKNK, this stresses the importance of interrogating what it means to host a festival that simultaneously aims to be both avant-garde and to preserve an indigenous language, for example. Even within Western Europe Fallasi points out that the festival actually has quite complex and layered and contradictory meanings. He further writes that the term derives ultimately from the Latin *festum*, but that originally Latin had two terms for festival events. One was *festum*, which meant public joy or merriment or revelry, and this is probably the understanding that we most commonly associated with festivals today. But there was also the term *feria*, meaning abstinence from work in the honour of the gods, which is quite a religious understanding.

It is fascinating to think about festivals not only as opportunities of abundance but in fact of abstinence, of interrupting the common sequence of daily routines. Festivals do do this. Festival stop things like time and traffic and work. Thinking about this aspect of festivals as potentially disruptive of the normative social order, I think, is really interesting. Fallasi says that both terms were used in the plural, in other words *festae* and *feriae*, which indicates that at the time, about 2000 years ago, festivals already lasted many days and included many events. So, again, festivals are a sort of collective noun inherently with lots of moving parts within them.

In classical Latin the two terms became synonymous, as the two types of events tended to merge. Drawing on Fallasi's work, I want to pose a key framing question for our discussions about festivals:

> Which locally rooted forms of festivity are pertinent to fostering meaningful rural economic development through the cultural and creative industries and to what extent is such economic development tied to intrinsic artistic and cultural factors?

Let us not, then, assume that "the festival" is the same in China or in Africa as it is in Edinburgh or anywhere else. I prefer to ask instead what modes of festivity exist in cultural communities; what are the names; what are their connotations in indigenous languages; what are the modes of sociability that people bring with them to festivals from within their own cultural frameworks? It would need to be determined which, if any, of these are pertinent to fostering meaningful rural economic development.

I think there is still a tendency, based on the South African situation, to import business models and models of what festivals are from outside. For example, even in

the jazz sphere, we adopted the North Sea Jazz Festival model explicitly in a partnership with that festival to establish the Cape Town International Jazz Festival. And I've already mentioned the Edinburgh model comprising a main and a fringe. Many rural festivals in contemporary South Africa, which are funded and sometimes even organised by municipalities, adopt that model. But we need to ask if it is necessary to adopt a model from abroad, or whether are there rather other local understandings and ontologies of the festival that we could call upon, whatever culture and creative industries we are trying to foster and whichever policy interventions we are discussing.

Finally, we need to ask whether the adoption of an international model is economically rational, which is often overriding on the part of municipal partners in government in the South African city right now. Festivals are expected to create jobs, primarily, and to leave economic benefits behind, even though they are temporary events. It is important to interrogate the relationship between that economic agenda and the artistic and cultural agendas that most of us who work in the festival sector bring on the basis of the skills base we have. I hope that this helps to frame some of our conversation here.

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Several images featured in this transcript were taken by Oudtshoorn-based photographer Hans van der Veen.

# Cultural and Creative Work in Rural and Remote Areas: An Emerging International Conversation[1]



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Abstract:

This article reports on the themes and trajectories of a multidisciplinary and international literature. It reveals how cultural and creative work in rural and remote areas has largely been examined and articulated through three storylines: (1) cultural vitality, that is, culture as a resource for community development; (2) the 'rural creative class', recently linked to rural innovation; and (3) rural creative economies and creative entrepreneurship in rural and remote areas. Over the past decade, these strands of discourse have become more intertwined in policy and planning documents, suggesting an opportunity for converging these discussions into a more comprehensive approach to fostering cultural and creative work in rural and remote areas. However, cultural policy directed to rural areas

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remains underdeveloped compared to its urban counterpart.

**Keywords:** culture-based development, cultural work in rural and remote areas, rural creative economy, rural creative class

## Introduction

In October 2019, Culture Action Europe organized the conference "Culture Crops: Cultural Practices in Non-urban Territories" to foster debate and develop a more comprehensive approach to culture and cultural and artistic practices in peripheral territories (Cotte, 2019). In February and April 2020, meetings on the topic of "The Role of Culture in Non-urban Areas of the European Union" were organized as part of the "Voices of Culture" structured dialogue initiative between the European Commission and the cultural sector. These events occurred in the context of a perceived urban-centric bias in European cultural policy, inequity of access to opportunities for non-urban based creators, and misunderstandings about the realities of non-urban creative work situations. In the end, cultural participants in the EU dialogue put forward over 50 recommendations for action (Murphy and Cameron, 2020).

In the United States, in January 2019, the National Governors Association (in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Assembly of State Art Agencies) published an "action guide" entitled *Rural Prosperity Through the Arts and Creative Sector: A Rural Action Guide for Governors and States* (Rood, 2019). While following on from a high-profile report focusing on rural artistic and creative work and economic innovation (NEA, 2017), this document is broader in its scope and sets out a Rural Systems Change Framework for Governors/States that incorporates and aims to foster both "economic and quality-of-life outcomes associated with the rural creative sector" (p. 3).

In Australia, a number of research projects on cultural work and creative arts in smaller communities are underway. For example, the "Creative Ecologies" project, launched in 2018, is a collaborative investigation "to understand what it takes to build thriving creative communities and develop tools to foster their growth" (Future Tense, 2018, 5). The project is a national initiative of Future Tense in partnership with Artlands Victoria, RMIT University, Ludowyk Evaluation, and Clear. It is attending to both urban and non-urban/regional contexts. Another in-process multi-partner project, "The Role of the Creative Arts in Regional Australia: A Social Impact Model," is designed to highlight the social impact of the creative arts for regional and remote communities and to deliver a framework for evaluating the arts within a broader understanding of community well-being and success (led by Queensland University of Technology researchers Sandra Gattenhof, Donna Hancox, Helen Klaebe; https://research.qut.edu.au/raasi/).

Is cultural work in non-urban areas an emerging agenda? What is the cultural policy research base to inform and advise this situation? The neglect of rural cultural matters in academic spheres has been long discussed (e.g., Rooney and Smith, 2008; van Heur, 2010). How has research progressed since this time? What are the main trajectories it has followed? To investigate this situation, an international multidisciplinary literature review on cultural and creative work in rural and remote areas was conducted. It examined both academic and grey literature, including documents and other initiatives produced by governments at different levels and as well as by cultural organizations and agencies. The review focuses primarily on English-language literature, with a few non-English-language sources indicating similar discussions. While lines of research and discussion are identifiable, in the messiness of real-life narrative trajectories, they are not completely separate, and some merging or overlapping of evolving discussions is evident. Categorization of the literature focused on the primary nature of the discourse in which works were received and with which they best aligned. Efforts to track lines of discourse chronologically

also informed these choices. While it is impossible to have included all relevant publications, the review served to identify and sketch out some of the main conceptual pathways and research trajectories of the research and writings relating to cultural and creative work in rural areas.

The complexities of terminologies relating to cultural and creative work are well documented in Donald and Hall (2014), Long and Morpeth (2016), and Collins and Cunningham (2017), among others, and are not elaborated here. However, as with many comprehensive reviews of a wide variety of types of documents about cultural development, the definition involved varies from culture-based enterprises, to artistic creation, to the broader cultural expressions and ways of life of a community. In the review, the scope of "culture" that was being discussed was considered, but focused more on the contextualization of how culture was being mobilized. Similarly, terms of rural, remote, non-urban, extra-metropolitan, and low-density territories, among others, are used within this literature, and the main criteria for inclusion was an extra-urban focus.

Thus, this article presents a general conceptual cartography of the key themes and trajectories of discourses in the literature, beginning around about 2005, and points to some recent and current initiatives that suggest an opportunity to interweave the discourses. In closing, it outlines key topics in policy recommendations proposed in recent research literature and suggests follow-on research that would further inform these policy-research discourses and advance rural cultural policy.

## From cultural development to cultural and creative work

Looking back, a landmark scan and survey of policy-related research and policy practices relating to cultural development in rural and remote areas was conducted in 2006 by Ruth Smiles of Regional Arts Australia for the International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies (Smiles, 2006). The report compiled and reviewed publications (a mix of academic and arts-council research projects, and mainly English-language materials), conferences and events, and other resources, including projects, organizations, and networks. Smiles reported that "while much of the focus for the research and discussion about the arts in rural and remote areas is about sustainable economic development, it is the value of the arts for cultural and social well being that predominates in forums and conferences" (p. 3). This insight reflects the bi-focal approach to the topic that has largely characterized and contributed to the fragmented nature of writings about cultural development in rural areas.

Over the last 15 years, a crescendo of social, economic, cultural, and political messages and experiments have spread wide and far, with multiple arguments and conversational threads, special initiatives, and local experimentation. Research literature on culture-based and creative work in rural and remote areas has stressed the importance of foregrounding the interconnected world of creative production as networks and flows of people, information, and creative production, and to maintain an approach that is more complicated than the image of a simple city–country divide (Burns and Kirkpatrick, 2008; Gibson, 2014). At a strategic local development and community planning level, a "cultural" turn in rural planning has encouraged greater attention to the role of culture in the construction of rural identities and futures (e.g., Nelson et al., 2012; Selfa et al., 2015; Campbell and Maclaren, forthcoming).

This sense of possibility has been coupled with warnings of the potential harm of introducing inappropriate frameworks to rural-based cultural initiatives; ongoing debates about the appropriateness of 'urban' definitions and approaches to examine, describe, and understand rural realities of culture-based and creative work; and questioning of the idea of transferring 'urban-centric' creative economy policies and practices to rural locations (e.g., McCool and Moisey, 2001; Gibson and Klocker, 2005; Cruickshank,

2016). Policy to support cultural activity and enterprises in rural contexts continues to be fractured and appears to be underdeveloped. This article results from a desire to bring together many threads of discourse and to synthesize and better understand the research and policy-related work that has been conducted for rural contexts in order to progress forward on a more consolidated foundation.

Overall, the research found that culture-based and creative work in rural and remote areas has largely been examined and articulated through three storylines: (1) cultural vitality, that is, culture as a resource for community development; (2) the 'rural creative class', recently linked to rural innovation; and (3) rural creative economies and creative entrepreneurship in rural and remote areas. An overview of key themes in these trajectories is presented in Figure 1. All three storylines are still actively in force, individually and sometimes joined-up/mixed. As new research and policy-related initiatives emerge, it seems a timely point to better understand, reconcile, and perhaps converge these somewhat parallel discussions into a more comprehensive approach to fostering cultural and creative work in rural and remote areas.




*Figure 1. Trajectories of key themes in the literature*

## Cultural vitality: Culture as resource for community development

In the midst of economic challenges and transitions, and bolstered by residents' desire to regain a community-based self-determination (Overton, 2009), many smaller communities have been recognizing that a clear sense of self—the ways the community understands, celebrates, and expresses itself—is a major contributing factor to its ability to withstand economic, political, and cultural winds of change and transition (Duxbury, 2010; Campbell and Maclaren, forthcoming). In this context, arts, culture, and heritage have been viewed as more than amenities to improve the quality of life but as a foundation upon which the future of these rural/small communities rests. Cuesta et al. (2005) argue that the arts and creative activities can profoundly affect the ability of a town not only to survive over time but to thrive.

Around 2005-06, investigations on the roles and impacts of the arts in "thriving small towns" emerged in the United States. On the basis of close examination of a series of small towns in the state of Michigan (U.S.), Shifferd (2005) and Rodning Bash (2006) identified key ingredients that outlined a progression of artistic development from *emerging to sustaining to mature*, a continuum "from nascent, isolated and episodic, to highly integrated and sustained, involving significant numbers of people" (Shifferd, 2005, 8). Reoccurring ingredients identified

in this research that fostered the arts and creative development in small and rural communities included:

- An underlying appreciation and attitude of acceptance toward local culture, history, people and assets, and a community's 'sense of place';
- A valuing of the arts in everyday life, and an inclusive encouragement of broad-based participation;
- Key leadership roles representing the broad community, and a community-based coalition willing to work towards a common goal;
- Social networks of volunteers and arts supporters who work on exhibitions, festivals, community cultural development projects; support artists in their community-regeneration efforts; and inclusively encourage vibrancy among all cultural groups in a community; and
- Cultural infrastructure development—Cultural facilities and centres are important 'gathering places', functioning as a cornerstone of community cohesion and community building. Support for this infrastructure, either as part of new developments or as maintenance of existing facilities, is essential to create a visible focus of efforts and to offer a physical point of contact for diverse community groups. (Duxbury, 2010)

These dimensions aptly illustrate this holistic approach, which focuses on arts practices embedded within a broader community for the social well-being of that community and its development, as well as to foster civic and social participation (Anwar, 2005) and, later on, "community resiliency" (Ortiz, 2017). At this time, Markusen and Schrock (2006) elaborated the various dimensions of an (economic) "artistic dividend" that accrues to rural regions with a thriving cultural community, followed by an article on an arts-based state rural development policy (Markusen, 2007). This work continues to resonate strongly in research on artistic activity in rural areas and has anchored numerous rural development strategies and planning efforts in North America (e.g., Donald and Hall, 2014).

This discussion was soon situated in the context of "rural development and revitalization" (Duxbury and Campbell, 2009), "rural reinvention" (Gibson and Stewart, 2009), and "rural empowerment" (Anwar McHenry, 2011), which strengthened into discussions of "arts-based community development" by 2016 (Skippington and Davis, 2016). Initial investigations into identifying supportive contexts in 2005 morphed into more direct "cultivating" of this development (Donald and Hall, 2014). In 2014, arts and culture in rural areas of the United States were given a significant spotlight through a national "Year of the Rural Arts," fueled by an NEA grant to a partnership between Art of the Rural, The Rural Policy Research Institute, and national networks for the project "Next Generation", with the topic taken up by Americans for the Arts and featuring the development of a wide array of online resources and events[2].

Other research in this stream has incorporated contexts of holistic local sustainable development, culturally informed/resonant local development, and local resiliency. For example, in rural Western Australia, Anwar McHenry (2011) observed that the arts, in their capacity to explore community identity and strengthen a sense of place, were key to encouraging and enabling civic participation to identify and resolve local problems, and to facilitate understanding between groups, vitally contributing to efforts relating to common objectives and thus fortifying resilience. A critical look at the perceptions and challenges of the social benefits and "usefulness" of the arts in 12 rural remote communities in Australia (Skippington and Davis, 2016, 237) found:

2 *Online resources include: Art of the Rural website (http://artoftherural.org), Atlas of Rural Arts and Culture (http://placestories.com/community/RuralArtsAndCulture), and an Americans for the Arts blog on "Arts Resources for Rural America" (https://www.americansforthearts.org/blog-feed/arts-resources-for-rural-america), while events included "Rural Assembly: Building an Inclusive Nation," "Cross Currents: Art+Agriculture Powering Rural Economies," and Rural Arts Happy Hour virtual conversations.*

> the remote/rural processes examined were usually aimed solely at social outcomes, increasing community networking and maintaining social cohesion. The research identified little or no appreciation in remote/rural communities of the potential to use the arts to generate and/or support economic outcomes. … Arts-based activities in the remote/rural communities examined in this research generally sit apart from major community planning agendas involving plans to increase tourism, attract workers, attract new businesses, build community infrastructure and improve the liveability of communities.

These authors argue that this situation must be challenged in order to "develop comprehensive and integrated visions for the future, pursuing less insular and narrowly focused art forms and projects," and encourage artists to "think more broadly and comprehensively and be prepared to contribute their knowledge and creative skills across the full spectrum of community development." (p. 237)

A similar argument was brought forward during a Digital Gathering on the topic of "Cultural Development in Rural and Remote Areas" organized by Mass Culture/Mobilisation Culturelle in Canada, in March 2019. Invited speaker Annalee Adair remarked:

> Culture can address to real issues only if it sees itself as contributing to community quality of life and not only advocating for the sector. A shift in perspective is needed: What is our contribution to our community as cultural organizations, as creators, as historians, as museums …? What is our part in ensuring out community identity is authentic and vital? And how does that then help the community as a whole? The role of culture in a community, and in community building and community vitality [needs to be discussed more] … culture is not a separate issue, it is integral to community identity, but it is sometimes seen as only for some people to participate in.

One trajectory forward in this discourse can be found in Jude Ortiz's doctoral dissertation research in northern Ontario (Canada) communities on the contributions of arts practice to community resilience (Ortiz, 2017). Ortiz found that local cultural goods provide a means of greater community self-understanding and that engagement in arts processes develops competencies that align with those needed to manage community change and continual adaptation:

> processes inherent to engagement in the arts fosters divergent perspectives, creative problem solving and an ability to work with complexity, emergence and uncertainty at an individual and community level; all important skills to deal with change. The production of cultural goods leads to increased understanding of self and others in the context of place, enabling identity reformation and belonging, health and well-being and agency, as well as the development of a localized economy. Furthermore, the research highlights similarities between artistic and community developers' practice suggesting that capacities gained through engaging in the arts parallel those necessary for developers to work effectively within emergent, inclusive, and holistic approaches that underpin continuous community adaptation in addressing change. (1)

Such research recognizes artistic practices as intertwined with processes of planning for local community development, adaptation, and resilience. It is important to note, however, that the broader discourse on resiliency has been accompanied by substantial critiques of the idea of resilience as enabling or excusing patterns of de-funding and/or the lack of adequate policy to support rural communities, and instead placing responsibility back onto the communities themselves. Thus, situating culture within this broader resiliency discourse must balance advancing considerations of culture within empowering local agency with critical awareness of broader policy arrangements, constraints, and other situational contexts. Overall, calls to integrate cultural production and expression more soundly into the mainstream of community planning for holistic sustainable development and local resiliency

continue to be advanced in policy-related documents such as Rood (2019), Cotte (2019), and Murphy and Cameron (2020).

## The "rural creative class"

The second stream of discourse relates to the attraction and retention of a "rural creative class." In the early 2000s, as the pervasiveness of discussions about the "creative class" (Florida, 2002) and urban centrality proliferated internationally, the discourse created shock waves in smaller places struggling to see themselves in this reframing of "what it takes to be successful," economically (and otherwise) (Lewis and Donald, 2010, Bennett, 2010, Yuzwa, 2017). Political discussions and various writings spoke of talent attraction and (to a lesser extent) retention, and related possibilities in this new economic context. Consequently, in the context of economic transitions and the threat (or reality) of decline, for at least a decade, rural communities have aimed to attract the "creative class" as residents-with-businesses, within a broader economic emphasis on entrepreneurship and small businesses. This pattern continues internationally, framed by regional, national, and supranational rural development policy frameworks, although on the ground, tending to occur in more informal and incremental ways.

In terms of research, while a 2003 study from the U.K., "This place gives me space" (Drake, 2003), provided first-hand accounts from rural creators, this was quickly superseded by statistically defined quantitative approaches to identify the "rural creative class" (McGranahan and Wojan 2007a, 2007b; Wojan et al., 2007), with a particular focus on who moves from urban areas, how they differ from their urban counterparts, where they locate, and how a place could attract them. Largely based in the United States (but not entirely), research found that artists and creative entrepreneurs located in rural areas tend to be older and have established businesses and markets (Hracs, 2005; McGranahan and Wojan, 2007b; Wojan et al., 2007; Andersen, 2010; Bennett et al., 2015).

Research found that artists move to smaller communities and rural areas as they flee the high rents of urban centres and seek a rural/small community "quality of life" and lifestyle amenities (Burns and Kirkpatrick, 2008; Andersen, 2010; Verdich, 2010; Denis-Jacob, 2012; Herslund, 2012; Felton and Collis, 2012; Collis et al., 2013; Bennett et al., 2015; Daniel, 2014)—with a good Internet connection. This theme inspired work internationally, for example: in Australia, Argent et al. (2013) ask, "Could amenity-led migration engender a "creativity-led rural renaissance?"; and in Portugal, Cruz (2016) asks, "Can tourism-attractive amenities also attract (and retain) the creative class?". This work dovetailed with more general work on rural entrepreneurs, such as Haisch et al. (2017) who, in central European contexts, ask, "Why do entrepreneurial individuals locate in non-metropolitan areas?". These types of investigations marked a return of first-hand accounts and fueled interest in creative entrepreneurs in rural areas.

Of course, these urban-to-rural migrations (*counter-urbanism*) play out more broadly on a societal basis. McManus and Connell (2008) saw this phenomenon as a relatively wealthy middle-class group withdrawing from urban settings to pursue a different lifestyle in a rural location, fueled by rising urban housing costs and quality of life concerns, as well as life transitions such as starting families or retirement. More recently, the migration of a younger cohort in their 20s and 30s is also observed, in Japan and elsewhere, propelled by a set of values that prioritizes environmental connection and sustainability and personal well-being within smaller community settings (e.g., Noda, 2018). According to various news stories and public polls, the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 has also sparked interest in moving from urban to less-urban areas in the U.S. (e.g., Hart, 2020) and U.K. (Rightmove, 2020), among other countries, although how this will play out is still yet to be seen.

An important context for rural and remote cultural activities and enterprises has been the availability and capabilities of broadband Internet, which is a key enabler

of the move from urban to rural areas (Bowles, 2008; Burns and Kirkpatrick, 2008; Donald, 2008; Roberts and Townsend, 2015). The need for connection—to others, to markets, to sources of inspiration and trends, to broadcast oneself outward—is a reoccurring theme. This reflects the centrality of the Internet as a marketing tool (Duxbury and Campbell, 2009), the need for access to platforms central to growing cultural sharing practices, especially among youth; and the need for cultural producers to keep within broader production networks. As Donald and Hall (2014, 5) elaborate, "artistic and creative activity in rural places feeds into larger cultural industry value chains." Anderson et al. (2015) tentatively argue that broadband technology proffers "a new rural geography: the creative countryside which is culturally inspired and entrepreneurially driven and in which place increasingly supersedes space in terms of importance" (Collins and Cunningham, 2017, 37).

Where do they locate? In the United States, Wojan et al. (2007) identified about 100 rural "creative havens," which tend to be in relatively close proximity to and have good connections to major metro areas; are home to a major university or college; or have considerable natural amenities which draw people to them. Jumping forward, a 2017 study by the U.S. National Endowment for the Arts found that a rural county is 60% more likely to contain a performing arts organization if the county overlaps with a forest or national park (NEA, 2017). Similar attractors have been identified elsewhere.

In 2018, Wojan and Nichols examined the correlation between the presence of arts and design organizations and commitment to innovation in other businesses in "rural creative places" in the United States. They noted that their findings supported both an "arts-as-enabler-of-innovative-thinking" explanation and an "arts-as-attractive-creative-class-amenity" explanation, concluding that "as a local development strategy, promoting the arts is likely to have a positive impact that extends beyond a direct economic impact to affecting the capacities of businesses reliant on design and innovation, either by attracting or enabling creative talent" (n.p.).[3] Amplifying this trajectory, Richard Florida (2018) recounts the 2017 NEA research report and the Wojan et al. studies to highlight the importance of the presence of a "rural creative class" to rural innovation in the United States:

> Wojan and company's analysis find a strong statistical association between the arts, innovation, and economic dynamism in rural areas. And this leads them to conclude that the arts are a direct force in rural innovation, not just an indirect factor that helps to attract and retain talent.
>
> Artists and creatives in America have long sought out rural places to fuel their creativity .... But the arts in rural places are not just a byproduct of the scenery; they play a key role in spurring the innovation that ultimately leads to economic development and rising living standards. The myth that urban areas are creative and rural areas are not is just that: a myth. (n.p.)

With this swing in focus, a stream of attention to the greater economic (and other) impacts of the businesses of the "rural creative class" is anticipated to continue.

## Rural creative economies and creative entrepreneurship in rural and remote areas

Closely aligned with the investigations into the "rural creative class," one can observe two groups of research literature, albeit with different focal points: first, a collective or macro perspective on investigating "rural creative economies" is evident from at least 2005; and second, a closer attention to the realities of the creative entrepreneurs operating in rural and remote areas, only significantly evident around 2011-2012.

### *Rural creative economies*

Between 2005 and 2010, an

*3 This research on rural innovation rests on companies of five or more employees, which ignores a broad range of activities and production undertaken by smaller collectives and individuals.*

international burst of writings on rural creative economies is evident. In 2005, Brian Hracs noted growing presence of cultural work in the "countryside" in Canada, connecting this with economic development and social change (Hracs, 2005). In Australia, Gibson and Klocker (2005) observed a "cultural turn" in regional development discourse, incorporating a neoliberal perspective on creativity. By 2008, one can observe expanded efforts to identify, rethink, and "grow the creative-rural economy" (Donald, 2008, i), with authors writing on this theme from Canada, U.K., Ireland, Scotland, Germany, Turkey, Netherlands, Australia, Japan, and the United States. Many articles on this topic were published in the *Creative Industries Journal*, which launched in 2008. In 2010, Bell and Jayne's (2010) seminal work on "the creative countryside" investigated policy and practice in the UK "rural creative economy." The same year, Chris Gibson edited a special issue of *Australian Geographer* on "Creativity in 'Peripheral' Areas: Redefining the Creative Industries," which was subsequently republished in book form in 2014.

By 2011, policy-makers took note, with policy-oriented events organized in Canada, and the U.K. that year, focusing largely on urban–rural creative economy connections (see, e.g., MacDonald, 2011; Martin Prosperity Institute, 2011). In 2012, a second wave of articles emerged asking "Could this happen here?"; for example, "Dream or reality?" (Denis-Jacob, 2012, Canada) and "What is the potential in remote areas?" (Skoglund and Jonsson, 2012). In an advocacy context in the U.K., the *Rural Creative Strategy – Independent Study Report* (Bianchini et al., 2012, for the Rural Cultural Forum) commented on whether there might be an urban bias operating within strategic national arts and cultural funding policy and examined the needs of rural communities and artists, why a national rural cultural strategy may be necessary, and how such a strategy might align with other relevant government and stakeholder policy agendas in that country.

A strand of this research on rural creative economies focuses on the presence and fostering of creative industry clusters, that is, aggregates of firms. For example, some research has examined the tendency of certain types of creative industries to locate in rural and non-metropolitan areas, for example, the craft industry in Italy (Bertacchini and Borrione, 2013), and traditional creative and cultural activities (visual and performing arts, printing, libraries) in Victoria, Australia (Rural Councils Victoria, 2013). Within this literature, one also finds research on festivals and special events as attractors for visitors to rural and remote areas (e.g., Gibson and Stewart, 2009). From a policy-advocacy perspective, the work of the Rural Cultural Forum (mentioned above, derived from the Littoral Arts Trust), and the (more recently named) Creative Rural Industries Consortium has continued to advocate for support for "the new creative rural economies" in the United Kingdom, with an expanded scope beyond culture-based enterprises to incorporate "creative rural-based entrepreneurs" more widely (see, e.g., Creative Rural Industries Consortium, 2017a, 2017b, 2019).

As can be expected, critical voices quickly followed, highlighting context and local realities; for example, "Is culture-led redevelopment relevant for rural planners? The risk of adopting urban theories in rural settings" (Cruickshank, 2016, Norway). However, the trajectory continued to build steam. In Europe, *Creative Industries in Peripheral Areas* is published (Collins and Cunningham, 2017), asking: What are the operational challenges, and how can they be addressed? In the United States, the National Endowment for the *Arts releases Rural Arts, Design, and Innovation in America: Research Findings from the Rural Establishment Innovation Survey* (NEA, 2017). The latter is accompanied by the Wojan and Nichols (2018) article, "Design, innovation, and rural creative places: Are the arts the cherry on top, or the secret sauce?", promoted by Richard Florida (mentioned in the previous section). With this, lines of discourse on the rural creative class, the rural creative economy, and innovation begin to dovetail.

***Creative entrepreneurship in***

### *rural and remote areas*

This second stream focuses on the working realities of individual creators and culture-based/creative entrepreneurs located in rural areas. This small but growing literature examines the vitality and challenges of artistic/creative work and creative businesses in rural and peripheral settings, bursting onto the scene in 2011-2012 with three works: Marie-Anne Lenain's doctoral thesis on the dynamics of creative SMEs in three remote rural areas in France, and their situatedness between networks and territories (Lenain, 2011); Susan Luckman's book *Locating Cultural Work: The Politics and Poetics of Rural, Regional and Remote Creativity*, largely based on interviews with rural creators in Australia and the U.K. (Luckman, 2012); and Evangelia Petridou and Dimitri Ioannides's article on creative work ("conducting creativity") in the Jämtland region of Sweden, situating this work within a framework of territorial cohesion and spatial justice (Petridou and Ioannides, 2012).

Susan Luckman (2012) observes that the "rural creative economy" in England and Australia is composed of small companies that are driven by individual "creative" entrepreneurs. As with many creative and cultural entrepreneurs (HKU, 2010), these individuals are more likely to be focused on providing a livelihood for themselves than on business growth (Bell and Jayne, 2010; Herslund, 2012). They also tend to be more "socially embedded" than creative workers in an urban creative sector (Gibson et al., 2010; Bertacchini and Borione, 2013; Bennett et al., 2015), and motivated by non-economic reasons with value placed also on social returns such as enhancing local cultural life, facilitating social cohesion, and fortifying community spirit. Beyond economic returns, "other advantages" and contributions of the rural creative worker/practitioner include the provision of "organisational energy" and using their skills "for the betterment of the area" (Herslund, 2012, 253, 251). A danger of "individualizing" and "romanticizing" working practices in creative/cultural fields shadows this work, particularly in non-urban areas. As Collins and Cunningham (2017, 48) observe, "[t]he perception of individuals 'tuning out from the rate race' in pursuit of a more fulfilling career in creativity dominates not just the rhetoric, but policy to support the development of the creative economy in rural areas."

By 2015, research literature increasingly addresses the real nature of rural creative businesses and the expectations that have been projected onto them. For example, "Great expectations or small country living?," regarding the enabling of small rural creative businesses with ICT (Anderson et al., 2015), and "Living hand to mouth: Why the bohemian lifestyle does not lead to wealth creation in peripheral regions" (Bennett et al., 2015). This is closely accompanied by examinations of the practices that enable these businesses; for example, Munro's (2016) exploration of practices of market-building amongst creative entrepreneurs in rural and remote Scotland in "Developing the rural creative economy 'from below'."

In addition, a recent shift from *creative to cultural* entrepreneurship can be perceived in the research literature, reflecting the revival of craft production, which is increasingly enabled and sought after by rural, regional, and remote cultural workers/practitioners (Luckman, 2012; Collins and Cunningham, 2017). In 2017, the *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation Management* published a special issue on "Cultural Entrepreneurship and Regional Innovation" (Ratten and Ferreira, 2017). Greater attention to craft-art and artisan work is also evident in literature from Denmark (Prince, 2017), Portugal (Bakas et al., 2018), the Northern Isles of Scotland (McHattie et al., 2019), among other regions, often interwoven with rural tourism contexts and concerns.

## Towards mixed approaches and strategies

The three storylines—cultural vitality, culture as resource for community development; the "rural creative class"; and rural creative economies and creative entrepreneurship—are still active, and a "weaving together" of these arguments and strategies into more consolidated platforms is needed

to advance policy to foster and support cultural and creative work in rural areas. Academic efforts to develop consolidated approaches appeared around 2016-17, with a growing emphasis on strategy and policy. Notable in this output are, from Australia, Skippington's (2016) *Harnessing the Bohemian: Artists as Innovation Partners in Rural and Remote Communities*; from the United States, Balfour et al.'s (2018) article "The creative fire: An international framework for rural arts-based development"; and, from Norway, Lygard's (2016) article, "The 'actually existing' cultural policy and culture-led strategies of rural places and small towns." Jude Ortiz's (2017) doctoral dissertation, *Culture, Creativity and the Arts: Building Resilience in Northern Ontario*, mentioned earlier, can also be placed in this group.

In the policy and advocacy realm, as mentioned in the opening of this article, a recent wave of initiatives is also appearing, providing different platforms to inform the next wave of policy for cultural development in rural areas. While reminiscent of the 2005 studies in Michigan to identify support factors in small towns that can foster thriving arts communities, this is a much larger investigation. The pendulum, having swung into a period of parallel research trajectories, is once again swinging back to more holistic blended approaches to understanding systems and contexts.

## Informing policy / Extracting policy recommendations

Within the diverse literature that has been produced internationally, researchers are calling for policy approaches and support for peripherally based creative and cultural entrepreneurs that are tailored to the unique features of their situations (e.g., Bell and Jayne, 2012; Luckman, 2012; Bennett et al., 2015). In general, the policy recommendations being put forward in research literature provide macro recommendations, noting the need to acknowledge differences among rural locations and circumstances, to enhance distinctiveness, and identify local cultural resources, both tangible and intangible. They acknowledge the multiple challenges to address—of distance/access, of critical mass, of soft infrastructure, of underdeveloped programmes and funding support—and the need for better knowledge. There is a general plea for place-specificity, to "listen to locals," and an emphasis on collaborative governance and policy-making processes.

More specifically, regarding arts-based economic development on the scale of small communities, the policy recommendations being put forward in research literature tend to place an emphasis on four dimensions. First, there is an emphasis on individual artists by, for example, concentrating on the needs and characteristics of artists, emphasizing policy that supports artists through affordable live-work spaces, arts centers, and incubators that help artists network and become more skilled at running their businesses, and distribution of financial support to smaller arts organizations. Second, there is an emphasis on permanent arts facilities such as arts centers and incubators, viewing cultural assets as networks of resources and arts organizations to address neighbourhood-level problems and build community capacity (e.g., Balfour et al., 2018). Third, there is a wide-spread continued interest in urban–rural linkages and the broader networks in which rural producers operate (see, e.g., Cotte, 2019; Murphy and Cameron, 2020). Fourth, there is also a realization of the importance of networking within and across rural/remote territories (e.g., Ortiz, 2017; Gonçalves et al., 2020).

In terms of recommendations directed more to creative economy development in periphery regions, *The Creative Edge Policy Toolkit* (Collins et al., 2013) presents a comprehensive array of recommendations to foster creative entrepreneurship. The report highlights catalysts such as business hubs and low-cost work spaces to support emerging creative industries, fostering international cooperation between peripheral regions, enhancing virtual networking and connections among entrepreneurs, facilitating improved market access, and policy initiatives

that are evidence-based and tailored to specific locales, needs, and market dynamics. The report also highlights the strategic potential of spill-over effects with other sectors of periphery economies.

Overall, attention to strategies of endogenous development and building capacity locally must balance efforts to attract creative entrepreneurs into a region. This is often missing from the literature on rural and remote cultural work, which tends to focus on attracting and retaining creative entrepreneurs from outside. Furthermore, it is not enough to attract creative talent to a rural or remote region, "it is even more important to retain such individuals as they are imperative to the development of these places" (Collins and Cunningham, 2017, 125). Studies on the retention of creative entrepreneurs in rural and remote areas have been rare. Cruz (2016) found the natural amenities that attract visitors and "creative class" residents to the Algarve region of Portugal are not sufficient to retain these creative residents if economic and entrepreneurship opportunities are not available. Bakas et al. (2018) investigated the artisan entrepreneur-mediators who link artisans to creative tourism in rural areas and small cities in Portugal, suggesting that the situations faced by the entrepreneur-mediators interviewed in the study point to the need to create policies with sufficient scope to ease the entry of non-local entrepreneurs, with low levels of social embeddedness, into rural communities.

Potential interfaces and interlinkages between cultural/creative initiatives and other social and economic sectors of small, rural, and/or remote communities are important cross-cutting considerations for policy-development, especially in smaller places with limited human and other resources. Bottom-up, community-engaged cultural and creative tourism, for example, provides a flexible and transversal platform for linking cultural, tourism, gastronomy, social innovation, and local development interests (see, e.g., Duxbury et al., 2019; Gonçalves et al., 2020). The growing prevalence of "place-making" as a collaborative platform for creative local development initiatives also requires more attention in the context of fostering cultural and creative initiatives in smaller places (e.g., Richards and Duif, 2018). In these initiatives, care must be taken not to look only at the contributions that cultural work might make to other policy agendas, but also "to recognize the inherent value and importance of culture per se" (O'Connell, 2020, 8).

Moving forward, it appears to be a time for stock-taking and projection, with further research needed to conduct a close theoretical tracing of the research literature and a close comparison and analysis of the emerging "mixed" frameworks. This must be complemented by detailed analysis of the policy recommendations embedded in the policy-related grey literature and in-practice policy frameworks of cultural agencies (and other bodies) internationally for cultural development and creative enterprises/entrepreneurship in rural and remote areas. The latter could potentially be launched through a "repeat" of IFACCA's 2006 international D'Art survey of arts councils and cultural agencies about cultural development in rural areas, expanding to incorporate "culture-based development" more generally. This work should be supported through ongoing networking and enhanced knowledge sharing between researchers and practitioners to build up a grounded knowledge of challenges, opportunities, and possible trajectories that can proactively, intelligently, and flexibly guide and foster cultural development and creative work in rural areas for the greater sustainability of the communities and territories in which they are situated.

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# 3 Theory and Method of Cultural Empowerment in Rural Revitalisation of China — Take Baima Huatian Commune as an example



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**The School of Arts, Peking University:** Based in the Department of Arts founded in 1997, the School of Arts was established in 2006 and is now becoming one of the top academic institutions concerning arts studies, cultural industries, art history, critical arts, and arts management. The institute is distinct in the way that it provides graduate students, undergraduate students, postdocs, and research fellows an interdisciplinary environment and freedom to develop their own research focuses. Additionally, the institute functions as a national think tank and provides intellectual support to the policy making processes of the nation on related topics. Shaohan Wang is a postdoc at the institute and is currently working as part of the academic team led by Prof. Hardy from the Peking University.

**Abstract:** China's rural construction has undergone a century of development, and cultural industries empowerment is an innovative path for comprehensive rural revitalisation in the new era, an encounter of the times between cultural industries and rural construction. The cultural industries' ability to revitalise the countryside is conducive to the inheritance of rural farming civilization and the development of the rural economy. By adhering to the ecological concept of "co-creation, construction and sharing" and focusing on the practical principle of combining public welfare and commerce, the cultural industries will continue to activate rural innovation capital and promote the integrated development of primary, secondary and tertiary industries. Focusing on the symbiotic mechanism of

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space, culture, relationship and product, the project realises the multi-dimensional value drive of rural value intellectualisation and empowerment.

**Keywords:** cultural industries, rural revitalisation, creative empowerment, Baima Huatian Commune, symbiosis mechanism

## Introduction

The cultural empowerment rural revitalisation plan is an important starting point for the State Council, and the Party Central Committee, to promote rural comprehensive revitalisation. The social practice of cultural empowerment and rural revitalisation has experienced more than ten years of exploration. It started with the Xu village Project, Heshun county, Shanxi Province in 2009 implemented by the team of Professor Qu Yan of Guangdong University of Technology, and developed into the Bishan Project in Yi county, Anhui Province in 2011 by the team of Associate Professor Zuo Jing of Anhui University. It has matured into the Baima Huatian Construction Plan carried out by Professor Xiang Yong of Peking University in 2019 in Baima of Xuanhan, Sichuan, and the Rural Creation Institute Action carried out by Professor Hu Yu of Tsinghua University in Fuliang, Jiangxi in 2020. There have also been the rural creation practices carried out by various rural construction teams such as Sichuan Fine Arts Institute, China Academy of Art, and Renmin University of China. Finally, in 2022, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and departments jointly issued Opinions on Promoting Cultural Industries Empowerment and Rural Revitalisation to realise nationwide model promotion. Cultural empowerment rural revitalisation is a theory and practice of new rural construction. In the past six years, teachers and students of Peking University Cultural Industries Research Institute have carried out some practical explorations of rural creation in Baima, Xuanhan, and Sichuan, accumulated some experience, set up Baima Huatian Commune, and explored the rural creation paradigm of "Baima Huatian". Baima is a remote village, located in the east of Sichuan, a quiet village deep in Daba Mountain. Since October 2016, we have started the local township creation assistance, participated in the local poverty alleviation and rural revitalisation work, and summed up the township creation concept of Baima Huatian, which is characterised by cultural connection, creative empowerment and value symbiosis. During the whole practice of rural construction, our team of teachers and students of Peking University, including invited experts, scholars and young volunteers from home and abroad, were immersed, moved and deeply educated. Our journey to build a cultural village is a journey to enlighten the local soul and a journey to soothe the cultural soul. Therefore, rural construction is a beautiful cause that makes each of us a better self.

After years of practice and exploration, Baima Huatian Commune has continuously summarised the theory and refined the experience, published the Baima Manifesto, and published several papers successively. I guided the graduation thesis of students, published two academic books, and published the book Baima in rural revitalisation, and summed up the thinking on the development concept, working mechanism and future development of rural revitalisation with cultural industries empowerment, to seek advice from the academic circles and practitioners.

## The development of cultural industries' empowering rural revitalisation

In the 14th Five-Year Plan for Culture and Tourism Development issued on 2 June 2021, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism formally proposed to implement the cultural industries-empowered rural revitalisation plan, emphasising that key industrial projects will be used as a carrier to guide cultural industries institutions and workers to reach out to the rural areas to help and invest in them and to vigorously develop cultural industries with rural characteristics. The plan emphasises using key industrial projects as a carrier, guiding cultural industries institutions and workers to go deeper into the countryside to help and invest, promoting the development

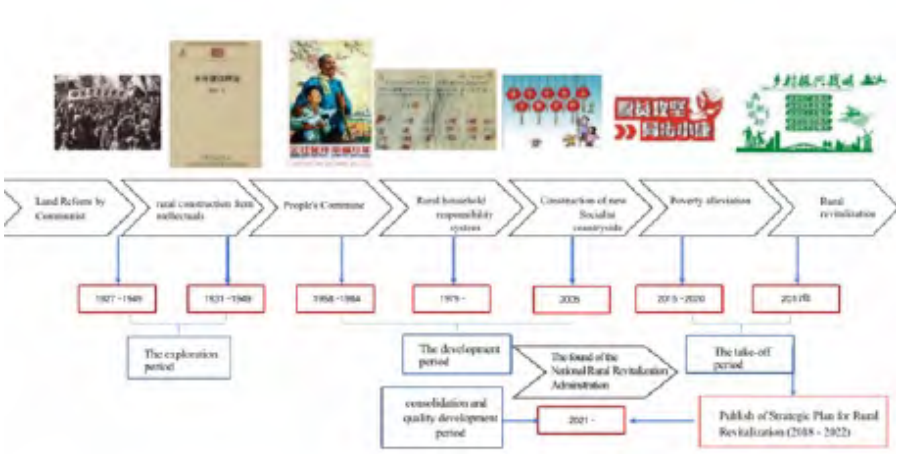



*Figure 1 The history of rural development in China*

of cultural industries into the new urbanisation construction, and vigorously developing cultural industries with rural characteristics. This indicates that the rural plan of cultural industries empowerment has changed from folk exploration to national governance, and provides policy support for the practical action of the rural revitalisation of cultural industries empowerment.

## *The development trends*

Rural construction in China has undergone a century of development (see Figure 1) and has been closely linked to the revolutionary cause of the Communist Party of China (CPC) from the very beginning. The CPC led the land revolution in the 1920s in the base areas and the liberated areas and intellectuals represented by scholars and industrialists, such as Liang Shuming, Yan Yangchu and Lu Zuofu, carried out rural construction in the district ruled by Kuomintang. These two forces together promoted rural China; they worked together to promote practical exploration, theoretical thinking and path selection in the early days of Chinese rural construction and, ultimately, the CPC led the people to complete the cause of the New Democratic Revolution and establish New China. During the period of socialist construction, the Communist Party completed the land reform in the countryside, and in 1958 began the exploration of the People's Commune, which caused certain setbacks to the construction of the countryside in new China. However, the Great People's Commune still played a unique role as an organisational form of mobilisation of grassroots forces in the countryside to complete the infrastructure of rural development during difficult times.

The innovative beginnings of China's reform and opening up also came from the countryside, thanks to the great creation of the household joint production contract responsibility system in Xiaogang Village, Fengli Commune, Fengyang County, Anhui Province, in 1978. China's socialist revolution, construction and reform are all closely related to China's countryside, farmers and agriculture. 2005 saw the Party Central Committee propose the construction of new socialist countryside; 2015 saw a comprehensive poverty eradication plan; 2019 saw the revitalisation of the countryside strategy; 2020 saw the full realisation of poverty eradication and the full building of a moderately prosperous society; and 2021 saw the consolidation of the achievements of poverty eradication, revitalisation and a period of high-quality development of rural revitalisation. Since then, China's rural revitalisation has entered a brand-new development journey. It can be said that once the peasants' enthusiasm is mobilised and the peasants' main consciousness is brought into play, our revolutionary, construction and reform undertakings will be successful. Therefore, in our great journey to promote the construction of a modern socialist country with Chinese characteristics, we still need to mobilise the enthusiasm of China's peasants, solve the deep-rooted problems in China's countryside and promote the high-quality development of China's agricultural modernisation.

The No. 1 Document of the Central Committee in 2022 puts forward the key areas and special work of

rural revitalisation through rural construction, rural development and rural governance. According to the deployment of the Central Committee, rural revitalisation includes revitalisation in industry, talents, culture, ecology and organisation, which is a comprehensive revitalisation of the countryside. We believe that cultural revitalisation plays an important role in the construction of the countryside. Cultural revitalisation in the countryside can be called "rural cultural revitalisation", which includes four kinds of situations (see Figure 2). Firstly, there is cultural heritage rural revitalisation, which plays the role of cultivating the foundation of cultural rural revitalisation by guarding nostalgia, preserving local civilization and protecting rural cultural heritage while promoting the protection, development and utilisation of rural tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Since the reform and opening up, many knowledgeable

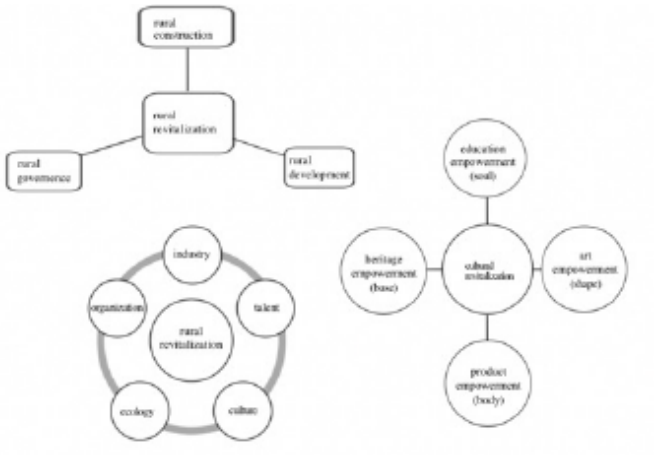



*Figure 2 Main forms of rural revitalization in the new era*

people have devoted themselves to the protection of rural cultural heritage, which has helped with the transmission of rural cultural traditions. Many rural educators have launched various forms of rural education to enlighten the minds of children left behind in the countryside, to provide rural women and land practitioners with new knowledge, and to enhance the local self-confidence of rural indigenous people. The third is cultural and artistic rural construction, which plays a role in shaping cultural rural construction. A group of artists have moved into the countryside to engage in artistic rural construction, beautifying the natural environment of the countryside through various artistic means. The fourth is cultural and creative rural construction, which strengthens the impact by using cultural and creative means and market-based resource allocation mechanisms to promote




*Figure 3 Representative cases of cultural villages in the new era*

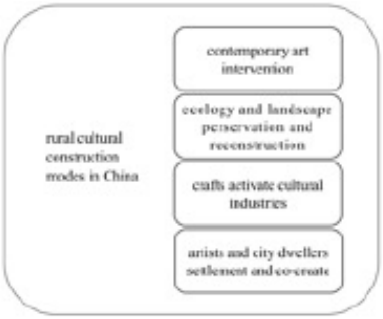



*Figure 4 Four types of rural cultural construction*

the creative transformation and innovative development of rural cultural resources and realise the development of a rural cultural economy with features.

During the great exploration of cultural rural construction in the new era, some classic cases of cultural rural construction have emerged (see Figure 3). As we mentioned, 2007 is the first year of China's art village construction, when Professor Qu Yan's team started the Xu Village Project in Heshun county, Shanxi Province, organising artists to sketch, collect, live and create in Xu Village. The team eventually developed a whole industrial chain of art industries in Xu Village, creating the nationally renowned "Xu Village Model". Later on, in Qingtian village, Shunde, Guangdong, he explored a more complete path for the revival of Chinese rural civilization through the operation model of 'government + university + foundation + villagers', including nine major veins of rural history, economy, nature, environment, farming and customs. In 2011, Professor Zuo Jing's team started the Bishan Project in Qian county, Anhui province, and has since spread it to Yunnan, Guizhou, Henan and other places to promote the Bishan supply and marketing cooperative. In 2016, with the help of clansmen, friends and fellow members of the community, students and teachers from Peking University started to explore the "Baima Huatian" in Sichuan. In 2019, Associate Professor Cong Zhiqiang from the Department of Art of Renmin University of China started the Gejia Village Art Experiment in Ninghai, Zhejiang. The Gejia Village Art Experiment has changed the fate of a village.

Art anthropologist Fang Lijiang has divided the models of cultural rural construction into four types (see Figure 4):

1. Contemporary art in the countryside, such as the Xu Village Project in Quyan and the Shijiezi Art Museum in Jinle, Qin'an County, Gansu;
2. Restoring the countryside and cultural ecology as a whole and reconstructing the rural landscape, such as the Qingtian Project in Quyan and the Bishan Project by Zuojing;
3. Introducing new villagers through art rural construction, attracting artists and urbanites to settle in the countryside and build a new village together. For example, the public-spirited art teaching in Linzhenglu Jixia Village in Pingnan, Fujian, and the new villagers' project in Mingyue Village in Chengdu, Sichuan; and
4. The use of traditional crafts to attract artists to activate local cultural industries, such as the 'First Village of Chinese Silverware' in Xinhua Village, Heguing, Yunnan, and the Sanbao Pottery Village in Jingdezhen, Jiangxi.

The different models of cultural village building are not separate from each other but are inclusive and symbiotic. In Fuliang County, Jiangxi, Ms Sun Qian's team studied and learned from the experience of the curator of the Echigo Tsumago Earth Art Festival in Japan, Tomiro Kitagawa, and carried out the Art in Fuliang art project. She overcame the inconvenience caused by the epidemic to carry out a public art project in Hanxi Village in Fuliang in 2021, successfully transforming a place lacking in tourism resources and sparsely visited by tourists into a popular destination. The project has transformed a place lacking in tourism resources and scarce tourists into a Netflix destination. In Rongjiang County, Guizhou, Wang Sha's team from the China Academy of Art carried out the Book of the Earth is More than Blue public art project, incorporating the folklore and cultural ecology of the Dong Village in Rongjiang, which has also been a success.

In addition, the scope of rural cultural revitalisation goes far

beyond the practical exploration within a village, and can also include the entire county economy. In Xiuwu County, Jiaozuo City, Henan, the county government has been attempting to promote the development of the county's aesthetic economy since 2016, leading aesthetic governance in various fields such as ecology, environment, industry and agriculture through party building. Led by teams of high-level talents, local engagement and diversified capital investment, the county has realised five aspects of rural natural appearance, rural architecture, rural lodging, rural industry and the rural lifestyle, etc. It has achieved the comprehensive objectives of retaining nostalgia, passing on cultural heritage, engaging indigenous people's enthusiasm, cultivating aesthetic education for all, and achieving a relative balance between input and output. At the time, the Xiuwu County government attached great importance to the empowering function of aesthetic education and set up a special office of aesthetics in the county office to promote the development of the county's aesthetic economy. Songyang County in Lishui, Zhejiang Province, has also conducted successful explorations. Lishui is one of the pilot cities of the national ecological product value realisation mechanism, and the ancient villages in Songyang County are very well protected. Teachers, students and alumni from the School of Architecture of Tsinghua University have actively intervened in the protection of the ancient villages, re-optimising the industrial space through architectural space design and industrial business design, realising urban-rural linkages, implanting new functions and new businesses while protecting the ancient buildings, fully mobilising the participation of villagers, and promoting the sustainable development of cultural tourism in Songyang.

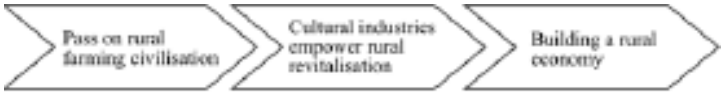



*Figure 5 Connecting role of cultural industries*

### *The basic idea of rural revitalisation with cultural industries empowerment*

Based on the practical exploration of these folk cultural villages, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and other national ministries and commissions have made a top-level design for launching and implementing the rural revitalisation plan for cultural industries' empowerment. The documents of six departments, including the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, focus on eight key areas of rural revitalisation with cultural industries, including rural revitalisation through creative design, performance industries, music industries, art industries, handicrafts, digital culture, other cultural industries and cultural tourism integration. The key to cultural empowerment and rural revitalisation is the organisation and utilisation of rural creative elements such as talents, projects, funds and markets. Cultural empowerment and rural revitalisation play a connecting role (see Figure 5). The so-called "inheriting the past" refers to the role of cultural industries empowering rural revitalisation to promote the inheritance of a rural farming civilization, and to promote local attention to the protection of rural cultural heritage and the reconstruction of local cultural life; The so-called "enlightenment" means that the cultural industries empower the rural revitalisation meeting to promote the creation of rural characteristic economy, which is conducive to local development of rural research and study tours, boutique B & Bs, creative agriculture, leisure agricultural products, and promotes the integration and development of rural primary, secondary and tertiary industries.

The cultural industries should adhere to the ecological concept of co-creation, construction and sharing to enable rural revitalisation. It is necessary to guard cultural heritage, promote rural aesthetics, cultivate a beautiful countryside and develop industries with a sense of place; to promote the cultural confidence and sense of belonging of

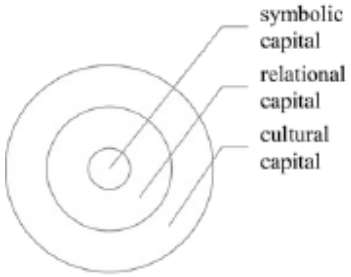



*Figure 6 Value connotation of rural creative capital*

the people of the village and promote the overall revival of the culture and economy of the village community. Focusing on the innovative development of cultural, artistic and creative resources in the village, the project promotes cooperation and mutual assistance among villagers and stimulates a sense of ownership. This will create a synergy mechanism between rural landscape, intangible cultural heritage conservation, artistic creation, cultural and creative development and industrial empowerment to achieve a bottom-up and top-down integration. We should make reasonable use of digital infrastructure and actively create social and public academic platforms, communication media and promotion channels to enhance the influence and attractiveness of rural businesses and lifestyles to talented people.

Cultural industries empowering rural revitalisation should focus on the practical principle of combining public welfare and commerce. With the combined mode of cultural creativity and industrial innovation, a balanced interaction mode of both social benefit productivity and commercial competitiveness should be constructed. A value distribution mechanism conducive to the interests of villagers should be adhered to in order to realise a sustainable development path in which the cultural economy and the nature of the countryside complement each other. Through the diversified means of creative design and technological innovation, resources such as folk memories, myths and legends, handmade artefacts, songs and dances and local festivals are developed into products and items with local characteristics. Cultural industries empowering rural revitalisation is an exploration model for sustainable rural development based on value symbiosis. It is necessary to build an interactive model that balances the productivity of social benefits and commercial competitiveness of the market and to adhere to a value distribution mechanism that is conducive to the interests of villagers in order to finally achieve the enhancement of the overall value of the countryside. To promote the integrated development of primary, secondary and tertiary industries, rural agricultural products and rural handicraft processing into local brands must be developed in order to form a "1+2+3" "six-level industry" system of integrated development and synergy: primary industry (raw material use), secondary industry (technical processing), and tertiary industry (services). The six levels of industries are primary industry (raw material utilisation), secondary industry (technological processing), tertiary industry (value-added services), fourth industry (brand building), fifth industry (interactive experience) and sixth industry (cross-border integration). The cultural industries can help revitalise the countryside from inheriting and developing farming civilization through to activating the vitality of local culture. This will promote the transformation of static rural cultural resources into dynamic rural creative capital, and finally realise the value of rural cultural industries.

Professor Li Boyi from the LSE and I together put forward a theoretical framework of creative capital to analyse the capital transformation of peasant cultural resources. Similarly, rural creative capital can also be analysed from the three content dimensions of creative capital (see Figure 6). First, from the dimension of cultural capital, it emphasises the refinement of local cultural genes. The gene comes from the collective unconsciousness of the Chinese nation. Each of us lives in a specific historical, traditional, geographical environment and natural climate, and will continue the community gene imagined by a nation. According to the theory of human evolution, cultural capital is the intrinsic value symbolic of cultural sharing, cultural identity and cultural prototype. The fairy tales, historical legends and fables

that we have passed down from generation to generation all contain the cultural genes that each of us has passed down. Gene is the sacred and profound recognition power of the Chinese nation. To extract local cultural capital, local cultural resources should be evaluated in a specific vertical time and horizontal space framework, to seek the cultural identity that local values pursue together. Secondly, from the dimension of relational capital, it emphasises the value consensus among people, unites villagers' local identity with empathy, and reaches an agreement of action among indigenous people, new villagers and various stakeholders of rural construction, thus establishing a specific interactive way among different rural construction subjects. Local relationship capital is a set of hidden but firm interaction mechanisms that people construct in their daily production and life. Finally, symbolic capital emphasises the extraction of visual symbolic elements and the creation of cultural and creative IP, realises cross-border innovation through IP authorisation, and promotes the innovative development of rural cultural industries. Therefore, the cultural industries' empowerment of rural revitalisation is not the infrastructure of large-scale construction, nor the upgrading of facilities for demolishing land and building houses, but more the operation of intangible assets, which is a "light operation" mode based on the development of rural creative capital. Cultural empowerment rural revitalisation should adhere to the principles of being agriculture-oriented, people-oriented, and land-oriented, pay attention to the construction of each village's unique aesthetic atmosphere of life, and carry out rural creation construction in a systematic, dynamic and local way.




*Fig. 7 The scene of the maker camp in Baima Huatian Commune, Sichuan.*

## The mechanism of cultural industries' empowering rural revitalisation

The Ministry of Culture and Tourism and six other departments pointed out in the Opinions on Promoting Cultural Industries to Empower Rural Revitalisation that they should adhere to the working mechanisms of being culture-led, industry-driven, farmer led, multi-participatory, government-led, market-operated, scientifically planned, characteristic development and other working mechanisms. The cultural industry can help revitalise the countryside by creating space, culture, relationships and products. In the context of Peking University's practice of rural creation in the Baima Huatian, we discuss in detail the mechanisms for carrying out these different creation efforts and their effects.

### *Space Making*

Space-making is the primary task of cultural industries to empower rural revitalisation, as rural space is the tangible carrier. In each village, we should adopt a customised approach according to the actual situation and build a rural public cultural and creative space, considering the speed, time, results and cost. The rural public space can become a spatial form that connects the inner mechanisms of rural creative capital.

We have renovated the old houses of the Xiang family courtyard in the village of Bicheng in Baima, Sichuan, and revitalised the old houses by "adaptive regeneration": preserving some of the old houses with a strong sense of age and traditional building materials and creating new spaces, exploring a way to preserve

the historical characteristics and diversity of the countryside in terms of architectural renovation. The building has been renovated to explore a way of preserving the historical character and diversity of the village, turning the Xiang family courtyard into a public cultural space in the area, and transforming its function to become a workstation of the Baima Huatian Commune. The space is divided into three main spatial functions (see Figure 7):

1. A public cultural and creative space to stimulate the cultural identity and enthusiasm of villagers and creators, to mobilise the participation of society and the public, to stimulate the creative energy of different village-based creators, and to make this space a place for rural creators who share common interests to meet, collaborate, engage in activities and create. The space is a laboratory, studio and incubator for sharing knowledge and creating new things;

2. The space for creation and production, which integrates architectural emotions, spatial imagery and atmospheric aesthetics into the space of the Village Creators' Camp, with diverse study and training and artistic creation as practical considerations, and uses the space to create a deep experience of knowledge, education, entertainment and aesthetics, thus promoting creativity, production, education, communication and sharing of village creators' works;




*Figure 8 The wall painting of the cultural village in Huatian*

3. The space for living adopts the traditional Chinese style through elegant ornaments and furnishing aesthetics, combining the twelve traditional Chinese seasonal flower gods, giving the space the warmth and atmosphere of home, depicting the ideal living scene of the village creators, and revealing the aesthetic marks etched by art and time in the details of each room. Through the mix and match of Chinese paintings, accessories and furniture, the furnishings focus on the display of humanistic qualities, adding strong visual symbols to the space and focusing on the spiritual satisfaction of the village creators when they live there.

Through various flower field art painting projects, the Baima Huatian Commune has been organising volunteers for years to enhance and creatively transform the overall environment of Bicheng Village, turning it into a well-known cultural and creative village. Artistic wall painting, micro-landscape creation, curtain graffiti and public installation art have been used to combine artistic beautification with local education. The art wall paintings (see Figure 8) are more than a single art painting. The paintings are a way of telling local historical stories and myths and legends and based on the creative presentation of these wall paintings; works such as the Huatian picture book and the Huatian rural musical will be developed one after another. Many mini-public spaces will be created to provide a space for the village's elderly to chat and exercise, and for the village's children to play.

### *Cultural development*

Cultural development is a long-term task for the cultural industry to empower rural revitalisation. The goal is to maximise rural cultural power, which is divided into four aspects (see Figure 9), including rural cultural originality, rural cultural productivity, rural cultural innovation and rural cultural soft power. The cultural creation of

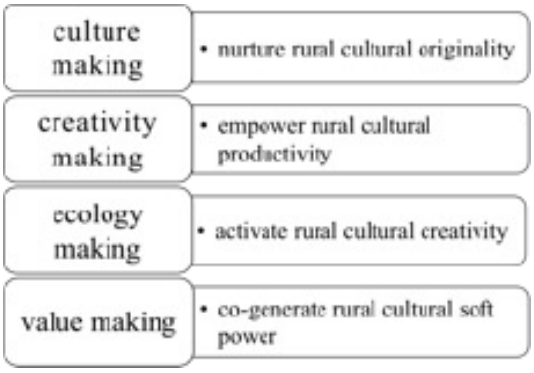



*Figure 9 The content structure of rural cultural construction*

the countryside is based on the creation of culture, creativity, ecology and values in each of these four areas, ultimately achieving a comprehensive creation of rural cultural power. The Baima Huatian Commune implements the Huatian Creation X Project, by organising artists in the village, filming a documentary on the Huatian, organising a Huatian festival, and carrying out local education in the Huatian classroom in order to extract local cultural prototypes, evaluate rural cultural resources and transform rural cultural values while continuously promoting the Baima Huatian's cultural branding.

**Organise a festival: Daba Mountain Fringe Festival**

The Fringe Festival, which originated in Edinburgh, UK, is a creative arts event outside the mainstream arts festivals, with a cultural connotation of new, creative, grassroots and pioneering, as well as diverse, free, interactive and everyday expressions. We combine the history and culture of the Ba culture, the natural scenery of the karst landscape and the folk traditions of the Tujia ethnic group in the eastern Sichuan region. Through the symbiotic creation of artists and local villagers, we activate local folk culture, stories and legends, handicrafts and festivals and other cultural tourism resources with cultural creativity, to achieve a win-win situation in terms of social and economic benefits from the development of local cultural resources. The Daba Mountain Fringe Festival has been successfully held for three consecutive years and has played an important role in driving the development of local cultural resources, the promotion of agricultural specialties and the development of rural cultural tourism. We have organized several sub-brand activities around the Daba Mountain Fringe Festival, such as the Huatian Spring Herder Festival, the Spring Umbrella Festival, the Flower Field Music Festival and the Flower Field Countryside Creative Market. The village of Baima Bicheng is an ordinary valley village, with no famous mountains or renowned celebrities nearby, no world cultural heritage sites or national 5A tourist sites, so it cannot rely on the inherent local branding resources to attract visitors from far and wide. We then create branded events with an attraction effect, increasing the attractiveness of the destination by organising a large event in the first and second half of the year and various workshops. These cultural activities, all of which are villager-oriented, are closely linked to the villagers' daily production life and festive folklore, with the necessary creative enhancements and fashion transformations, of course.

The activities planned and organised by the Baima Huatian Commune also include the Baima Mountain Forest Concert, in which young performing artists, musicians and producers live in the Baima Huatian and use the cultural resources of the Daba Mountains to carry out local performance creation and the Baima Forum International Rural Creators Conference, which invites experts, scholars, artists and planners in the fields of cultural creativity, regional tourism and rural construction to conduct cutting-edge discussions and practical sharing on topics related to rural revitalisation in the form of both forum and dialogue. The Huatian Market is a rural creation fair with the theme of Ba culture, symbols of Ba, Ba Mountain Grand Canyon, bamboo art and grass weaving, etc., highlighting the beauty of the natural ecology in Ba Mountain and the flower field.

**Implement a set of practices: Huatian Maker Action**

Huatian Maker Action is a series of Huatian creative construction plans. With Huatian International Village Maker Camp as its main workstation, Baima Huatian Commune systematically combed the local cultural resources and cultural context, and from the perspective of global vision, national needs and local development, extracted the cultural gene of official piety and benevolence, farming and reading Families. Through artists' residence in villages, new local images, Huatian art painting, Huatian drama club and other modes, artistic interventions such as theme wall painting, colorful graffiti, and artistic installations are carried out so that these ancient and long-standing historical cultures and static natural scenery come alive, re-enter people's daily life, and rebuild the modern value and life connection of traditional culture and folklife.

The Huatian Creators initiative aims to intervene in the practice of rural creation through art, activating the systemic local resources of "people, culture, place, landscape and production" of rural place creation. To realise the overall benefits of rural value development through art creation, in July this year, the Baima Huatian Commune participated in a special event commissioned by the Zijin Award (the Third Annual China (Nanjing) Student Design Exhibition), organising and planning the Rural Space and Society Design Work Camp. More than 30 student designers from 11 universities across China were invited to go deep into the village of Baima to carry out a fieldwork study, integrate with the local villagers and uncover the stories that move their lives. The work camp lasted ten days, with three days of online curriculum learning and a week of offline field research. The campers were put to the ultimate test by capturing story elements such as words, actions, images and scenes that moved them within two to three days, then combining these story elements with cultural genes, refining the cultural themes and conceptualising and designing cultural and creative projects, and finally completing the implementation of the landing with the help of the villagers, achieving very good results.

### *Relationship building*

Relationship building is a fundamental task for cultural industries to empower rural revitalisation. Relationship creation means working with local villagers and adopting various means to stimulate their intrinsic motivation and participation. Rural creators are a combination of cultural companions, creative enablers and value co-producers but, first and foremost, they are cultural companions. They must integrate into local life, interact with local villagers in-depth and learn from the villagers. Benefit Points are registered by Baima Huatian Commune and the Bicheng Village Party Committee and the Village Committee conducts audit and supervision. Beneficial points come from the villagers' practice of public good deeds agreed upon in the Villagers' Convention. Points can be used for their children to receive welfare education in Huatian classrooms, participate in Huatian study tour projects, and receive free services such as house renovation design, business incubation and product cultivation provided by Baima Huatian Commune.

Baima Huatian Commune set up a WeChat official account and video channel, and the sharing column of Huatian Talk as an independent cultural column was updated twice a month. By screening global rural revitalisation cases, it has face-to-face communication with front-line workers and researchers in rural revitalisation. Listening to rural creation stories all over the world, the platform shares the individual experiences of rural entrepreneurs. A consensus with interviewees on rural revitalisation cooperation has been reached, the theoretical achievements and practical paradigms of rural innovation development in the new era are summed up, and rural innovation models in various places in a wider scope are promoted. The talk show also provides academic guidance and experience for participants in rural revitalisation empowered by cultural industries.

### *Product creation*

Product creation is an important task for cultural industries to empower rural revitalisation. Baima Huatian Commune initiated the Huatian Farmer Project and Huatian Research Project, organised and planned the immersion experience of local aesthetic life and seasonal experience of local farming with different durations (such as three days, five days and seven days of Huatian) and carried out Huatian study camps, parent-child experience workshops and other projects. Schools and social people from all over the country and Dazhou come to Baima Bicheng Village through the WeChat official account to experience local farming activities and research projects, explore the aesthetics of local slow life, feel the charm of Daba Mountain, and boost the development of the local rural cultural tourism economy. At present resources are being further integrated and, with the support of the local government, Baima BiCheng is being built into a tourist destination of "Huatian Cultural Product Village, a slow and lively place" in eastern Sichuan.

Baima Huatian's cultural tourism product is creative. The essence of this creative tourism is reflected in the daily life, farming work, daily gestures and folk festivals of Baima villagers. It is a natural, living, real and simple way of tourism. In this kind of tourism situation, tourists and local villagers coexist in real-life situations and interact with each other sincerely. Creative tourism in Baima Huatian takes the daily life of local villagers as a sustainable experience, objectively stimulates the motivation of villagers to improve their living environment and optimise production technology and consciously integrates traditional culture and folk culture into their daily life, all of which is conducive to the organic reshaping of the local lifestyle.




*Figure. 10 The structure of Baima Huatian*

Baima Huatian Construction Co. Ltd. carried out the research and development of Huatian intelligent products and launched a series of digital Huatian products. Through cooperation with the intelligent robot team of Hangzhou Xiangshang Digital Intelligence Group, Baima Huatian Commune is developing an emotionally intelligent robot that displays the aesthetics of oriental life and realises companion healing. We also developed the Baima Huatian series of township products, including symbolic products of Ba culture, natural creations of Daba Mountain, folk creations of Tujia nationality, handmade creations of Baima local area, and local historical-brand cultural products, including symbols of Ba country, Bashan Grand Canyon, Ba embroidery weaving, handmade works of Ba craftsmen, and wine of Huatian. Baima Huatian Township adopts the unified brand authorisation mode of "Baima Huatian" to create products, formulate product standards, adopt the mode of "commune+company+farmers", run Huatian entity experience stores and creative experience exhibitions away from the village, and develop the online sales form of Huatian Township Creative Market.

In short, Baima Huatian Township Innovation Model is a systematic and complex township innovation system, and its effectiveness needs to be further tested by practice. Peng Yingqian, a master's degree graduate of Peking University Art Institute, has participated in the music public welfare activities of Baima Huatian for a long time and has also constantly summarised

the theoretical paradigm of Baima Huatian. In a recent paper, she systematically combed the symbiotic relationship of Baimahua Field International Village Maker Camp (see Figure 10), summed up the interaction mechanism between Baima Huatian in creating different relationships (public welfare incubation and commercial operation, endogenous empowerment and outward inquiry, indigenous people and new villagers), and refined the details of different empowerment means which include artistic empowerment, research empowerment, technological empowerment, festival empowerment, cultural tourism empowerment, public welfare empowerment and value empowerment.

## Key areas in rural cultural revitalisation

The historic cause of rural revitalisation has just begun, and more people with nostalgia and abilities need to be involved. To speed up the implementation of rural revitalisation with cultural industries empowerment, we need to pay attention to the following key tasks.

### *Design rural creation plan and activate rural creative capital*

It is suggested that local governments should take districts and counties as the main body of responsibility, and introduce action plans to guide local cultural industries to empower rural revitalisation. The action plan to promote rural revitalisation through cultural industries empowerment should be pragmatic and effective, focus on key areas, carry out key tasks, and implement the strategy of major projects through cultural industries empowerment. The workshop manual and construction guide for rural revitalisation through cultural industries empowerment must promote the carrying out of systematic projects such as protection of local cultural heritage, construction of local cultural gene bank, shaping of new rural sages, reconstruction of traditional festivals and ceremonies, adoption system of rural creative projects, cultivation of intellectual talents and rural creative development fund, etc., and increase the construction of public service platform for rural revitalisation through cultural industries empowerment. The action plan must integrate relevant institutions to develop rural creative empowerment service platforms such as WeChat and app software. Local government should develop information management systems integrating information technologies such as the Internet, cloud computing and big data, to provide digital and intelligent solutions for the recruitment of rural creative volunteers, the maintenance of rural creative communities, the governance of rural creative communities, the operation of rural creative platforms, the application of rural creative projects, rural creative e-commerce services, rural creative consultation and publicity, etc. Through the information and data processing of rural creative platforms, rural industries can be digitised.

### *Establish rural creator college and train professionals*

Rural talents are the top priority of rural revitalisation. The documents of six departments, including the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, specifically mentioned that an effective mechanism for gathering talent from all sides should be established. Cultural and tourism administrative departments at all levels should formulate policies, measures and mechanisms and guide cultural industries practitioners, entrepreneurs, cultural workers, cultural volunteers, teachers and students of colleges and universities offering art majors, etc. People from different backgrounds can go deep into rural areas for assistance and investment, to drive culture, capital and industry to the countryside. We should encourage all localities to explore and implement the system of cultural industries commissioners in light of the actual situation. The essence is to solve the lack of talent, and we should pay attention to the implementation of the system of cultural industries commissioners. In a broad sense, rural innovation includes not only cultural innovation (rural revitalisation enabled by cultural industries) but also agricultural innovation (rural

revitalisation enabled by agricultural science and technology) and science and technology innovation (rural revitalisation enabled by digital technology). The training and use of cultural industry specialists, agricultural science and technology specialists and digital technology specialists are all integrated. According to the relationship between people and the land, people can be divided into "those who keep the land and the countryside", "those who leave the land and the countryside", "those who do not leave the land and the countryside" and "those who do not leave the countryside ". No matter what kind of situation they are in, they all have their unique connection with the countryside, and the enthusiasm of different people should be gathered to participate in rural revitalisation. Innovative mechanisms and systems are needed to mobilise the rural responsibilities of different groups of people, integrate resources from different fields of rural creation, build working platforms, organise rural creators to devote themselves to the construction of the countryside and carry out various actions.

**Cultural commissioners play three roles:**

1. Cultural accompanists, who enter the countryside with respect, gratitude, equality or even admiration, to integrate, understand and perceive the living culture of the countryside, enhance friendship with the villagers and win their trust;
2. Creative enablers, who have one or more specific skills in the key areas of cultural industry enablers for rural revitalisation, and can realise the creative transformation and innovative development of local cultural resources;
3. A value co-creator who should understand the concept of both public welfare and commercial stakeholders, put the interests of local villagers first, and establish a fair and effective distribution mechanism to achieve value co-creation and sharing and sustainable development of the countryside.

As specialists in cultural industries empowering rural revitalisation, cultural commissioners should promote the national talent pool of cultural industries empowering rural revitalisation. We should give full play to the development responsibilities of different subjects of cultural industries commissioners. From the perspective of personal development, it is necessary to build a smooth channel and an effective mechanism for volunteers, interns, sojourners, entrepreneurs and other individuals to participate in rural entrepreneurship; From the perspective of organisational development, different organisations such as village committees, social enterprises, universities and public welfare organisations should fully respect the professional skills, values and public welfare spirit of third-party rural creative organisations, and create a social environment conducive to the participation of organisations in rural revitalisation. From the level of government development, it is necessary to integrate the public resources of governments at all levels (such as townships, counties and cities, provinces and municipalities, and central ministries), establish a coordination mechanism and form a policy combination to enhance the identity, professional skills and social honors of cultural industries-empowered rural revitalisation talents.

### *Enlarge social organisations and build a public service platform*

The construction of different forms of platforms for cultural industries-empowered rural revitalisation should be opened, including building a platform for bases, camps, communities, parks and workstations in villages and towns with mature conditions, thus setting up a platform for rural creation academies, training commissioners, planners, builders and other specialists. The need to formulate standards for managers' talents in rural cultural industries is urgent. A mature platform for rural creation activities may organise national rural creation conferences, rural festivals and rural creation bazaars, actively promote typical experiences, and expand the brand publicity of various talents, projects, organisations and platforms. Rural creation organisations may form a think

tank, an association and a fund to promote rural creation. Universities and research institutes with mature conditions should gather to establish national rural cultural and creative research bases and practice bases licensed by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the National Rural Revitalisation Bureau.

In May 2022, the Institute for Cultural Industries at Peking University and the Cultural and Creative Development Research Institute at Tsinghua University, together with more than 20 universities, research institutes, enterprises and institutions such as the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing Normal University, Renmin University of China, Sichuan University, Xiamen University, jointly established the Village Cultural and Creative Branch of China Cultural Industry Association, which was the first social organisation in China to promote the rural revitalisation and development of cultural industries. The association was established in June 2013 and it is a national social organisation approved by the State Council, registered by the Ministry of Civil Affairs, headed by the Ministry of Culture and with an independent legal person. It is a national first-level association in the field of cultural industries. The Village Creative Committee aims to become a national consulting think tank, a talent college, a project base and an enterprise home. Its core purpose and mission is to "focus on rural cultural creativity, drive the gathering of township creative talents, help rural cultural prosperity and promote rural industrial revitalisation".

### *Improve geographical indications, and cultivate the IP brand system*

The cultural industries' empowering rural revitalisation lies in the integrated development of the first, second and third industries. The inner logic of the leapfrog innovation of rural creation is closely related to the value extension of creative IP with stories, brands and symbols of villages. According to the China Culture Industry Association, the total output value of geographical indications nationwide has exceeded RMB 1 trillion (excluding data on related industries), and geographical indications' precise poverty alleviation has become an important force in winning the battle against poverty. The Ningde model of geographical indication precision poverty alleviation has received national attention and has been widely promoted. Since the registration of Gutian Tremella as a geographical indication in Gutian County, Fujian Province, the brand value has increased by an average of more than 15% per year, benefiting 340 000 people and increasing the county's per capita income by RMB 7 000. In 2021 the State Intellectual Property Office established a list of national demonstration zones for the protection of geographical indication products.

We should implement the peasant geographical indication revival plan to create a geographical indication of origin products with geographical perception, regional signs and local imprints. We should implement the rural creation IP support plan to realise the value symbiosis effect of rural creation IP with prototype-driven, trendy market and cross-border innovation characteristics. We should vigorously implement the geographical indication revival plan, select some geographical indications with a strong sense of local trust, significant source marks and distinctive characteristics of origin, classify and grade them for protection and promotion, and establish a strict supervision system and technical platform for the production process and channel control. In addition, we should implement the village-creative IP support plan and cultivate new trendy IPs with prototype-driven, trendy market and cross-border innovation characteristics. We should pay attention to farmers' harvest season in order to hold evening activities, local cultural festivals and lifestyle festivals. With live e-commerce and short video promotion channels, we could build rural creative brands, and improve the operation and management ability of rural creative IP licensing.

## Conclusion

The cultural industries' area of strength in rural revitalisation is to realise the multi-dimensional drive of rural values, including four types of value drivers (see Figure 11):

1. Intelligence: Through various personalised and systematic rural education, to achieve value recognition and rural self-confidence of rural creation stakeholders.

2. Capability: Through the empowerment toolkit of cultural industry-empowered rural revitalisation, to provide a series of talents, technologies and funds for rural creation development.

3. Power: To allow cultural industry-empowered rural revitalisation talents to have the right to know and participate in rural creation work in villages.

4. Value: To deeply develop the cultural value and commercial value, social value and economic value, short-term value and long-term value, individual value and collective value, and villager value and government value in order to realise the comprehensive effect of the value of rural creation.

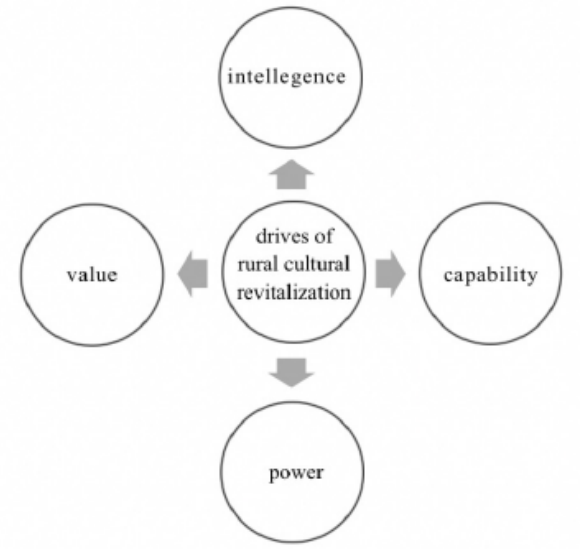



*Figure 11 Types of cultural industries' empowering rural revitalization*

The Party Report to the 20th CPC highlighted that, in order to comprehensively promote the revitalisation of the countryside, adhere to the priority development of agriculture and rural areas, insist on the integrated development of urban and rural areas, and smooth the flow of urban and rural elements, we must promote the revitalisation of rural industries, talents, culture, ecology and organisation. The revitalisation of the countryside is an important part of comprehensively promoting the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation with Chinese modernisation. The ultimate goal is to illuminate everyone's nostalgia and reshape the physical, living and spiritual spaces of the countryside. By vigorously developing rural cultural resources, transforming rural creative capital, beautifying the natural environment of the countryside and improving rural public cultural services, the integration and development of rural cultural resources and rural characteristic cultural industries are an important means to promote rural development, rural construction and rural governance in China in the new era.

# The National Arts Festival: Yesterday, Today & Tomorrow



*Monica Newton*

*Chief Executive Officer of the Grahamstown Foundation & National Arts Festival*



*Before joining the Grahamstown Foundation and National Arts Festival in January 2020, Monica served as the Head of the Gauteng Department of Sport, Arts, Culture and Recreation where she led teams that implemented sporting and arts events in the province, built libraries and provided archiving and heritage services . Since taking office, Monica has worked with the National Arts Festival and Scifest Africa teams to deliver online festivals for the first time in the history of these major events, and to create ongoing digital platforms such as the vFringe. In 2021, the five major festivals hosted by the organisations were "hybrid events", with both live and digital elements in response to the continued impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on the country and the live events industry.*

*Monica's career in the public service included fulfilling the role of Deputy Director-General: Arts and Culture Promotion and Development at the national Department of Arts and Culture (now the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture). Appointed to that position 2013, her portfolio included culture and creative industries development and the National Language Service. Monica has worked with national, provincial and local government and related government agencies since 1997 in a variety of portfolios, first as a full-time employee and later as a consultant in her own business. Prior to joining the Department of Arts and Culture, she was the CEO of the National Arts Council, a statutory body reporting to the Department of Arts and Culture and established to support and develop the arts in South Africa. As CEO of the organisation she fulfilled the role of accounting officer and took responsibility for the corporate governance, finances and performance of the organisation.*

*Monica holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Industrial Sociology, Bachelor of Arts Honours in Industrial Sociology and a Masters in Sociology from the University of the Witwatersrand.*

*The National Arts Festival (NAF) is an annual festival of the arts that traditionally takes place in the small city of Makhanda (formerly Grahamstown) in the Eastern Cape over 11 days during June and July. In 2020, the National Arts Festival went online after Covid-19 forced the cancellation of all live events. The digital Festival attracted over 83 000 online visitors.*

*Founded in 1973, the NAF has evolved into a comprehensive programme of curated and independent work as well as showcases such as the Standard Bank Young Artists, the Standard Bank Jazz Festival, National Youth Jazz Festival, Standard Bank Ovation Awards, Eastern Cape Showcase, Creativate Digital Arts Festival, Children's Programme and more.*

*The Festival has become an important launch pad for artists to stage their work but also to connect to collaborators and mentors - and to showcase their talent to local theatre producers as well as international Festival producers.*

**A transcription of the presentation by Monica Newton**

## Introduction

The National Arts Festival (NAF) is a non-profit company governed by an independent board that produces three of the country's largest festivals in Makhanda, (formerly Grahamstown), Eastern Cape, South Africa:

### *Scifest Africa*

Scifest Africa was established in 1996 to promote the public awareness, understanding and appreciation of science, technology and innovation (STI). The project is supported by South Africa's National Department of Science and Technology and various other cash and in-kind sponsors. The project consists of two components, namely the National Science Festival held in Makhanda in March every year, as well as regional and national outreach programmes implemented throughout the rest of the year. Scifest Africa identifies and designs unique interactive events and educational resources with scientific integrity to advance science, facilitate learning in an informal and non-threatening way, and provide learners with a great opportunity to discover science outside the classroom. It attracts approximately 44,000 audience members each year.

### *The National Arts Festival*

The National Arts Festival (NAF) is an annual festival of performing arts in Makhanda. It is the largest arts festival on the African continent and one of the largest performing arts festivals in the world by visitor numbers. The festival runs for 11 days, from the last week of June to the first week of July every year.

The NAF comprises a Main programme and a Fringe festival, both administered by the National Arts Festival Office, a non-profit Section 21 Company. The Festival programme includes performing arts (theatre, dance, stand-up comedy and live music), visual art exhibitions, films, talks and workshops, a large food and craft fair and historical tours of the city. The NAF runs a children's arts festival over the same period and a number of other festivals take place in Makhanda over the period of the NAF, such as the National Youth Jazz Festival.

Performances take place across the city in approximately 60 venues (such as theatres, churches, schools) as well as in various outdoor locations for the street performances.

The Festival attracts approximately 110,000 local and international visitors and is one of the biggest contributors to the economy of the region.

### *The National & Regional Schools Festivals*

The National Schools' Festival for Grade 12s begins just before the National Arts Festival in Makhanda and hosts theatre productions, visual art exhibitions, street theatre performances, workshops, craft markets and music concerts for its participants. The Schools' Fest On the Road is a programme of regional festivals that offer Grade 11 learners a two-day engagement in the arts that includes a talk by a key note speaker, a selection of workshops, and four to five performances. The core aims of the programme are to engage in audience development, supplement the often under-resourced arts and culture components of school curricula, and expose participants to a range of genre, arts opportunities and career options.

In addition, the organisation produces Masicule, a choral festival, the English Olympiad, co-produced the Sharjah Fringe Festival in the UAE state of Sharjah and a new isiXhosa Olympiad is to be initiated with the support of the National Lottery Commission.

In response to the restrictions imposed by Covid-19, the NAF had to evolve into a digital festival company, hosting various digital events and maintaining the vFringe platform as a showcase of independent arts.

## The NAF: Yesterday

### *2019 National Arts Festival*

In 2019, which was the year before the worldwide Covid-19 pandemic, the NAF hosted 563 productions and 41 exhibitions from 27 June to 7 July in Makhanda. There were over 200,000 event attendees (including free events) and over 77,000 tickets sold for the various productions over the 11 days of the festival.

R20 million, which was almost 50% of the total income generated through ticket revenue, performance fees and other activities, was paid to creative enterprises, artists, and related technical sectors. The 296 stalls that were part of the Festival markets, approximately half of which were from the Eastern Cape, generated R6,1 million in sales. Thus, apart from the myriad cultural, educational and artistic benefits of such an event for participants and spectators alike and enhancing the career opportunities for many, it made a significant financial contribution to the national arts sector while boosting the local economy as well.

### *2020 National Arts Festival*

In 2020 the restrictions imposed by government to curb the spread of Covid-19 in South Africa forced the NAF to rethink its format. It was not able to host the event in the usual way, as its traditional structure was dependent on large gatherings in often closed spaces which were made impossible by Covid-19 restrictions.

After extensive deliberation and consultation, it was decided to present an online or virtual NAF. This presented a huge learning curve for organisers, participants and audience alike.

Due to an incredible amount of creative and technical innovation, a total of 270 productions were hosted. 113 shows were recorded in eight venues across the country within 100 days and the website was visited by over 83,000 users viewing 938,000 pages. 200 crafters, designers and vendors were part of the Virtual Green and 146 productions and 44 exhibitions were part of the vFringe platform and virtual galleries. Many of these innovations have been retained and the Virtual Green and vFringe platforms remain online.

## The NAF: Today

### *2021 National Ars Festival*

The lockdown was amended to Level 1 on Sunday 28 February 2021, which relaxed some restrictions on gatherings but others still remained. Theatres could only accommodate audiences of 100 indoors and 250 outdoors. Plans for the first ever hybrid NAF included:

- A live element in Makhanda;
- A digital component featuring live and recorded work; and
- A series of decentralised showcases.

In 2021 a festival was designed to respond to what artists can present, rather than presenting a platform that artists could populate. Scifest Africa was also planned as a hybrid event and the Regional Schools Festival presented as a decentralised hybrid event.

## The NAF: Tomorrow

### *National Arts Festival: 2022 and beyond*

The NAF is evolving into a digital festival company, hosting various digital events and developing skills and expertise in this regard. The integration of digital and live events will continue and the NAF will evolve, adapt and change accordingly. Art forms and artists will, of course, evolve even more rapidly, shaping the Festival and its audiences. The town of Makhanda will have to adapt and evolve too, as broadband infrastructure and continuous power sources are needed to reliably host digital festivals and serve the infrastructure for live events as well. The new, hybrid NAF will continue to grow and thrive as it strives to provide a continued service of excellence and innovation to all its many and varied participants and partners.

Watch this space!

# From Forgotten Spaces, Comes Greatness





*PJ Sabbagha and Namatshego (Tshego) Khutsoane*

***PJ Sabbagha** is a South African choreographer whose name has become synonymous with issue-based dance theatre. Sabbagha is a founding member and Artistic Director of The Forgotten Angle Theatre Collaborative, Managing Director of the Ebhudlweni Arts Center and Artistic Director of the Annual My Body My Space Rural Public Arts Festival.*

*Sabbagha was the recipient of the 2005 Standard Bank Young Artist Award for Dance and the 2006 FNB Dance Umbrella (Gauteng MEC for Arts and Culture) award for Best Choreography for his work, Still Here. He was also awarded the 2005 and 2009 awards for Most Outstanding presentation of a new work for The Double Room and Macbeth respectively. Sabbagha has received extensive nominations for the then FNB Vita Awards and the FNB Dance Umbrella Awards. Sabbagha was also nominated for the prestigious Daimler Chrysler Award for dance. In 2005 he was voted top South African Artist and was also placed in the top 10 of The Star Tonight's annual top 100 South Africans. He was also recognized for his contribution to South African Arts and Culture through his nomination for and participation in the Amstel Salute to Success.*

*He has travelled across the USA as a guest of the US State Department as part of the 2007 International Visitors Leadership Program investigating HIV and AIDS and other communicable diseases. In 2017 Sabbagha visited France as a guest of the French Ministry of Culture and Communications as part of a Seminar Focusing Arts and Culture in Service of Community and Territorial Development. Sabbagha's work has been shown at festivals and theatres across the globe in countries that include Russia, Mexico, Holland, Tanzania, Mali, Mozambique and Taiwan.*

***Namatshego (Tshego) Khutsoane** is a passionate creative practitioner drawn to work that explores complex human and social issues. An experienced theatre-maker and educator, Tshego has honed her expertise enabling learning and engagement in her work across multiple performance and facilitation contexts for more than a decade. Her Masters of Business Administration (2019, University of Reading UK - as a recipient of the Johnny Clegg Scholarship for creative practitioners) ccomplements her Masters of Dramatic Arts (2013, University of the Witwatersrand SA), positioning her to communicate ideas easily and effectively across many ages and levels of education, with a particular interest in issues intersecting with concepts of identity.*

the forgotten angle
Theatre Collaborative

**A transcription of the presentation by PJ Sabbagha and Namatshego (Tshego) Khutsoane**

## Introduction

The Forgotten Angle Theatre Collaborative (FATC), founded in 1995, based in Emakhazeni, Mpumalanga, is one of South Africa's leading dance organisations. Throughout its 25-year history FATC has collaborated with performers, choreographers, educators and theatre practitioners to present top quality dance, theatre and training programmes at a national and international level.

Since inception, FATC has been dedicated to the creation of innovative and provocative South African dance theatre. Under the Artistic Directorship of founder, PJ Sabbagha, FATC has produced a prolific body of work dedicated to the probing of critical personal and social issues. In this way the organisation has emerged as a leading voice within a new wave of South African 'protest' or 'issue-based' dance theatre. Through its work in the late 1990s and early 2000s FATC was acknowledged as South Africa's leading contemporary dance company in addressing the overwhelming presence of HIV / AIDS in South African society. The current Artistic Programme of the organisation continues this commitment to interrogating contemporary personal, social and environmental issues.

### *Because People build Communities. Communities build Societies. And Societies build Economies*

FATC is not only dedicated to the creation of innovative and provocative South African dance but also to the training and skills development of young and emerging dance performers, choreographers, educators and arts and culture administrators and Entrepreneurs. FATC has collaborated with renowned South African and international dance and theatre artists, its Artistic Programme has enjoyed a busy national touring schedule and has gained a significant international footprint with projects, performances and residencies in Russia, Holland, Mexico, Tanzania, Mali, Madagascar, Mozambique, Reunion Island, France, Taiwan, Sweden and Germany. Furthermore, individuals who were nurtured during their time as FATC company members are now enjoying growing international performance opportunities and careers.

## The Ebhudlweni Arts Centre

In 2015 FATC relocated its operations to the rural area of Emakhazeni, Mpumalanga, and established the Ebhudlweni Arts Centre.

With this move FATC has been able to deliver on its main objective to facilitate, develop and advance the role of South African artists, arts organisations, NGOs and Community Based Organisations as progressive and dynamic agents of personal development and societal transformation. Over the past five years (from its new rural home), FATC has successfully implemented an extensive Artistic and Arts Education Programme that serves



*Rural Economic Development through Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) in China and Africa*



its immediate rural community - a hugely under-resourced and under-served rural community - as well as the regional, provincial, national and international dance and arts and culture community. FATC has served a range of beneficiaries – from local rural children, youths, women, and persons with disabilities to professional South African and international dance artists.

The advancement of rural communities is actioned through a programme which works to develop innovative models and arts & culture interventions / activities that foreground rural realities in the rural / urban divide nationally. Rural citizens, nationally, continue to struggle against the systemic inequalities that are a result of the urban focus of our economy, particularly in terms of job opportunities, access to education and the basic right to fully engage, enjoy, participate and benefit through arts and culture activities. Historically, programs at the scale, quality and level of those offered by FATC have only been available in and around major metros and urban centres.

The programmes also seek to actively contribute to the sustainability, growth and development of rural citizens and the broader South African dance ecosystem. These two focus areas - namely the upliftment of rural communities through access to quality arts education and experiences AND impacting the South African arts ecosystem at a systemic level – are closely connected. FATC @ Ebhudlweni's programming is therefore designed to address both these focus areas in an integrated manner.

From the Ebhudlweni Arts Centre, the organisation is therefore able to serve its immediate rural community through arts training programmes and arts experiences, as well as the national and international dance industry through residency programmes, large-scale arts interventions such as the My Body My Space: Public Arts Festival (MBMS) and the creation, performance and touring of its Artistic Programme.

Prior to lockdown, FATC's local arts education programmes were reaching 1500 beneficiaries across four towns, providing high quality arts and culture education to children, youth and people with disabilities monthly. Its annual MBMS Public Arts Festival leveraged extensive national and international support, creating a platform for 250 artists and performers annually and contributing R800 000 to the local economy annually over a 3-day period. Over the years FATC has demonstrated its ability to implement many large scale, high quality, innovative, responsive and socially responsible arts projects.

While the impact of Covid-19 has had devastating impacts at all levels of our sector, FATC seized the moment to initiate a crowd funding programme to raise funds to support households in distress across the local community. Since May 2020 and on monthly basis FATC provides sustenance and hygiene support to 91 households that includes 320 people per month. All FATC programmes have continued in some form online and in a Covid-19 compliant and responsible manner, and an innovative and ground-breaking way was found to continue the valuable work of the MBMS festival.

## From Forgotten Spaces, Comes Greatness

*PJ Sabbagha and*
*Namatshego (Tshego) Khutsoane*




### My Body My Space: Public Arts Festival (MBMS)

MBMS is a festival of cutting-edge performances, installations and exhibitions that unfold in public spaces throughout the Emakhazeni Municipality in rural Mpumalanga. The 2016, 2017, 2018 and 2019 iterations of the festival hosted a total of almost 1200 local, national and international performing and visual artists, crafters and vendors. Each year it attracts an audience of approximately 600 to 800 people per day made up of rural children, youths, local, national and international visitors. Some of the economic impacts of the MBMS festival have been to:

- Increase arts and culture tourism;
- Stimulate the local economy;
- Create and support jobs in the Creative and Cultural Industries (CCIs)



The festival democratises the performance landscape as local, national and international artists perform side by side.

It is often understood that life only happens in big cities, outside of which the world is stagnant and empty. By propelling us into encounters with apparently 'barren' spaces, My Body My Space challenged assumptions about where life, art, and politics happen — and which bodies and spaces are made invisible when we turn away from 'everyday happenings' in 'everyday places. (Beth Vale 2017)

### *Moving and viewing in the community.*

In 2021 FATC migrated the My Body My Space festival onto a dedicated WhatsApp line funded through DSAC: MGE Public Arts Programme and the National Arts Council. By doing this, MBMS 2021 continued the festival's commitment to:

- Placing marginalised **rural** communities at the centre of the festival experience;
- **Inclusivity and access**;
- **Stitching together diverse communities**;
- **Disrupting** the familiar ways people inhabit shared social, physical - in 2021 virtual - spaces; and
- Providing a platform for cutting-edge work that probes **critical contemporary** issues.

When launching the MBMS21

WhatsApp line, FATC ensured the festival could provide following:

- Take art to **'where people are!'**
- Invite them to engage with the programme as part of their daily lives;
- Art that imprints into your everyday: Walking/ In a Taxi etc;
- A programme that is ephemeral and residual;
- A festival on your mobile phone;
- A free festival; and
- Low data usage.

In order to achieve this, MBSA21 had a dedicated WhatsApp line hosted by TURN.IO as a primary hosting platform using WhatsApp Business and Chat Bot AI and WhatsApp Chat service for Social Impact at Scale. This festival was a global first and was made possible through partnerships and collaboration with many partners and sponsors:










## *Making Art in less than 16MB*

The FATC team had to learn fast!

Using artist centered curation, they managed to achieve 3500 + active users and generate 65 000 messages. An audience survey revealed that 66.7% were between the ages of 18 – 35, 19.05% were 36 and older and 14.29% under the age of 18. 38.10% of audience survey respondents stated that they had never attended an arts festival before in real life before the COVID-19 pandemic. 80.95% of audience respondents stated that they felt more connected to other people by engaging with the MBMS festival. There were even some global participants.

### *Ease of Engagement*

- 38.1% found it very easy to find their way around the festival's WhatsApp line;
- 38.1% found it easy to find their way around the festival's WhatsApp line;
- 23.81% found it challenging but manageable;
- 0% found it extremely difficult.

### *Feedback from MBMS21 Audience Respondents:*

*"Freedom to choose what you want to watch. The short format. You can literally take a quick time out at any point to get some inspiration or be moved. On demand bite size art is the future!"*

*"Finding unexpected gems. Being able to stop something I wasn't enjoying and find something else. Being able to watch a short work when I had a few minutes to spare."*

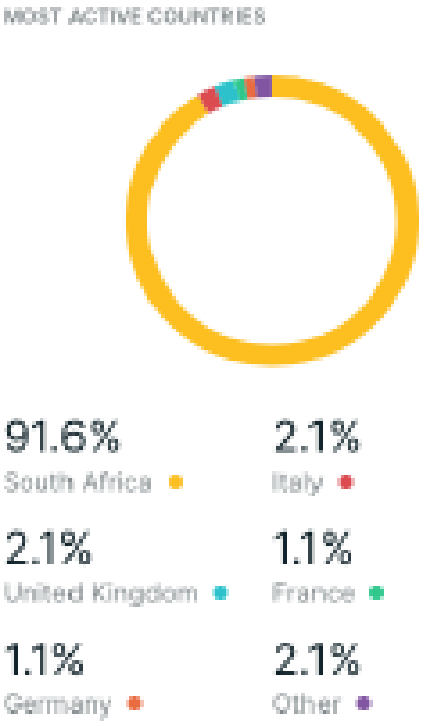
*"They made me think about different perspectives, raised more questions within me. Sometimes reminded me of issues I may have de-prioritised."*

*"Many dealt with similar issues such as displacement, isolation, loneliness, cleansing, healing etc. The intimacy of engaging with the artists on one's phone made one acknowledge these issues, face them head on and one can watch them again and again."*




## Conclusion

2021 marks the 26th Anniversary of FATC and the 6th Anniversary of the Ebhudlweni Art Centre. With these milestones clearly in sight, FATC is working towards the consolidation of FATC @ Ebhudlweni Arts Centre as a "centre of excellence" in rural Mpumalanga- dedicated to the advancement of rural communities through a focused commitment to creating access to accredited, de-colonised, high-quality, free, tertiary-level arts training and access to high-quality, free, arts education (in school and after school), arts experiences and arts events for rural children, youth, women and persons with disabilities locally, regionally and nationally, in addition to serving the national and international dance and arts and culture communities.





# Creating the Worlds We Want: The *Vrystaat Kunstefees and cultural self-agency* in global networks [1]

*Dr Ricardo Peach*

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**Vrystaat Kunstefees/Arts Festival/Tsa-Botjhaba**

*The Vrystaat Arts Festival • Tsa-Botjhaba is an Afrikaans language festival that forges creative connections with English and Sotho cultures. We contribute to the exchange of ideas around arts, culture and society through connections with other national and international creative communities.*

*The festival takes place at the Bloemfontein campus of the University of the Free State which is made available for the duration of the festival.*[1]

"In these difficult times, the festival has emerged like a phoenix from the ashes of the lockdown to tackle the difficult task of continuing our industry. It offers artists hope and, above all, work."

- Cornelia Faasen, CEO, National Afrikaans Theatre Initiative (NATi)

**TheCapeRobyn:** *"I count over 25 people involved on this project. That is a lot of people who got paid during the COVID lockdown?"*

**Louise Coetzer:** *"Yes, that's one of the reasons we decided to push a project of this size and of such an interdisciplinary nature, so it could spread the job creation across many sectors. As we are an NPO, job creation within the arts industry is our major focus, and we are grateful to the funders who enabled this project, [such as] ... Vrystaat Kunstefees ..., allowing Darkroom Contemporary to employ so many professionals on this project during this time."*

- Deux: ex: machina, Snelstroom, 2020

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2020 was a challenging, disruptive, deeply painful and traumatic year, but also a tremendously innovative, eye-opening year for cultures globally. Despite what the COVID-19 lockdown threw our way, at the Vrystaat Arts Festival we are incredibly proud of what we were able to achieve in such uncertain times.

We have had continued support from donors and sponsors, such as Naspers, the University of the Free State (UFS), Netwerk24, the Dagbreek Trust, the embassy of the Netherlands in Pretoria, NATi, kykNET, the Vrystaat Kunstetrust, the LW Hiemstra Trust, the Flemish government, the Italian Cultural Institute, BASA and the Rupert Foundation (among many). Because of these, we were able to inject more than R2,5 million (excluding our operational costs) into the arts industry through projects we developed as a result of our online offerings, in a time of phenomenal uncertainty. To support artists and our ecology through creative work was as important as supporting them through charitable funds, such as Tribuo and the Theatre Benevolent Fund (TBF).

In a year when we could not hold a physical festival, we still increased our Instagram following and achieved almost 890 000 online Facebook engagements as a result of our online programming. In 2018 and 2019, when we held physical festivals, we achieved around 840 000 and 1,3 million respectively. During our online programmes in the second half of 2020, we also increased our Facebook video reach by 673% in 62 days, our post-reach by 262% and our post-engagement by 119%. Our website views for 2020 were 52 028, with 84,8% new visitors and 15,2% returning visitors.

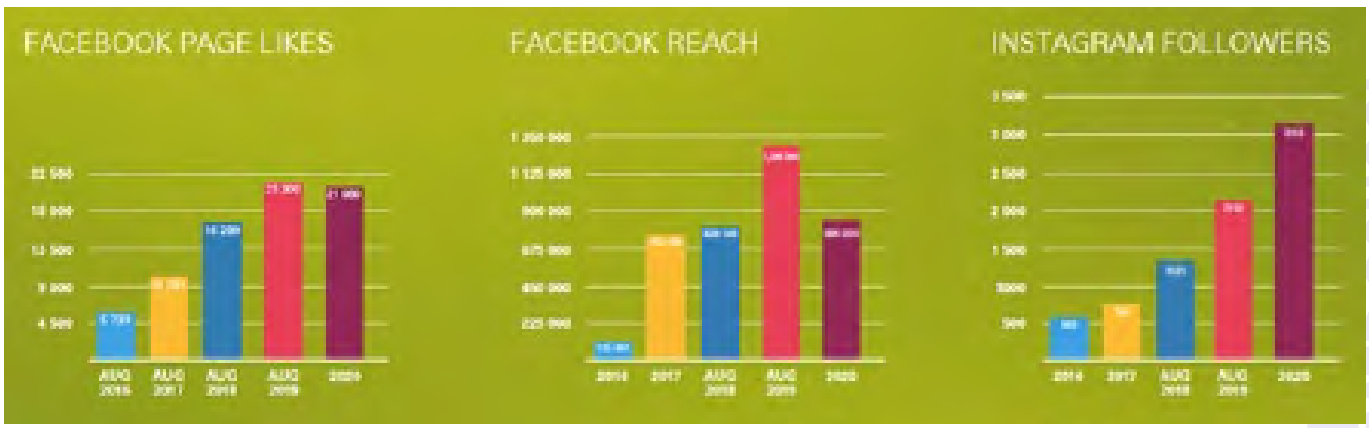
**Sumari Potgieter and FJ Potgieter from Think Digital, who manage our social media programme, suggest of their strategy in 2020:** *"All over our social media platforms, our audiences loved to be entertained and to feel part of something bigger. Without the build-up to a physical festival, we still managed to capture the attention of our loyal audience and keep them engaged with numerous online initiatives. Their positive feedback was the fuel in our tanks. In a time when people were uncertain about the times ahead, they were able to connect to the outside world through art and adapt to an online environment just as quickly as the festival and artists did. With this, we were able to bring a whole new life to an online world as part of the festival."*

As a result of this new reach, we are integrating these online initiatives into the physical festival for 2021, in a week officially allocated by the University of the Free State for the festival in October.

## About 2020

The COVID-19 pandemic lockdown significantly changed the business models of many organisations around the world. The Vrystaat Arts Festival similarly adapted, rapidly, to these shifts and presented major online initiatives during 2020.

We initiated national and international arts industry discussions; moved the Vrystaat



Literature Festival online through *VrySpraak-digitaal*; developed a ticketed online *Snelstroomsluipkyk* theatre and music festival; presented an online Pan-African Creative Exchange (PACE); showcased Free State Arts and Health initiatives; recorded and presented our first ever *Vrystaat Klank & Klassik*, in partnership with the Odeion School of Music; launched a major online ticketed festival titled *Snelstroom*, which included more than 200 events; held the Crossings arts dance laboratory; and created our first online arts market-shared economy project, the *Wolkewinkel*.

## Going online

The process of going online was done incrementally and iteratively with numerous, rapid prototyping tests to help *Vrystaat* Arts Festival staff develop new skills, and to allow new processes to be optimised. Most importantly, "failures" were welcomed and used as essential stepping stones for learning.

In a time of extreme uncertainty, we had to believe that we could create online opportunities for artists and the communities we served – even if we had little to no experience in doing so. As a team, we decided not to sit back and wait for events to unfold, but to embrace our own agency to create the worlds we wanted to see emerge, on a global stage, linked to a series of networks with whom we had never previously imagined we could work.

## *National and international industry discussions*

The *Vrystaat* Arts Festival, within a week of lockdown, initiated and led South Africa's first national and international online industry discussions around arts and culture, which continued until we launched our programme offerings in the second half of 2020.

Coordinated by Sarah Lock, the festival's administrative assistant, and managed by the social media team from Think Digital, the discussions ranged from festival stakeholders around the world exploring options for survival in a lockdown, to local artists looking at their options in this period of trauma.

Sessions included all the major South African festival leaders and international speakers such as Susanna Seidl-Fox, the programme director for Culture and the Arts at the Salzburg Global Seminar, and Inge Ceustermans, general director of the Festival Academy (an initiative of the European Festivals Association (EFA)). There were also world-renowned luminaries on "telematic" or computer-mediated art, such as Professor Roy Ascott, the father of networked culture, DeTao Master of Technoetic Arts and DeTao Masters Academy Shanghai and founding president of the Planetary Collegium. There were also conversations on arts and mental health with key players in the field, such as David Doyle, CEO of DADAA, the biggest arts and disability organisation in the Asia-Pacific region.

The most critical discussion, I believe, led by the director of capacity building at the Australia Council for the Arts, Kevin du Preez, was an industry conversation on cultural leadership in times of change, with an international network of arts thinkers. These leaders included Abid Hussain, director of Diversity, Arts Council England (UK); Carolyn Warren,






director general of Arts Granting, Canada Council for the Arts; Cornelia Faasen, CEO of the National Afrikaans Theatre Initiative (NATi); David Baile, CEO of the International Society for the Performing Arts (ISPA); Magdalena Moreno, executive director of the International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies (IFACCA); Michael Orlove, director of State, Regional and Local Partnerships, National Endowment for the Arts (USA); Rosemary Mangope, CEO of the National Arts Council of South Africa (NAC); and Stanley Dlamini, CEO of the eSwatini National Council of Arts and Culture.

Their discussions on empathy, patience and having to think as "beyonders" (people who see beyond their own needs into those of others) spurred us all on to think about how we could shift the festival's focus from not only surviving, but to assisting artists and those in the arts ecology to flourish creatively. As I wrote recently in an article for the Salzburg Global Seminar, *What future for festivals?*, these industry discussions became our healing, reflection and recovery tools as we learned skills from the sector to develop new online strategies iteratively for 2020 and beyond.

## *VrySpraak-digitaal*

One of the key initiatives that came out of the learnings we gathered through our industry discussions was the *Vrystaat* Literature Festival's online initiative *VrySpraak-digitaal*. This event, held in September 2020, allowed local, national and international writers and poets to participate in book launches, panel discussions, poetry readings and performances. The programme consisted of 45 online offerings that were systematically released as pre-recorded and live conversations.

Award-winning journalist Ruda Landman hosted her very popular *Ruda at 11 series*, including Susan Cilliers's *Huis van gruwels: My 16 jaar in die Springs-hel*, and Jan-Jan Joubert and Oscar van Heerden's discussion on ANC politics and all our futures. International participants included, among many others, Polish academic and poet Jerzy Koch, the Dutch poet Nachoem Wijnberg – considered one of the Netherlands' most prominent living poets – and Romanian-Dutch writer and columnist Mira Feticu.

The literature festival coordinator, Corneli van den Berg, regarded the online festival as an ideal opportunity to develop new audience members both locally and internationally. During the festival an average of 450 audience members per live Facebook session viewed the free conversations, and the number of children joining the children's story hour presentations averaged 320 per presentation. She was surprised and delighted by the reach and interest of the presentations.

**Corneli suggests:**

*"Over the past five years, the Free State Literature Festival has grown from strength to strength. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that with a little inspiration, a touch of resilience and a lot of perseverance, we can still present a programme of the highest quality, one that supports writers and connects to*









*audiences. I am very proud of what we accomplished."*

The festival also developed its inaugural online First Nations conversation led by Sylvia Vollenhoven, professor of practice (Humanities Faculty, UJ), and Lee-Ann Tjunypa Buckskin, deputy chair of the Australia Council for the Arts, in partnership with the Australian High Commission in Pretoria and the Programme for Innovation in Artform Development (PIAD) at UFS.

These conversations again highlighted for me the need for other cultural institutions in South Africa to begin the process of engaging First Nations South Africans to develop a First Nations protocol for their organisations. In 2021, the *Vrystaat* Arts Festival cannot still be the only cultural entity in South Africa to follow the protocol of the First Nations people, whose lands we are on.

### *Snelstroom*

*Snelstroom*, through its precursor, *Snelstroomsluipkyk*, coordinated by Michael Garbett, programme manager of the *Vrystaat* Arts Festival, was the first online arts festival in South Africa to start selling tickets to online shows when, on 16 June 2020, it opened its programme to the general public on the South African Theatre on Demand (SATOD) platform. This was a brand new platform developed specifically for local productions by executive producer Blythe Stuart Linger, and




we were keen to support new South African-led initiatives for the sector.

**Michael comments:** "*Snelstroom provided an opportunity for the festival to have a wider reach not only to audiences, but to artists as well. As a result of our continued online engagements, we connected with new festivals and institutions across the world. 2020 was a blunder in the traditional sense, but a huge opportunity to expand our growth and industry footprint.*"

*Snelstroom* was a unique development for the arts in our country, one we are continuing parallel with our physical festival in 2021. *Snelstroom* consisted of a curated programme (*Hoofstroom*) and a fringe (*Vrystroom*); presented 231 shows (23 international and 208 national), 45 of them debut works; had 14 000 views; and supported 440 artists (71 international and 369 national). In addition, artists participated from as far away as Australia, Brazil, the Caribbean, China, England, Hong Kong, Iran, Italy, Nigeria, the Netherlands, Portugal, USA, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

New partnerships were established with Abuja Fringe (Nigeria), Creative Youth International (UK), the Cairo International Experimental Theatre Festival (Egypt), Barnyard College (USA), CUNY Brooklyn College's Performance & Interactive Media Arts programme (PIMA-US) and Agencies Alliance (international). A previously hidden, rhizomatic network of partners we had never thought we could connect with, emerged from the COVID lockdown mist right before our eyes.

The total ticket sales for the festival was just over R60 000, with events nominated for several cultural awards. Great to see, in addition to the creation of new online categories, was the integration in South Africa of online productions into the traditionally mainstream physical production award categories.

It was particularly heartening to see art awards, such as the *kyk*NET Fiestas and the Naledi Awards, embrace online events as competing equally with traditional physical theatre work in the same categories – a much needed recognition of digital representation. The *Vrystaat* Arts Festival was very proud to have Alfred Hinkel's *Die dans van my heenkoms*, which was on Snelstroom, win the *kyk*NET Fiesta Award for Best Online Production.

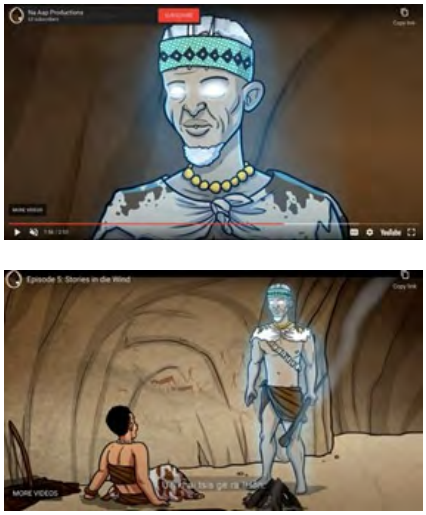
However, there is still a gap between the range of work designed for interactive, networked, online spaces and the current category parameters for most South African awards. We need to close this gap in the future if we are to fully acknowledge these new forms of emerging, telematic work developed by artists in 2020 and beyond.

I suggest that a new category for Interdisciplinary and Live Art (including online media art) would go a long way to address the gap that currently exists between what the award categories cover, and what artists have begun to create in networked, real-time, interactive environments.

There are a few projects that stand out for me personally among the numerous quality offerings on the *Snelstroom* programme. The first is *Stories in die wind* by Deidré Jantjies. *Stories in die wind* is Africa's first First Nations digital animation, supported by the Programme for Innovation in Artform Development (PIAD) through the international First Nations Colloquium. The PIAD, with co-director Angela de Jesus and coordinator Miné Kleynhans, is an initiative of the *Vrystaat Kunstefees* and the University of the Free State (UFS), funded by the Andrew W Mellon Foundation, and facilitates arts/science and interdisciplinary programmes with communities.

**Jantjies suggests:** *"Stories are a key part of our rich legacy and intangible heritage, ensuring that language, memory, ritual and traditional knowledge systems and practices are passed on to future generations."*

*Stories in die wind* is a short web series focusing on a young girl and her purpose in her community, and is based on the Nama story *|!hûni // gāres| (The rain flower; Die reënblom) /Nanub !Khas*. Jantjies created the series to bridge the generation gap within her communities, using both Nama and Afrikaans subtitles and including interviews in the programme with Ouma Katrina, a Nama-speaking elder.



*Stories in die wind, by Deidré Jantjies, 2020*

Female-led and female-developed, this was a critical outcome of the work encouraged and discussed by members of the First Nations Colloquium, of which Jantjies is a member. Over a four year period the colloquium brought together a gathering of South African, Australian, Maori and USA arts managers, directors, writers, artists and cultural practitioners with the aim of fostering cross-cultural and international collaborations with First Nations peoples and First Nations creative work in annual gatherings in the Free State and the Northern Cape.

In terms of using the networked, real-time capacity of the internet as a medium in the most sophisticated and complex way, I think *Deus::ex::machina* from Darkroom Contemporary is one of the stand-out pieces of *Snelstroom* 2020. Deus::ex::machina is a mixed-

reality, real-time, multiplayer game where viewers from anywhere in the world can meet online at specific, programmed times on a shared, live-streamed interface.

Using this shared interface, viewers can choose specific actions for a group of dancers who are performing in real time in a physical space, wearing headphones and taking instructions based on the collective decisions of the viewers as analysed by the game interface intelligence. The executive director and chief curator of the Zeitz MOCAA, Koyo Kouoh, suggested when I was discussing the project with her that it is a form of "community-generated choreography".

**Louise Coetzer, the project director, comments:** *"This virtual experience is driven by you, the viewer, and demonstrates a real-time exercise in cause and effect, infinite probability and random points of connection. In this extended reality, the viewer controls the dancers through multiple online voting processes, ultimately deciding their own unique experience of the performance as it unfolds via live stream."*

This project facilitates what I have termed in the past as *proticipation*, where the participants also become the producers of the work. This is the magic of networked, real-time mediums and is what makes this telematically driven work so ground-breaking for South African digital performance practice.




As a continuation of his participatory film and performance events in 2018 (*Sig/Sight*) and 2019 (The vertical journey) at the Naval Hill Planetarium, media artist Marcus Neustetter created a third experimental performance in 2020, *Imaginary futures*, developed particularly for the medium with which we all became so familiar in 2020 – Zoom. Artists and participants gathered and created in virtual spaces and on devices in Bloemfontein, across South Africa and around the world.

Neustetter used the films initially shown at the Naval Hill Planetarium, which engaged with "performative films evoking journeys of discovery and wonder", and brought them into the digital domain. A series of free public online events followed, including a "playful series of acts that sit in the tension between art and science, the urban and the rural, the mythical and the embodied, the past and the future".

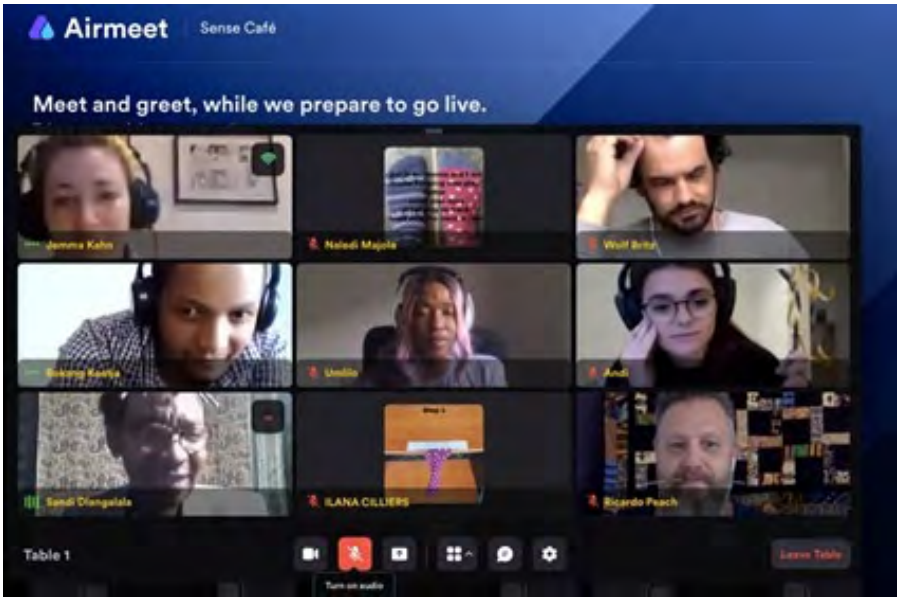


In August, as part of PACE, and in October as part of *Snelstroom* 2020, participants engaged in various Zoom interventions through a series of live public performative interventions hosted on Zoom using "VR immersions, live sound and film mixing, live drawing, animation, puppetry and performance".

Having experienced the work on Zoom, I can attest to a type of digital, communal seance that occurred when characters emerged in their domestic settings and in other spaces from where they were streaming their interventions, popping up at various times on the screens in a form of Zoom chat roulette – sometimes distracting, sometimes poetic, sometimes disturbing. Zoom thus became a space for a new type of experimental performative practice, with all its accidents, opportunities and ghosts in the machine.

Another work that took up the challenge of exploring creative practice in online environments was Sense Café, where the process of the artistic engagement and the mode of experimentation became the "product". Sense Café was an "artist's laboratory investigating the senses and exploring ways to create multisensory celebrations".

The artists explain their framework as follows: "How can a type of 'home theatre', which harnesses more than audio-visual perception, be facilitated by electronic networks? A test group of artists will attend a




series of workshops where they will germinate seeds 'towards a home theatre' and serve their sprouts to 'critics'."

As a participant, I was sent a list of items to purchase and to prepare prior to the event. I was asked to carry a stick that I picked up from outside with me for a week (I cheated and had it for a day), buy chocolate and marshmallows (which nearly didn't make it to the session) and prepare a pending yeast concoction, among many other requests.

When I logged on at the specific allocated time the artists, including Jemma Kahn, Bokang Koatja, Umlilo, Peter Treurnicht, Naledi Majola, Sandi Dlangalala, Ilana Cilliers and Wolf Britz, proceeded to create various beautifully crafted online sonic, visual and other interventions to facilitate emotional and sensual connections across the network – including facilitating a raunchy yeast-spawning session.

And it worked. I was hooked. When asked to break my stick – whose narrative story of its intimate relationship to me I had to share with the group – I nearly broke down. The stick had become a friend, as had happened with the other people's sticks. Not to mention the marshmallow and chocolate person – whom I had befriended and could not eat either. Well, not till much later.

I hope to see many interesting learnings from this space expand both digitally and out of the network into physical space in the future.

Spaces for such interdisciplinary play without outcomes, laboratories of exploration or collective residencies, whether online or physical, are rare in South Africa. For the South African arts industry to grow, evolve and adapt, we must fund

and support many more of these types of process-driven projects, and ditch the absolute need for immediate outcomes. Outcomes will arrive, much later and much more powerfully than we could have imagined previously.

The *Vrystaat* Arts Festival had already begun exploring these spaces in 2014, with the first of our series of OPENLabs. These OPENLabs were cross-genre, experimental platforms that engaged in critical dialogue about art-making in interdisciplinary fields.

In 2019, we also held the first Pan-African Creative Exchange (PACE+) Dramaturgy Laboratory. The PACE+ lab, led by Dr 'Funmi Adewole, was a transdisciplinary space for professional performing artists which explored the concept of the "performer-spectator relationship"and what thinking through this concept could do for making, performing, planning and promotions.

We will continue this type of laboratory process intervention in 2021, both digitally and physically.

Moving into 2021, *Snelstroom* (through both its main, curated *Hoofstroom* programme and its open *Vrystroom* fringe programme) has proven to be an unprecedented opportunity for the *Vrystaat* Arts Festival to engage with creatives from all over the world. We have never before had such a broad system for talking to, presenting and engaging with colleagues from far-flung locations.

As a result, for the curated *Hoofstroom* online programme for 2021, we appointed an international curator, Sepehr Sharifzadeh Golpaygani, to inform the online curatorial team and bring in new ideas for international partnerships. Sepehr is an independent creative producer, curator, festival maker and researcher who started his career in performing arts as a creative writer, puppeteer, clown and mime. At the age of 24, he cofounded the first International Theatre agency in Iran, aiming to facilitate the cultural exchange between Iran and the international performing arts scene. He is also cofounder of two independent, alternative and artist-led festivals in Iran: the online Reconnect Performance Festival and the Micro Theatre Festival.

As we have facilitated the inclusion of several Iranian theatre works in the 2020 online *Vrystroom* fringe programme, including *Flight no 745* and *I put a spell on you*, Sepehr's insights into the international performance world will generate whole new sets of networks for South African and international artists in 2021.

**Sepehr comments:** *"Being asked to curate an online festival in a country as rich and historical as South Africa is anyone's dream, and I'm indeed honoured to be tasked with this responsibility. Many of the great festivals of our time rose from the ashes of the world wars; many of the second wave festivals developed from specific social movements and changes from the end of the '60s. It is important to collect the stories of these COVID lockdown times and leave a trace for our successors, just like our predecessors did. Many festivals moved online as of March 2020 and postponed their real events to 2021, and many conversations have happened regarding the future of festivals and the arts. Once we accept the fact that online performances are not here to replace theatre but to engage people in a new art format, we will be heading one step towards daring to build a future together for the betterment of the performing arts and festivals."*

### *The Pan-African Creative Exchange (PACE) Entangled*

PACE Entangled, led by London-based, Nigerian-born Nike Jonah and Dutch, New York-based Erwin Maas, and managed by Mark Antony Dobson, was an online initiative of the *Vrystaat* Arts Festival over a four-day period in August 2020. This biennial arts market/provocation for the interdisciplinary arts in Africa was the first digital platform to showcase selected productions from Africa to national and international presenters, producers, buyers, artists and the general public. Throughout the programme, over 3 040 unique viewers from more than 33 countries participated, with more than 300 delegates from across the world registering and attending the four-day event in person.

Participating artists and presenters from the African continent commented that the PACE Entangled

platform felt like it was created for them and that it put Africa front and centre in an international context. They mentioned that usually they feel Africa is at the periphery of the international conversation at these kinds of international platforms, and that they have rarely felt so connected to other arts professionals on the continent. PACE Entangled also actively created paid work for various artists (poets, rapporteurs, creative interventionists) to make creative interventions in the online conversation and showcasing.

**Mark, who was responsible for putting the online platform together, remembers the period vividly:** *"2020 was a year filled with trauma, uncertainty and disbelief. I approached it like an improv. challenge. I said yes to everything and chose to see the challenges and failures as an opportunity to learn and grow, at home, locked away from the real world. I know that the Pan-African Exchange happened and that I worked hard on it, but it lives in my mind as a time when I was functioning on pure adrenalin and simply trusting my instincts. Everyone says it went well, and I have vague recollections that it did. I think we will all have collective PTSD in the years to come, but at least we will handle it together."*

A new initiative, the Pan-African Telematic Art Project (PATAP), part of PACE Entangled, was developed and coordinated by the *Vrystaat* Literature Festival assistant, Thuthukani Ndlovu. PATAP ensured




Segun Adefila, *Crown Troupe of Africa*, live, PACE Entangled intervention, Lagos, Nigeria, 2020

that new works specifically designed for online environments were supported in PACE. Thuthukani implemented the initiative because he believed it was especially important to support the creation of new work in a new medium in a time when the arts industry was hurting, but keen to be innovative and risk-taking.

**Thuthukani says of PATAP:** *"More artists should take advantage of the current opportunities and technological tools at their disposal to create and promote their work. It's also imperative for stakeholders within the creative industry to collaborate in ensuring that more people can conveniently access online content and learn about the new technologies. This will then create a more positive perception towards embracing the 4th industrial revolution, and hopefully encourage artists and the government to be more proactive in promoting, consuming and creating telematic work."*

One of the main issues we faced for PACE and PATAP was ensuring that all the participants had fees to cover their data costs. Data costs and access to digital platforms across the digital divide was something we did all in our power to help bridge.

In addition, some of the new conference platforms we used at the time did not support mobile devices, and we learned very quickly that most practitioners in Africa access digital platforms from their mobile phones. Mobile-friendly systems are essential for future digital engagements across the African continent.

### *Vrystaat Klank & Klassik*

The first edition of *Vrystaat Klank & Klassik*, a festival celebrating classical music and sound art as an extension of the *Vrystaat* Arts Festival, was presented online in September 2020. Curated by Elretha Britz and coordinated by Hillétje Möller

Bashew, the programme included the OSM Camerata from the Odeion School of Music, the celebrated Odeion String Quartet with "Hidden colours of the Free State", soprano Magdalene Minnaar together with pianist Maryke Johnson with a programme called *From Schubert to Schönberg*, and Anneke Lamont with *Diabelli Variations*, Op 120.

Narratives written by well-known Bloemfontein authors, including Nàomi Morgan, Zee Bashew, Ilne Fourie and Jaco Jacobs, were presented by outstanding Free State actors, including Jefferson J Dirks-Korkee, Gerben Kamper, Hillétje Möller Bashew and Nosana Sondiyazi, as introductions to each piece. Each narrative was inspired by the music to follow and set the ambience of the show.

The performances were pre-recorded in Bloemfontein and was broadcast on *kykNET* in the second half of 2021. The Odeion String Quartet was nominated for a *Fiësta* for "Hidden colours of the Free State", which was a great honour for the festival team, who are now planning a second physical and digital hybrid event.

**Elretha comments:** *"Classical music is a niche genre not always easy to market. However, if one does not make an effort to keep it going, people will never be exposed to this timeless music. The Rupert Foundation and the Arts Trust in the Free State were valuable partners in the first ever* ***Vrystaat Klank & Klassik****. With it now in its second year, we will reach new heights when we present it again in November 2021."*

### *Free State Arts and Health*

The Free State Arts and Health (FSAH) programme is a bilateral partnership initiative of the *Vrystaat* Arts Festival and DADAA, supported by the Australia Council for the Arts and the Andrew W Mellon Foundation through PIAD.

FSAH, with mentor David Doyle, CEO of DADAA, is a pioneering arts and health initiative operating in central South Africa, supporting and designing community-centred intermediations by arts workers with the aim of positively impacting on the health and well-being of the communities with whom they work. Using the arts, FSAH engages with communities in arts practices and projects that address key health aspirations, understanding that good health – including social, physical and mental health – is imperative in the creation of cohesive societies.

In 2020 FSAH was part of the world-renowned Ars Electronica festival through their Keplar's Garden programme.

**Ars Electronica suggested:**
*"Lockdown ... forced communities to go online both to create and to access art. This has led to new developments for*



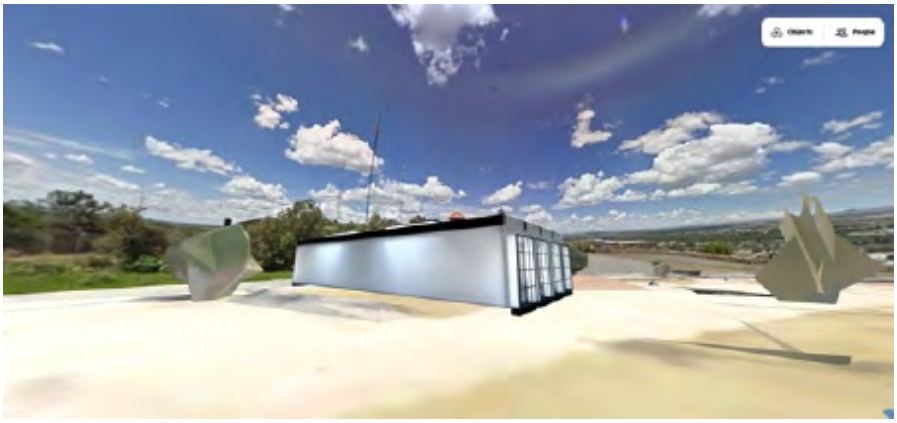
*African artists in a highly networked, global environment. However, the divide between those who have access to data and technology and those who don't has hindered many and become a new barrier."*

The *Vrystaat* Arts Festival did not let this divide be a barrier to our work. Rea Mokone, programme manager for FSAH, set out almost immediately to build, by herself, a 3D gallery in Mozilla Hubs and imported digitised prints she had been working on with First Nations communities in Platfontein, near Kimberley in the Northern Cape.

**Rea comments:** *"Throughout my journey, as part of this festival and mostly in my role within FSAH, I have borne witness to how much the festival has evolved, and it is this constant ability to evolve that has enabled us to react in ways that have been beneficial to art practitioners and to the communities we work with. I am proud to have been part of the evolution of the festival, and I look forward to seeing how we can learn and evolve further."*

The works titled Platfontein print portfolio I & II, in a three-dimensional virtual space in Mozilla Hubs, were the product of the !Xun and Khwe First Nations people's community art and cultural development process and contributed to the resumption of community pride and cultural agency among the participating artists.

For many of the project participants it was the first time that they had





heard the stories from their elders, which these artworks share with us. And, in a digital space, they are even more accessible now than we could ever previously have imagined.

### *Crossings*

Crossings, developed and managed by the coordinator of the dance programmes of the *Vrystaat* Arts Festival, Georgina Thomson, created an opportunity for six young artists to connect and cross over into each other's spaces via the internet and in the studio, with the intention of creating new works.

Crossings challenged the participants to bring their concepts and ideas to each other both online (to start with) and in studios (in the second session) to work towards creating a 20-minute innovative work. Choreographers included Thami Majela, Sizakele Mdi and Motlatsi Khotle, with composers Chesney Palmer, Dumelang Tsepo and Tsholofelo Tshikare. The two facilitators were Vincent Sekwati Mantsoe (France-based South African choreographer) and Musa Hlatshwayo (Durban).

From Crossings, Thomson developed the New Dance programme for 2021 to present commissioned/new works from South African contemporary dance choreographers, including

an online Dance on Film programme. The programme will include established and young choreographers and a series of master classes during the festival, as well as conversations to discuss the contemporary dance scene.

### *Wolkewinkel*

The *Wolkewinkel*, coordinated by Isabel Lock with assistance from Atie Kamper and Hanco Kamper, is the *Vrystaat* Arts Festival's first online arts market. Functioning parallel to the physical arts market on the campus of the University of the Free State, the *Wolkewinkel* is an online, shared economy project that assists those making bespoke arts and crafts products in South Africa to have a broader platform to sell their work to both national and international markets.

This has been a complex and ongoing journey, but an enormous milestone in the festival's digital evolution, where we can now offer customers, patrons and many new supporters an online platform to extend what they would usually only sell and buy in a physical space into a digital space. The *Wolkewinkel*, similarly to the *Vrystaat* Kunstefees's arts market, promotes only high quality work assessed and approved by the skilled curator of the market.

We have started very small, and the development of this platform will be ongoing, to adapt and adjust to changes in the industry. As it is a long-term project, we will watch







the outcomes of these online dropshipping processes over the next few years, to assist those crafting handmade South African goods.

## International reach and recognition

Thanks to operational support from Naspers, the University of the Free State and many more project and initiative sponsors, the *Vrystaat* Arts Festival was able to create opportunities for South African artists that provided new, hitherto unimagined international recognition.

One of the first successes was the Cairo International Festival for Experimental Theatre awarding Bloemfontein singer Liv Die and Vukallective first prize in the Lockdown Theatre category for work they created in the Free State with support from the *Vrystaat* Arts Festival and NATi.

The second international achievement, in partnership with the Fak'ugesi African Digital Innovation Festival in Johannesburg, was the selection of three *Snelstroom* works for the world-renowned Ars Electronica arts festival in Linz, Austria. These works from PATAP were Louise Coetzer's

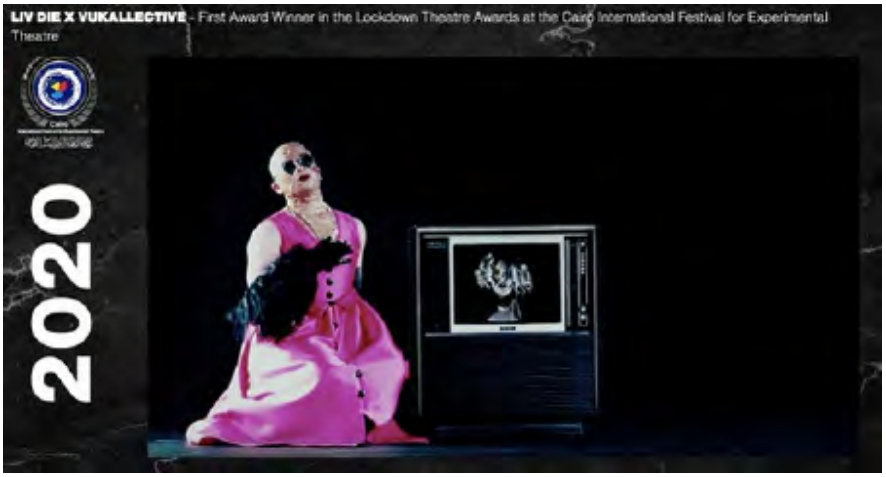
interactive media art and dance work *Deus::ex::machina*; Noluthando Lobese, Lindiwe Matshikiza, Nicola Pilkington and Vanessa Lorenzo's My many mouths (an immersive 360˚ video); and the FSAH project, *Ons kom vanof ons stories* (part of the Platfontein print portfolio I & II), a 3D online gallery of !Xun and Khwe First Nations prints.

South African visual artworks and photography from the Nexus programme in the *Vrystroom* festival were also on display physically at the Brighton Fringe festival in the UK in 2020.

Through PACE, artists from South Africa and the rest of Africa were involved in several international award-winning productions. One was *The art of facing fear,* winner of Best Ensemble and Best Production for the Good Theatre Festival Red Curtain Awards, and nominee for the 2020 Broadway Los Angeles Awards and the Young-Howze Theatre Awards (USA). An invitation also came for PACE participant Fumban Innot Phiri from Malawi to direct work in *The Hektomeron* at the Marin Sorescu National Theatre Craiova, one of Romania's biggest theatres, and a new UNESCO-funded South-South performing arts market in the Caribbean developed as a result of PACE.

Also, as director of the *Vrystaat* Arts Festival, I was invited to participate in the international Salzburg Global Seminar, *What future for festivals?*






Noluthando Lobese, Lindiwe Matshikiza, Nicola Pilkington, Vanessa Lorenzo's *My Many Mouths*, an immersive 360˚-video.

where I shared the experience of the *Vrystaat* Arts Festival going online with global arts and festival leaders. A report, including a thought piece by me titled *Breathing in the network* – new forms of cultural solidarity through online festival engagements, was published, where the ability of various festivals to deliver for artists in times of uncertainty was explored.

The *Vrystaat* Arts Festival, particularly through PACE, was also invited to participate in the online programmes of the Australian Performing Arts Market (APAM), the Korean Arts Market Seoul (KAMS), the International Society of Performing Arts (ISPA), the *Internationale Tanzmesse* in Germany, the Culture Funding Watch in Tunisia and NBO MTI in Kenya/ Uganda.

## Celebrating 21 years

In 2021, the *Vrystaat* Arts Festival celebrates its 21st anniversary. This is a momentous milestone in the history of the festival, which has grown into one of the most internationally engaged events on the African continent. We would particularly like to celebrate creative Free State voices, including works in Afrikaans and Sesotho, for this 21st anniversary.

The *Vrystaat* Arts Festival has successfully trialled and implemented a new model for Afrikaans-language festivals in an international context, both physically and online; one which incorporates and grows other language groups and cultures, while also maintaining and growing Afrikaans.

In 2021, there will be new costs associated with COVID-19 lockdown regulations and cleaning protocols. In addition, at present, on level 1, only 30% of theatre capacities can be used, with 1,5 metre social distancing rules. Theatre ticket costs will need to be increased but balanced, based on what people can afford in a difficult economic environment, and artists subsidised to offset the increased loss in ticket sales due to limited seats being available.

But we will continue.

We believe, going forward, that diversity – physical and online – is essential for creativity, and even though we may not all share the same cultural identities, we all share the same human values. To thrive in an African context, in partnership with other African cultures, we will move together into the future as part of a Pan-African family, physically and online, in our new, hugely expansive networks.

## Conclusion

We learned many, many new skills in 2020 – skills we had never thought we needed or were capable of implementing. But we were.

In summary, some of the learnings we gathered from 2020, which we will continue utilising in 2021, include:

- Continuing to develop and follow First Nations protocol. This is led by First Nations communities both online and physically.
- Working iteratively. Don't try and do the big picture programmes



immediately. Slowly experiment and scale up once you are more confident.

- Not expecting perfection. Embrace "failure". Fail well and fail fast. But continue.
- Being gentle, being empathetic and being a "beyonder". Think beyond yourself, to how you can help those around you.
- Adding to current award categories – not replacing old ones, but adding new ones - such as an award for Live and Interdisciplinary Art. This would go a long way to support new sound art, media arts, and interdisciplinary and interactive, real-time, networked practice.
- Creating a lot more space for laboratories without outcomes, where play is the key deliverable and the process is the product. Without this, South African artforms will not evolve.
- Going hybrid. Find ways of integrating the digital with the physical.
- Employing a social media team. They are essential for building programmes online.
- Finding ways to bridge the big gap between digital and physical inequality. Pay participants for data and make sure you have platforms that are accessible to mobile devices.
- Networking the hell out of your connections and building new ones through this enormous, expanded digital world. Make sure you build contacts, not succumb to digital fatigue.
- Creating the worlds you want – not waiting for others to build them. We can all use our own cultural self-agency, tap into our global networks and build these new worlds in partnership with others.

**Khoekhoegowab:** *Vrystaati di Dī// khasib !Gâi!gâisens ge #an!gâs tsī !gôasiba Khoe-San Khoena ra mâ. Nē khoen ge //în aboxan !na /gaisa #goms tsī !hû//arede! kho/gara hâ,nâu khoen !hūb din /khas khami.*

**Afrikaans:** *Die Vrystaat Kunstefees erken en respekteer die Khoe-San van die Vrystaat en die diep geestelike verhoudings wat hulle met hul voorouers, hierdie land en sy mense het.*

**English:** *The Vrystaat Arts Festival acknowledges and respects the Khoe-San of the Free State, their deep spiritual attachment to their ancestors, and the relationship they have to this country and its people.*

**Sesotho:** *Mokete wa tsa Bonono Freistata o ananela le ho hlompha morabe wa Khoe-San wa Freistata, le kamano e tebileng ya semoya eo ba nang le yona le badimo ba bona hammoho le dikamano tseo ba nang le tsona le naha ena le baahi ba yona.*

# Day Three:

# *Introducing the Relationship of Informality and the Cultural Economy*

**Introduction:**
**Munyaradzi Chatikobo**

**Keynote speakers:**
**Avril Joffe,**
**Jen Snowball**
**and Shaohan Wang**

**Panellists:**
**George Gachara,**
**Omar Nagati,**
**Ojoma Ochai,**
**Dimakatso Motholo**


1. **Introduction**
   **Introducing the Relationship of Informality and the Cultural Economy**
   Munyaradzi Chatikobo
2. **Informality and the Cultural Economy: Challenges and Affordances**
   Avril Joffe
3. **Employment in the Cultural and Creative Industries**
   Jen Snowball
4. **Protection Versus Development: The Family-run Hotels at the Maijishan Cave-Temple Complex**
   Shaohan Wang
5. **Investigating informality in the financing of culture and creative businesses in Kenya: A Case Study of the Uhuru Textiles Market in Nairobi**
   George Gachara
6. **Redefining Creative Initiatives through the Formal-Informal Interface**
   Omar Nagati
7. **We need new narratives of informality in global south cultural and creative economies: case study of Nigeria**
   Ojoma Ochai
8. **Cultural Kasi'preneurs of Daveyton: looking through the lens of informality**
   Dimakatso Motholo

# Introducing the Relationship of Informality and the Cultural Economy



*Dr Munyaradzi Chatikobo*

*Lecturer and Head of Cultural Policy and Management in the Wits School of Arts*

*Dr Munyaradzi Chatikobo is a Lecturer and Head of Cultural Policy and Management in the Wits School of Arts. He is also a former Drama for Life Lecturer with vast experience in cultural leadership and arts management training. His academic and research interests are in Cultural Policy and Management which includes: Community Arts, Community Theatre, Culture and Development, Cultural and Creative Industries, Cultural Diplomacy, as well as Cultural Entrepreneurship. He is board member for Nhimbe Trust in Zimbabwe. Munyaradzi graduated from University of Zimbabwe in 1995 with special Honours in Theatre Arts. In 2009 he attained a Master of Arts Degree in Applied Drama and Theatre under Drama for Life in Wits School of Arts- University of the Witwatersrand. The area of study of his PhD, which he attained through the Wits School of Arts, was Cultural and Policy and Community Theatre in South Africa. Munyaradzi's work experience in Cultural and Creative Industries spans over 24 years where served in different management capacities in public institutions and private companies in Zimbabwe, Malawi and South Africa.*

## Introduction

The Cultural and creative industries in Africa is largely characterised by informality, which has earned it a stigma especially when viewed in relation to the same in the Global North. Informality in the African cultural economy is a widespread phenomenon which was critically reflected on in this e-conference proceedings by Snowball (2020); Gachara (2021); Joffe (2021); Matholo (2021); Nagati (2021) and Ochai (2021). The reflections were curated as part of a four-day International Summer School hosted by the Cultural policy and Management Department in the Wits School of Arts and Peking University's Institute of Cultural Industries. All presenters who approached the subject of informality from varied dimensions agreed as to its peculiarity and significance to the African cultural economy. One of main arguments emerging from all the presentations is that informality is a deliberate choice by cultural and creative practitioners as a way of responding and adapting to the cultural, historic, economic, and social contexts which are both natural and a result of the history of colonialism in Africa and apartheid in the case of South Africa. By highlighting the value of and the value in informality, the seven presenters did not negate the vital place of formality in the cultural economy.

## The Concept of (In)formality

The concept of informality cannot be divorced from its relationship to formality (Heintz, 2012). Acknowledging the fluidity or lack of consistency in the definition of informality, Heintz (2012) describes the concept of informality from an enterprise perspective as the relationship between enterprises, government regulation and law, where small enterprises are run by self-employed individuals and operate outside the ambit of government regulation and laws, thus implying an illegality of such enterprises. Similarly sharing the notion of multiple perspectives, for

Misztal (2000, p.17-18) the definition of informality is contextual and therefore has dual meanings.

> In some contexts, 'informality' is used to describe a relaxed, casual, or non-ceremonial approach to conformity with formal rules, dress codes and procedures, while, in other situations, it can refer to actions taking place behind the official scene and which—because they are not in accordance with prescribed regulation—are perceived as a threat to fair and just treatment, resulting in favouritism, nepotism and patronage.

A narrow view of (in)formality is not helpful as it creates blind spots to either the value or downside of both informality and formality. Often informality is associated with negative attributes such as chaos, illegality, poor quality of products or services, poverty and poor protection of works; a narrative which needs to be changed as argued by Ochai (2021) in her presentation. Formality and informality should be seen as complicity twins which are necessary for inclusive growth of informal economies such as the creative economies in Africa. For the two to complement each other, a delicate balance must be achieved. Canclini (2000, p. 488) asserts that "the transition from informality to illegality is slippery". The main argument made by Canclini (2000) is that informal systems of production, transaction and distribution amongst entrepreneurs can position economies in non-hegemonic globalisation.

## Background of International Summer School Presentations

Seven presentations in this section of the International Summer School e-conference proceedings were drawn from North, South, West and East Africa were examining the state of the African some parts of China's cultural economy through the lens of informality. In our view as the hosts of the conference, day four was curated in a way that gave a fair sweep on the state of the African cultural economy. In her presentation titled *Informality and the African cultural economy: challenges, affordances, and policy implications*, Joffe (2021) gives an overview of informality across in the Global South, Africa and South Africa while the other five presenters gave specific perspectives from Egypt, South Africa, Kenya and Nigeria. The seven presentations use examples from the width and breadth of the cultural economy which include fine arts, film, fashion, cultural tourism, crafts, music, heritage and cross-cutting services such as provision of infrastructure and equipment. Backgrounds of the seven presenters range from cultural practitioners and cultural managers to academics which brings richness in diversity of perspectives. All presenters contested the definitions of informality, particularly the binary of formality and informality which create blind spots to the values and place of informality both in the cultural economy and the broader economy.

## Summary of day four presentations

The presentation, *Redefining Creative Initiatives through the Formal-Informal Interface* by Nagati (2021), points to a presence of informality in the cultural economy which mirrors prevalent informal practices in the Global South Cities. Using examples from site specific creative hubs, art houses and artisan workshops in Cairo in Egypt, Nagati (2021) demonstrates how formality and informality not only co-exist but more importantly how they complement each other. He shares Misztal (2000)'s assertions that only societies which can achieve an appropriate balance between formality and informality can move forward to achieve democratisation and ultimately improved quality of life. He reminds us how formality and informality are separable conceptually but cannot be separated in reality. Matholo (2021) looked at informality from historical and entrepreneurship perspectives in her presentation titled *Cultural Kasi'preneurs of Daveyton: looking through the lens of informality*. She describes how the apartheid geography of racial separation created unique township economies which include 'cultural kasi'preneurship' that redefine permanent historical legacies. For Matholo (2021) "cultural

kasi'preneurs are finding alternative forms of existing, creating meaning, seeing, surviving and thinking about the township", which gives informality permanency and hence the term (in)formality which scholars like Mbaye and Dinardi (2019) attribute to the blurred line between formality and informality. One of the major indictors of formality is employment and labour regulation with the cultural economy.

Through a South African Cultural Observatory commissioned research titled *Employment in the Cultural and Creative Industries in South Africa*, Snowball (2020) takes an economic approach which uses numbers of people employed and their income in the cultural and creative industries to measure formality and informality in the cultural economy. She concedes to the complexity of measuring formality using employment and income because of blurry lines between cultural industries and other industries. In the presentation titled *"We need new narratives of informality in global south cultural and creative economies: case study of Nigeria"*, Ochai (2021) uses examples from Nollywood, cultural tourism, and fashion industries to demonstrate economic viability of informal subsectors of the cultural economy. Drawing from Uhuru Textile Market and the HEVA Micro Financing Model for the creative industries in Kenya, Gachara (2021) specifically critiques formalisation which he says is characterised by tax dodging, corruption, market inefficiencies, harsh compliance penalties and high costs which stifle small enterprises. Informal microfinance models built around social networks and cooperative are ideal models for the cultural economy. Similar to Nagati (2021), Gachara (2021) argues for a mid-point model which draws from both formality and informality.

The main points emerging out of the seven presentations are the negative perceptions about (in) formality informed by what Gachara (2021) described as mainstream suspicion of informal businesses. The negative narrative is also coming from limited research and understanding of informality. "The dominant narrative of Informality often centres around illegality, poor quality, poverty, precariousness, and lack of protection for workers. This is often a true reflection of Informality; but only some of the time" (Ochai, 2021, p. 1). In a very interesting take on informality, Joffe (2021) argues that "While not all informal workers are poor, poverty is both a cause and a consequence of informality". Informality is a complex phenomenon that's outlook is contextual and is influenced by multiple factors. The pervasiveness of informality mirrors the context and as such it is not only peculiar to the cultural economy as articulated by Nagati (2021, p. 1) who says;

> The intersection between creative initiatives and the informal economy is not an abstract hypothesis in cities in the Global South, which are largely dominated by informal practices, and where the organic linkages between the formal and informal processes are manifest in many sectors in the service economy. It is the nodes of organic linkages between informality and formality which is loaded with opportunities awaiting to be explored. Wang, (2021) underscores the classical tension between protection and development in heritage in the transition of semi-formal family-run hotel enterprises to formal UNESCO World Heritage site in the Route Network of Chang'an - Tianshan Corridor.

## Concluding remarks

Most presenters illustrate the vitality of informality in the creative and broader economy and challenge the dominant view that stigmatises informality in the cultural and creative industries as sites of illegality, poverty, and general chaos. They argue for the development of conceptual lenses and practical mapping tools which can surface informality as a vital and deliberate choice made by creative practitioners. There are many informal enterprises in the cultural economy which are compliant with government regulations, thus rendering them legal. There are cultural entrepreneurs who are not formally employed but earn a lot of money, thus making informality attractive to many who then deliberately decide to keep their cultural enterprises informal.

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# Informality and the Cultural Economy: Challenges and Affordances



Avril Joffe

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**A transcription of the presentation by Avril Joffe**

## Introduction

In this talk I want to consider the challenges and affordances of informality that is so present in the African cultural economy. Participants in the cultural economy are often disadvantaged by their choice to operate within the informal space. Government structures and funding bodies expect compliance with specific tax clearance and registration requirements which has negative implications for the informal sector when seeking to access funding and other benefits. However, the fact that informality in the cultural sector is often a choice would indicate that there are benefits to this too, so it is an interesting question with which to grapple. If there are benefits to informality, how may it be best supported and nurtured and how can public policy actually attend to the ways in which people in this sector wish to work and organise themselves?

## Informal Economy and the Global South

It has long been assumed that the informal economy was a marginal and transitory phenomenon that would inevitably be absorbed by the modernising urban industrial sector (Moser, 1978). In many countries of the Global South, however, the informal economy has grown (ILO 2013). The informal economy includes all those income generating activities that fall outside what is considered the purview of state regulation. According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), "all economic activities by workers and the economy that are - in law or in a proactive manner - not covered or insufficiently covered by formal arrangements" (ILO 2002). It excludes unpaid household care economy and criminal activities.

## Informality and Poverty

While not all informal workers are poor, poverty is both the cause and a consequence of informality. A report by the ILO shows that "the poor face higher rates of informal employment and that poverty rates are higher among workers in informal employment" (ILO 2018). For hundreds of millions of workers, informality means a lack of social protection, rights at work or decent working conditions. For enterprises it means low productivity and, particularly for the cultural and creative sector, a lack of access to finance.



*Photo: @eye_media_sa, Street trader, working his magic making crafted jewellery*

## Revisiting the ILO Definition: Attending to deficiencies

The ILO definition is deficient as it excludes any forms of local resilience, community inclusion, forms of voluntarism or the generation of income not through formal means of transaction. It also tends to ignore location or regulation of place, such as work in informal settlements or, what we call Townships in South Africa. In this way, it ignores the distinction between urban and peri-urban areas and rural communities. It also excludes activities which evade the law and, problematically, it criminalises informal work and people in the informal sector (Brown, McGranahan, & Dodman 2014).

## Informality in the African Economy

According to the ILO more than 60% of the world's employed population are in the informal economy, with 2 billion working informally worldwide. In the African economy, informality is ever present: 85.8% of employment and 95% of youth employment is informal (Munyati, 2020). In South Africa, youth employment reached almost 60% in the first quarter of 2020 (StatsSA).

In the African cultural economy there is a dominance of micro and small enterprises in the cultural and creative industries (CCIs). This implies precarious labour conditions unsupported by social protection, with the bulk of activity taking place in informal sector. CCI activity is disproportionately present in the informal sector and therefore unregulated, often untaxed and difficult to measure. Associated with this is a lack of registration of artists, freelancers or other cultural workers.

What this means is that almost all African governments do not fully appreciate how the sector is organised or who its key participants are and therefore leave them out of policy decisions. Research shows that there is considerable fluidity in the types of employment in the CCI, with cultural workers moving seamlessly between the formal and informal sector based on the prevailing economic conditions. In South Africa, 43% of cultural jobs are informal and more people work on a freelance or contract basis compared to non-cultural jobs – 32.5% compared to 8.3% respectively (SACO).

## Informality in African Urban Cultural Life

Informality is also very present in African urban cultural life. There is a concentration of cultural economic activity in urban areas, and urban informal economies are growing especially rapidly where formal economic growth has not been commensurate with urban population growth or with industrialisation. George Gachara describes the increasing visibility of the cultural economy in cities across Africa as:

> emblematic of the African renaissance – characterised by the growth of per capita and household incomes, aggressive transformation of urban spaces, rapid adoption of digital communication, growing diaspora remittances and increased foreign direct investment (2020).

There is a constant interplay between what is visible and what is invisible between appearance and disappearance (Guyer, 2011; Pieterse and Simone, 2013). Brown, McGranahan and Dodman posit that:

> it can be very misleading to assume that urban informality can be reduced to a question of registration taxation and labor relations. --... The routes and dynamics of the urban informal economy are typically far more complicated than this (2014: 10-11).



*Photo: @eye_media_sa, The three photographers – owning the street and always hustling*

## Informality in the African Cultural Economy and the Covid-19 Pandemic

The prevalence of informality in the African culture economy therefore became a real concern during the pandemic given the huge drop of income experience by all workers in the cultural economy (Joffe,2021). The World Economic Forum, for example, noted that in the first month of the crisis it was estimated that the income of informal workers in the region of Africa dropped by 81%. A study by NIDS-CRAM (2020) during the pandemic showed that in South Africa this exacerbated inequality. Of the job losses, three million were women and it affected the most disadvantaged in the labour market which was mostly the less educated, poor black Africans and manual and informal workers.

## Global South Project: Exploring the Benefits and Affordances of Informality in the Cultural Economy

Research by International Council members of the Cultural Industries Policy and Evidence Centre, and funded by the British Council, explored what these benefits and affordances of informality in the cultural economy are in the Global South (British Council, 2020). Researchers hail from India, Indonesia, Colombia, most of Latin America, Kenya Egypt and South Africa. The findings are important because approximately two billion people are working informally, mostly in the Global South. There is also a spread of contract work in the "gig economy" in the Global North which is of interest because it is becoming more common that people are wanting to work in this

more flexible, agile way. The majority of informal workers, however, still lack social protection, rights at work and decent working conditions. It is therefore important to understand what the reasons are for this choice that is being made. The point of departure for the research is that the relationship between the informal economy and the cultural economy "needs to be analysed in terms of the specific processes that generate and/or maintain it" (ILO 2013a).

Some of the characteristics that the research found is that by its nature the informal economy tends to be labour rather than capital intensive, and depends on innate creative ability or self-taught rather than formally acquired skills. It includes many activities that fall within the usual definition ranging from design, making and performing arts, leisure and entertainment to fashion and food. But it has almost been totally ignored in the evolution of cultural economy policies and cultural policies generally, which have always been predicated in the global North on assumptions of high-tech, urban, intellectual property-driven models and, even in the South Africa context, on the formalised, registered nature of individuals or organisations. There has been a complete disregard for the wealth of activity, products and services produced in the informal economy by unregistered individuals and groups.

COVID-19 highlighted both the significance and vulnerability of the informal sector and its close interaction with social structures at a community level. This is therefore an appropriate moment to think about how the informal sector might be integrated into wider economic, social and cultural policy making, especially in developing economies like South Africa which have young populations, high rates of unemployment and very fragile welfare structures.

## Who Occupies these Spaces of informality?

A study done by Wiego (an organisation that works with women in the informal sector), as set out in *The Informal Economy Revisited* edited by Martha Chen and Françoise Careé, examines who occupies the spaces of informality. Cultural workers (as with many other informal workers) relate to the state and capital not through wage, but through a variety of forms of self-employment, own account work or work as contributing family members and as freelancers. Innovations such as the new status category in labor statistics of "dependent contractor" captures more accurately the majority of outworkers and home-based workers and "gig" workers (Wiego, 2020). In the cultural economy, many people in occupations throughout the value chain, or whose enterprises lack legal recognition, would fit into these categories of precarious employment.

The Global South Project also looked at the question of space and the ways in which venues, enterprises, events, business and residential zoning issues are being utilised and implemented. It also examines ways which people and enterprises are occupying multiple spaces in informal settlements and backyard spaces (Brown, McGranahan & Dodman 2014). There is also a lack of standards, contracts, agreements, working hours or social security contributions. This was evident during COVID-19 when so many people were unable to show a cancelled contract in order to receive financial support from government sources as cultural practitioners often rely on verbal confirmations rather than a written contract.

## The Findings of the Global South Project

The Global South project found the following with regards to the informal sector:

- **It relies on strong networks:** This highlights the reliance on informal supporting networks based on hidden economic circuits (not captures in formal statistics) (Indonesia, Brazil, South Africa).
- **Agreements and work are based on relations of trust:** Close social circles, family and friends all allow forms of finance and non-written contracts distinct from formal economy (Brazil, Indonesia, South Africa).

- **There are major challenges in access to finance:**
  The lack of documentation, levels of risk, preference for mobile loans, debt financing for personal goals (Indonesia, Kenya).
- **Cultural professionals often have multiple forms of income generation:**
  There is a need to hustle and retain more than one cultural job (Latin America).
- **There is a fluidity and politics relating to space:** Street life, use of homes as businesses, backyards as markets space or venue (South Africa).
- **Individuals and organisations are undocumented and often misunderstood:**
  Lack of documentation continues the perception of the sector being low-tech, unprofessional, unscalable, non investible (India, South Africa).
- **There is social exclusion writ large:**
  Impact of informality felt most keenly where agency and representation are absent - women, refugees or migrants, poorly educated, rural communities (India, South Africa)
- **There are often leadership/ governance challenges:**
  How voluntarism and informality in contractual relations can frustrate governance (Colombia).
- **Examples abound of the innovative application of digital technology:**
  How digital devises can be a boost to informal trading (South Africa).
- **There is huge disinterest in the '9-5 job' even in cultural organisation/ enterprise:**
  Young entrepreneurs resist formality of work preferring alternative forms (Brazil).
- **The most stated need is training:**
  Knowledge, expertise, training is in great demand (Brazil).
- **There is a coexistence and duality of formal and informal:**
  There is a fluidity in movements between formal and informal (both ways) and both co-existing within cultural value chains (India, South Africa).

## Incentives to Formalise or Opportunity to Reset?

The pertinent question this research raises is whether this information provides incentives to formalise or an opportunity to reset. One view would be that COVID-19 has provided an opportunity to go back the drawing board and look again at how people are voluntarily or personally choosing to be organised, and that public policy should be following that rather than imposing a set of views and values. The informal economy is ignored as an irritating but marginal factor and, at worst, stigmatised as criminal. This premise discounts facts that:

(a) without the informal economy the majority of the world's working population would not be able to **survive**;

(b) it is **embedded in informal community structures** and so is vital to social as well as economic wellbeing; and

(c) is often **more agile, flexible and responsive** to changing circumstances than the formal economy.

Bypassing rules and regulations is not unique to the informal economy but, as seen in South Africa, also characteristic of businesses in the formal economy.

## No rush to Formalise: Rather Recognise Unique Rules of Engagement

In fact, the argument here today is that there should be no rush to formalise but rather an attempt made to recognise the unique rules of engagement that people themselves are choosing.

> "Defining or describing informality as involving no or insufficient coverage by formal arrangements might seem to suggest that formalization is inherently desirable. But informality may arise because the prevailing formal arrangements and regulations that are being applied are poorly designed or discriminate against certain segments of society. Simply enforcing such arrangements and regulations more vigorously may drive the informal economy underground, or may reduce the informal economy in ways harmful

> to those (previously and perhaps still) dependent upon it --... The challenge is to improve upon the existing informal economy, not to formalize it or to protect it from formalization (Brown, McGranahan and Dodman 2014:11).

This is really important for the cultural economy, for freelancers, for all cultural workers, professionals and organisations occupying parts of the informal economy value chain. The challenge therefore is to improve upon the existing informal economy and mitigate the negative consequences (such as a lack of social projection or access to finance), not to continue to attempt to formalise it.

## Forging a Decolonial Lens of Informality

There also suggests a need to decolonise our lens on informality. Decolonisation is the remedy to physical, cultural and psychological harm through direct action and listening to indigenous people, first nations people and indeed the majority of the South African population (Maldanado Torres, 2007, Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013, Nyoka, 2007). It is vital to understand how those in the informal economy are choosing to organise themselves economically, socially and within the cultural economy.

This relates directly to restorative justice through cultural, psychological and economic freedom and challenges notions of white superiority, nationalistic history and "truth". What that implies is that



*Photo: @eye_media_sa, Street trading on the fence side of Fox Street*

formalising a sector is imposing a set of western values and concepts onto what are chosen local ways of organising. To decolonise our lens on the informal cultural economy requires a paradigm shift as to how the informal economy is understood. As researchers and students of Cultural Policy and Management we need to consider how a decolonial lens applies to cultural policy and related policies so that new, more appropriate laws for regulations in the informal cultural economy are introduced in order to secure justice for informal cultural workers and cultural professionals.

## Shifting Mindsets, Challenging Definitions and Changing Narratives

It is therefore essential that we shift mindsets and challenge definitions and change narratives. It can no longer be the norm to follow colonial rules and regulations where everybody who is formally registered or organised is considered reliable and valid. Those outside of that are not all chaotic and disorganised. Although they are often seen as symbols of underdevelopment and an obstacle to modernising the economy, this ought to shift so that they are seen as participants in a commercial operating environment in its own right: a multifaceted, complex, local and indigenous economy that is as diverse as the people who inhabit it.

## Public Policy for Informal Cultural Economy Revisited

Public policy in most countries is based on the premise that all workers need to be drawn into the formal economy so that they can be subject to tax and regulation and are less likely to be victims of illegal and exploitative working conditions. In the context of government, they can then apply for grants, be invested in as a company and are able to access public employment programs and COVID relief funds because they can show all their formal documents. However, informal cultural workers can make gains through organising in different ways.

- Social protection and labour standards can be designed in ways appropriate for securing justice for informal workers;
- Creative professionals can register on a single database for authentication; and
- Cultural intermediaries in hyper-local locations can provide contract support and ensure payments to cultural workers.

The question is, can financial institutions adjust their systems to meet needs of freelancers and the self-employed?

These types of policies will ensure restorative justice to this vibrant, agile, flexible part of the cultural economy. Clearly there is a need for further research and to explore ways in which the informal part of the cultural economy can be recognised. This includes researching appropriate public policies to safeguard the rights and status of artists, creatives and freelancers in the informal economy and offer social protection which will enhance their ability to continue to contribute to the lifeblood of the cultural economies in the Global South.

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# Employment in the Cultural and Creative Industries



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*Her research work in cultural economics has included developing and testing a framework for the monitoring and evaluation of publically funded arts and culture, cultural mapping studies, employment in the cultural and creative industries, and international trade in cultural goods and services in emerging markets. She has published widely in the economics of arts and culture, and is member of the editorial board of the Journal of Cultural Economics, the journal managed by the Association for Cultural Economics International (ACEI).*

*Rhodes University is a public research university located in Makhanda in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. It is one of the oldest universities in the country and is noted for its research excellence.*

*The South African Cultural Observatory (SACO) is a national research organisation funded by the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture. It is hosted by the Nelson Mandela University, with partner universities (Rhodes University, University of Fort Hare, University of The mandate of SACO is to provide up-to-date, policy and industry relevant data on the cultural and creative industries in South Africa.*

south african
**cultural observatory**
*Measuring & valuing South Africa's cultural and creative economy*

**A transcription of the presentation by Prof Jen Snowball**

SA Cultural Observatory (SACO)

Rhodes University, Department of Economics

**Based on:** SACO 2020 Cultural and Creative Industries Mapping Study, Report 2 – Hadisi and Snowball

## Introduction to the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI) Mapping Study

The purpose of the South African Cultural Observatory (SACO) is to provide updated information on how the cultural and creative industries (CCIs) contribute to the economy of South Africa in terms Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and GDP growth, employment, transformation and international trade. The mapping studies done through the SACO therefore focus on these areas of research. For the purposes of this presentation, I will focus on the area of cultural employment.

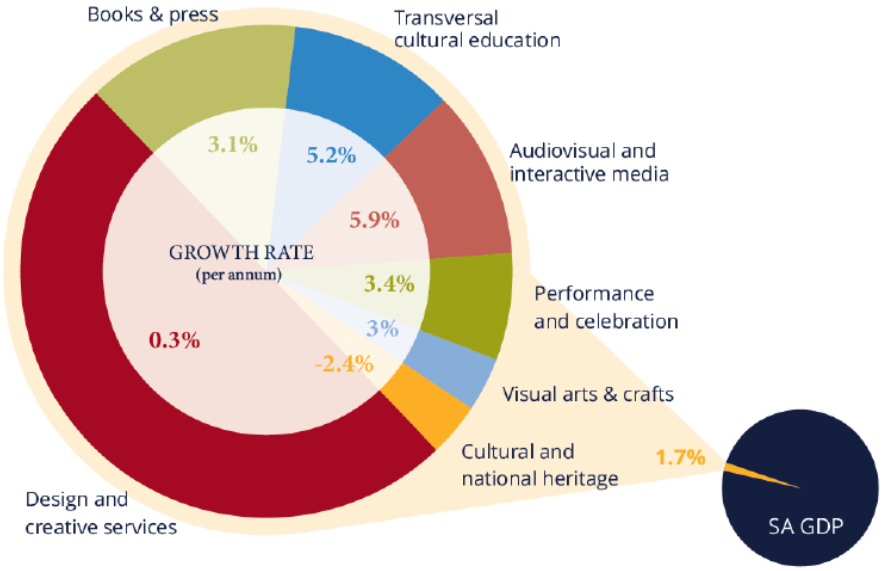
The research methods used were:

- GDP contribution: Partial equilibrium modelling, based on CCI Satellite Account, embedded into a Social Accounting Matrix for South Africa;
- Cultural Employment: Analysis of StatsSA Labour Force Survey; and
- International Trade: Comtrade Data via Trademap

This presentation thus aims to provide a brief overview of Report 2 on cultural employment, with reference to COVID-19 shutdown impact data.

## Contribution to GDP by Domain

The chart and graph below provide a snapshot overview of how the creative economy looks in South Africa. The last mapping study was completed in 2018, so the information is therefore pre-COVID. The categories or domains are built on the UNESCO framework. The graph indicates how each domain contributes to the GDP of South Africa and it can be clearly seen that the biggest contributor is the domain of design and creative services which includes many of the commercial sectors. There is also a significant contribution from books and press. The visual arts domain is interesting because it has a relatively low contribution in terms of money, but is one of the biggest in terms of employment. Upon further investigation, it was determined that this is because of the informal and precarious nature of the sector.




| Domain | GDP contribution |
|---|---|
| A. Cultural & Natural Heritage | 3% |
| B. Performance & Celebration | 7% |
| C. Visual Arts & Crafts | 3% |
| D. Books & Press | 14% |
| E. Audio-Visual & Interactive Media | 11% |
| F. Design & Creative Services | 50% |
| Transversal Cultural Education Domain | 11% |

## Measuring Cultural Employment

Measuring cultural employment in South Africa relies on national data and there are two major data sets, which are.

- The Labour Market Dynamics Survey (LMDSA):

The data available from this survey at the time of writing was from 2008- 2017, during which time roughly 132 000 households per year were surveyed.

- Post-Apartheid Labour Market Survey (PALMS):

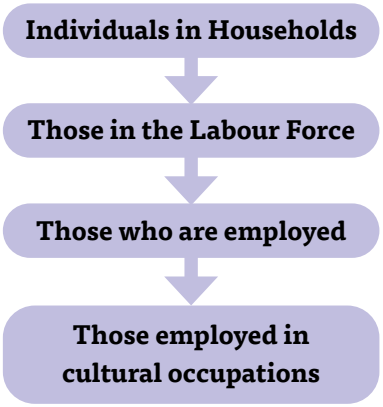
This is a a more long-term longitudinal survey which has data available from more than five million observations from 1993 – 2017.

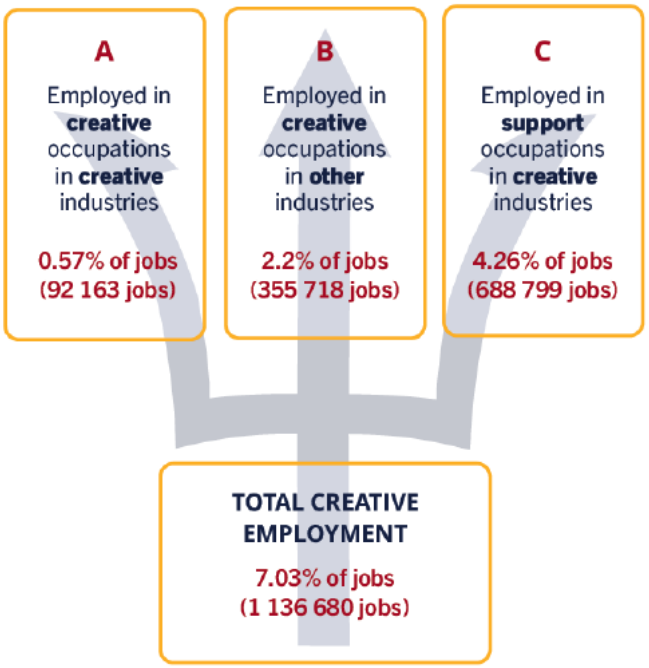
Both of these data sets are based on household surveys, which is of interest because they therefore include information regarding informal employment.

The surveys covered:

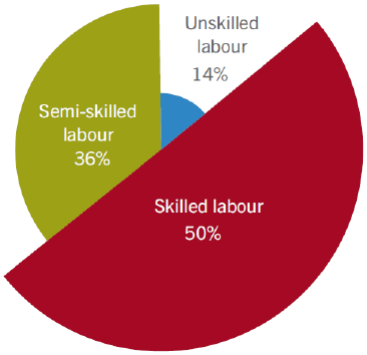
- Project for Statistics on Living Standards and Development (from 1993);
- October Household Survey (1994 to 1999);
- Labour Force Survey (2000 to 2007); and
- Quarterly Labour Force Survey (2008 to 2017).

Measuring employment in cultural occupations is not only a challenge because of data but also because you find creative workers in many different places. The cultural trident method developed by Higgs et al in 2008 is used to try and track what is happening with creative occupations over time. It divides creative occupations into three categories as outlined in the diagramme to the right:



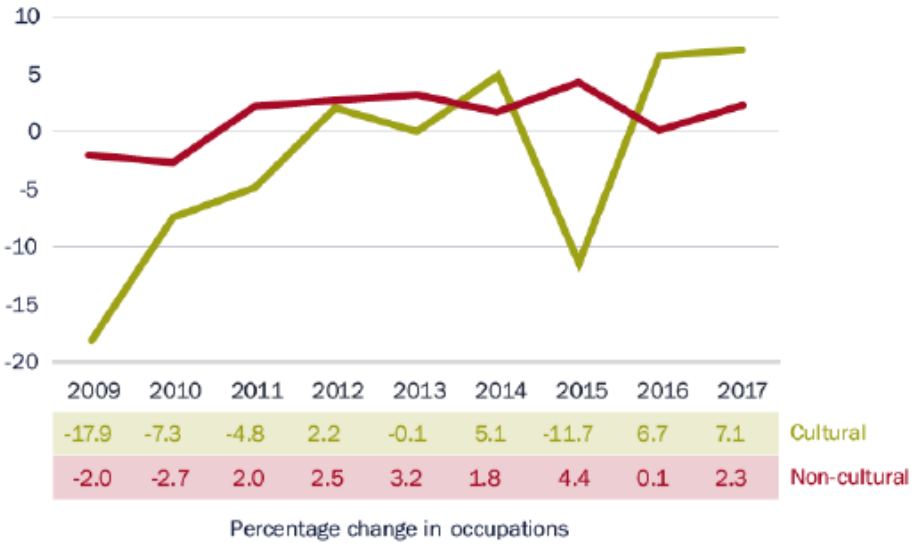



Using the cultural trident method, it was established that, if all categories are included, creative employment makes up 7% (1.1 million people) of all jobs in the country. The number of cultural occupations in South Africa is sensitive to changes in GDP growth, but these grew at a faster rate than the number of jobs in other sectors in 2016 and 2017. Education and skills levels of people in cultural occupations, including the informal sector, have been increasing over time. The growth of the sector will therefore depend on having a well-educated and skilled labour force.




## Cultural Employment Over Time

The Green bar in the graph on the right shows the rise and fall of the number of cultural occupations and the red bar the change in all other occupations. Green can be seen to be far more volatile and any downturn is reflected quite dramatically. It is evident, however, that this sector can also recover very quickly. This volatility in the sector is the result of the fact that those employed in the cultural economy can transition more easily from formal to informal and also often work as freelancers.



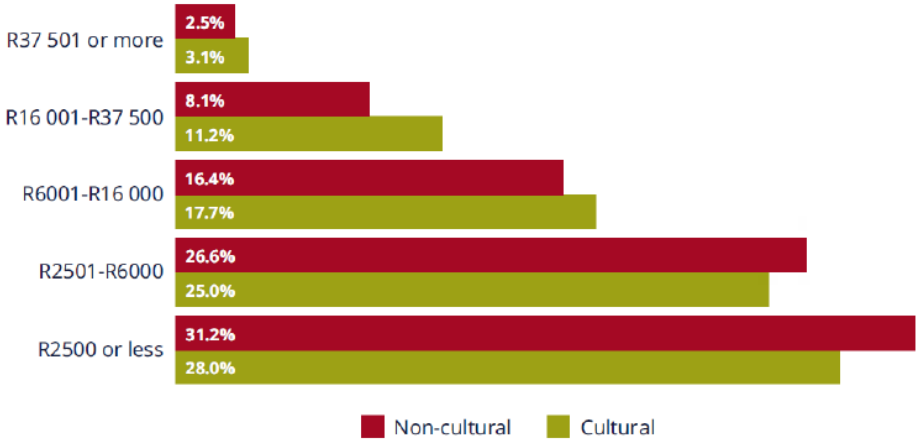

## How big is Cultural Employment in SA?

Information taken from the UNESCO database and tabled to the right indicates the percentages of employment in the creative economy in different countries. This information would suggest that the creative economy forms a significant part of many economies, but the reality is that, universally, it has received little attention in terms of policy and support.

| Country | Percentage of persons employed in creative economy (A + B + C) | Year (if not 2015) |
|---|---|---|
| Mexico | 9.95 | |
| Russian Federation | 7.6 | 2014 |
| Germany | 7.09 | |
| Malta | 6.72 | |
| South Africa | 7.03 | 2017 |
| Chile | 5.8 | 2013 |
| Spain | 4.55 | |
| Thailand | 4.53 | |
| China | 4.16 | |
| Uganda | 2.53 | 2012 |
| Mozambique | 1.69 | 2014 |

## Earnings

One of the things the data allows us to track is what the earnings are like in the creative industries. The graph on the right sets out the findings of a 2018 labour market dynamics survey. It reveals that a lower percentage of those working in cultural occupations fall into the bottom two income categories (R2 500 or less; R2 501-R6 000), and a higher proportion of those working in cultural occupations fall into the higher income categories (from R6001-R16 000 onwards). This is largely because of the higher levels of education in the sector.

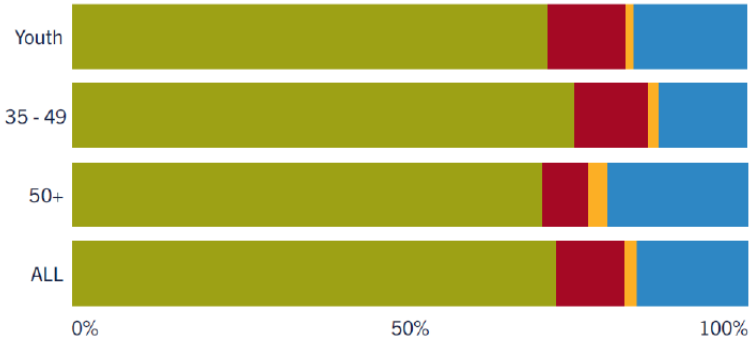



## Transformation

The data can also track transformation: whether the people working in creative occupations are representative of the population demographic of South Africa. As can be seen in the tables on the right, the trend is towards increasing diversity and inclusion. In 2017, 83.6% of people working in cultural occupations were:

- black Africans (71.8%);
- coloured people (10.1%); or
- Indian or Asian origin (1.8%).

There is still an over representation of white people working in this sector, but it is positive to note that young cultural workers are more transformed than older age groups. This data, however, does not give an indication of ownership.




| | Youth | 35-49 | 50+ | ALL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| African | 70.5% | 74.4% | 69.6% | 71.8% |
| Coloured | 11.5% | 11.0% | 6.7% | 10.1% |
| Indian/Asian | 1.2% | 1.5% | 2.9% | 1.8% |
| White | 16.8% | 13.2% | 20.8% | 16.4% |

## Which Domains offer the best opportunities for youth?

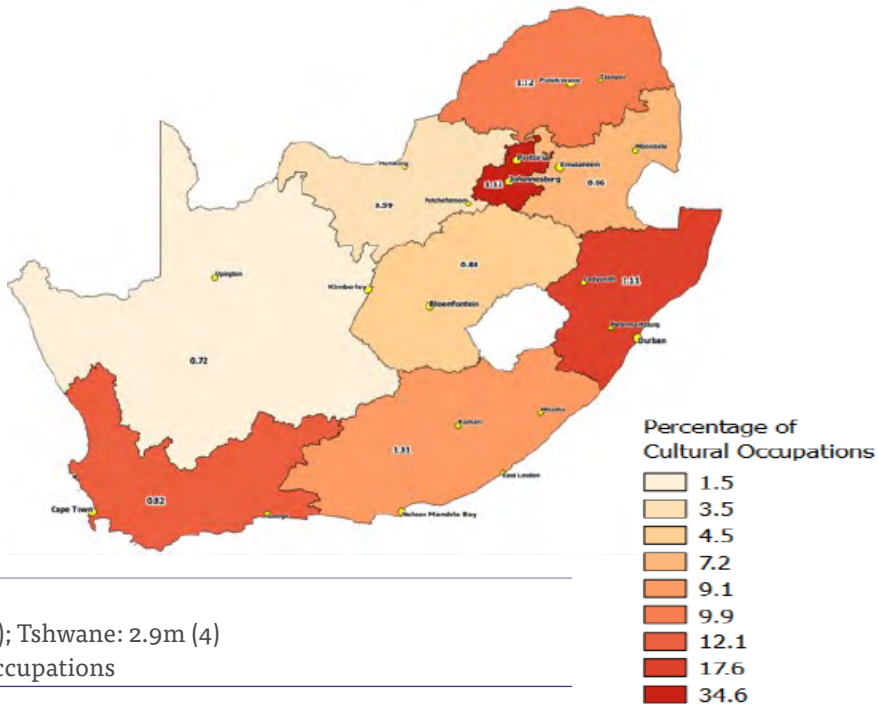
One challenge the country faces is that young South Africans are not being absorbed into the labour market by the economy, either formally or informally. Cultural employment is one important way to begin to address and overcome this challenge. The different age groups participating in the various domains of the sector are set out below:

Young people working in cultural occupations are mostly found in the Visual Arts and Crafts domain (43.1%), but the next most popular is the Design and Creative Services sector (19.6%). This is an encouraging finding, as the SACO Mapping Study of 2018 showed that, in terms of their contribution to GDP, the Design and Creative Services domain contributes 45% of the GDP contribution of the cultural economy and is also one of the fastest growing areas.

| Domain | Percentage of Youth | Percentage of 35-49-year old's | Percentage of those aged 50+ |
|---|---|---|---|
| A. Cultural & Natural Heritage (Including intangible heritage) | 1.6 | 0.2 | 0.0 |
| B. Performance & Celebration | 5.8 | 4.7 | 2.4 |
| C. Visual Arts & Crafts | 43.1 | 48.1 | 40.5 |
| D. Books, Information & Press | 13.8 | 11.4 | 11.3 |
| E. Audio visual & Interactive Media | 2.1 | 3.6 | 0.5 |
| F. Design & Creative Services | 19.6 | 11.3 | 6.2 |
| (ICH) Intangible Cultural Heritage/ Transversal domain | 14.1 | 20.7 | 39.2 |
| **Total** | **100%** | **100%** | **100%** |

## Spatial Distribution of Cultural Employment

Investigation of employment per province was done order to determine if creative employment in South Africa is more Unipolar (like UK mostly centered around London) or polycentric (like US centered around many cities) (Kemeny, Nathan and O'Brien, 2019). The darker coloured provinces in the map below have the biggest metros.



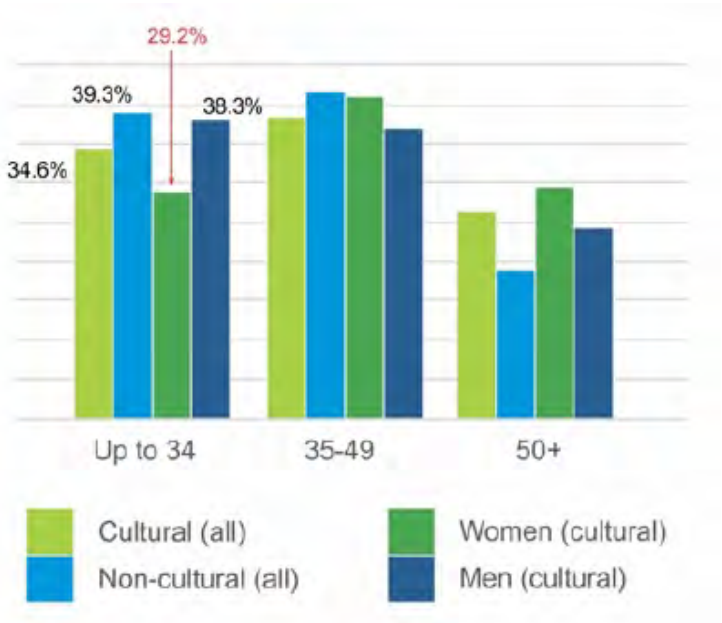

| | |
|---|---|
| Gauteng (City) Province | Population : 12.3m<br>JHB metro : 4.4m (1); Tshwane: 2.9m (4)<br>34.6% of cultural occupations |
| KwaZulu-Natal | Population: 10.3m<br>eThekwini metro: 3.4m (3)<br>17.6% of cultural occupations |
| Western Cape | Population: 5.8m<br>Cape Town metro: 3.7m (2)<br>12.1% of cultural occupations |

As found internationally, cultural workers tend to "cluster" in some provinces, especially those with larger cities ("urban logic"), although smaller clusters may be identified individually in more rural provinces.

## Cultural Occupations by Gender and Age Group

One of the consistent things the data reveals is that there is a low proportion of young women working in cultural occupations. This is demonstrated by the graph to the right:

Compared to young men, young women are under-represented in cultural employment.



## Why so few young women?

What is preventing young women from entering cultural occupations? Is the cultural sector "meritocratic"?

Some suggested reasons for this phenomenon are:

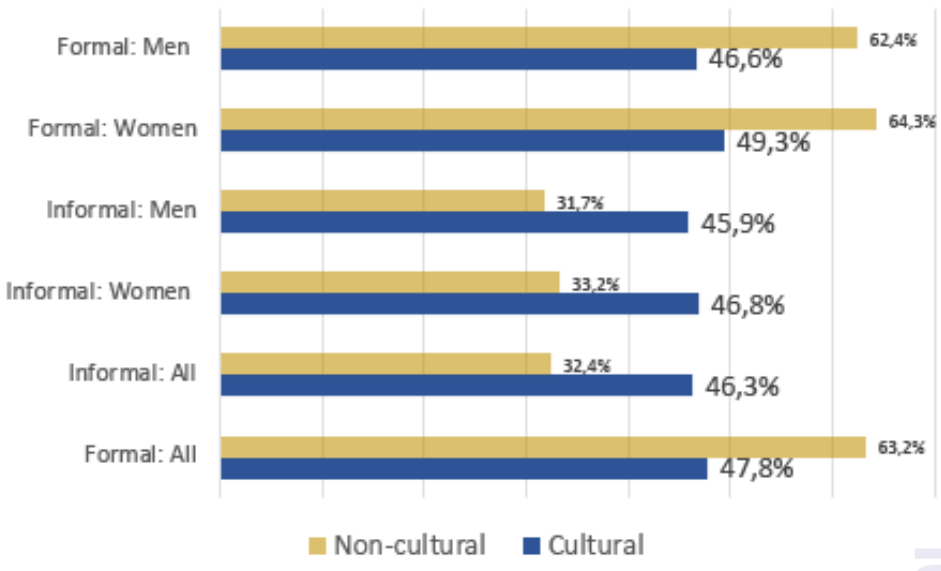
- Mode of production may disadvantage especially young women with family care responsibilities;
- Precarious, short-term contracts for specific projects;
- Long working hours with few family care benefits;
- Regional concentration, particularly in large cities;
- Lack of access to important social networks and capital; and
- Sexism in some sectors:

A NFVF (2018) report showed that, in film and TV, many women struggle with workplace harassment, few leadership positions, and networking in a male dominated industry. This reality was made evident by the global #MeToo campaign.

## Informality and Cultural Occupations

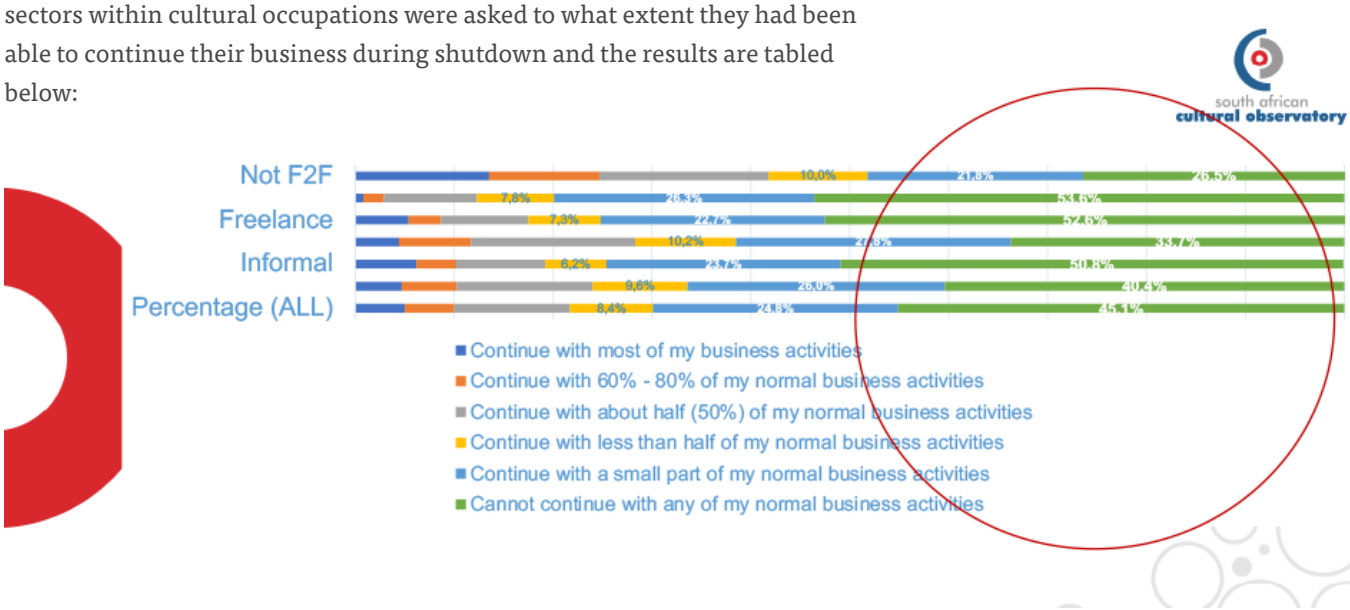
A higher proportion of people working in cultural occupations are informally employed (46%) than those in other occupations (32%). This is even more prevalent for women as is seen in the graph to the right:

This data indicates that policies and securities are just as important for those working in the informal sector as they make up almost half of those in cultural occupations.



## The impact of the COVID-19 shut-down

A big challenge for the informal sector when COVID-19 happened is that many of those in informal cultural occupations did not qualify for government support during the shutdown. Those working in both the formal and informal sectors within cultural occupations were asked to what extent they had been able to continue their business during shutdown and the results are tabled below:



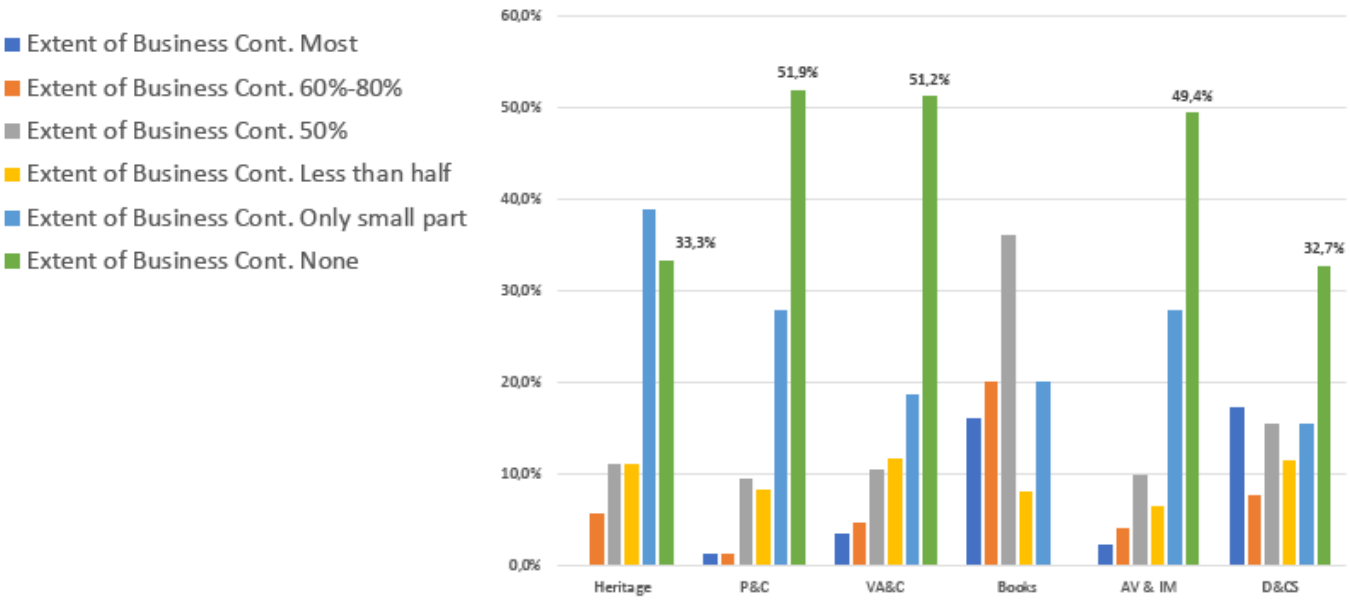

## Impact by Domain

Three aspects of vulnerability were tracked by SACO across the domains:

- Freelance workers;
- Those who relied on face to face (F2F) interactions; and
- Those working in the informal sector.

The results are tabled below:

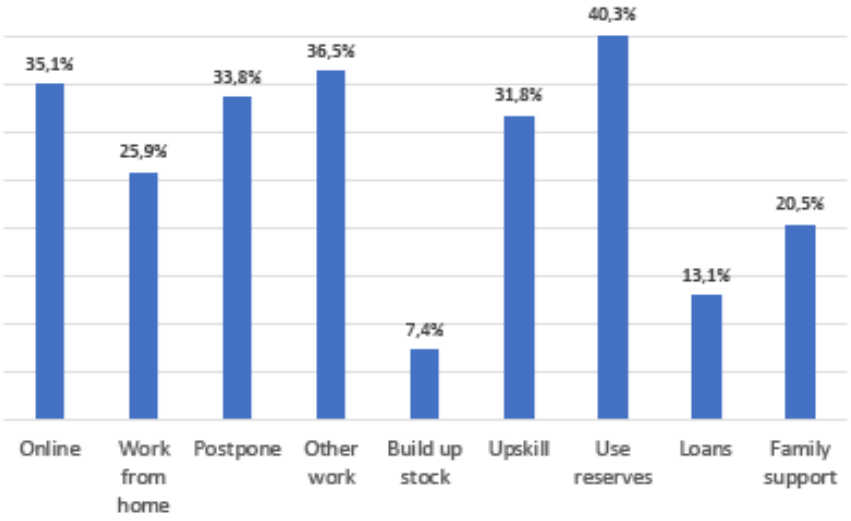
| Domain | Freelance | Mostly F2F | Informal | Weighted vulnerability score out of 10 (ranking) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cultural & Natural Heritage | 35.0% | 85.7% | 10.5% | 5.55 (4) |
| Performance & Celebration | 67.5% | 95.2% | 36.9% | 7.52 (1) |
| Visual Arts & Crafts | 72.5% | 50.0% | 47.8% | 5.63 (3) |
| Books and Press | 56.7% | 26.7% | 33.1% | 3.70(6) |
| Audio-Visual & Interactive Media | 63.7% | 71.7% | 33.5% | 6.17 (2) |
| Design & Creatives Services | 56.9% | 30.0% | 34.5% | 3.90(5) |
| TOTAL | 62.4% | 68.6% | 34.9% | 6.00 |




## Strategies used to overcome challenges

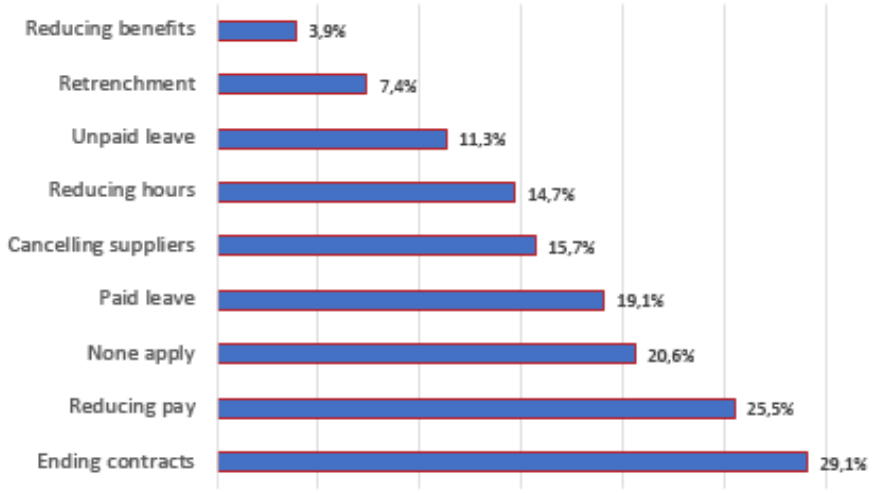
This survey was run in April 2020, which was really early on in the shutdown. The results are tabled to the right:

Only 17% of the respondents reported not being able to use any strategies to keep their businesses going, pointing to fairly high levels of resilience in the sector, at least in the short-run. However, the extent to which the various strategies could be used also depended on business characteristics.



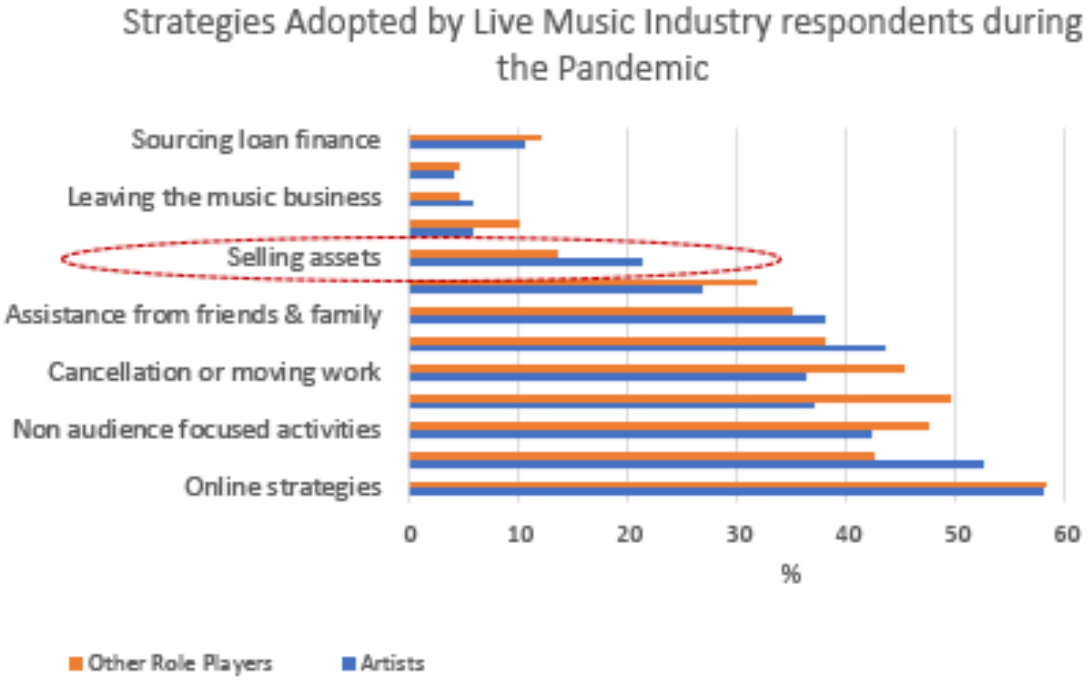
## Employer Strategies to Overcome Challenges

Only 7% of employers reported retrenching permanent employees, but 29% ended informal or short-term contracts, 25% reduced payments, and 19% asked employees to take paid leave. Only 21% continued to pay as usual.




## Adaptation and "pivoting"

The table below sets out various adaptation strategies that were undertaken to mitigate the effects of the COVID-19 shutdown. One danger sign is that a later SACO survey of music sector found that 35% of respondents were selling their equipment as a survival strategy.



## Conclusion

Cultural workers in South Africa, including youth, have higher average earnings and education levels than non-cultural workers. This is as a result of education levels for cultural workers increasing over time. Youth in cultural occupations are more racially representative, which will also improve sector transformation over time. Compared to non-cultural employment, however, cultural employment has more informal sector jobs, and a greater proportion are freelance or contract workers, especially with regards to women. A much lower proportion of young women are in cultural occupations than young men or, for that matter, young women in non-cultural occupations. There has also been a persistent gender wage gap in cultural work.

When incorporating all three parts of the creative trident, the cultural and creative industries in South Africa accounts for an estimated 7% of all jobs. It is therefore essential to include them in policy.

Policy suggestions for the cultural and creative industries include:

- Mentorship/Internship support and business skills training;
- Support in terms of intellectual property rights;
- Support in building networks; and
- Development of industry norms and standards to reduce harassment.

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# Protection Versus Development: The Family-run Hotels at the Maijishan Cave-Temple Complex



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**The School of Arts, Peking University:** Based on the Department of Arts founded in 1997, the School of Arts was established in 2006 and is now becoming one of the top academic institutions concerning arts studies, cultural industries, art history, critical arts, and arts management. The institute is distinct in the way that it provides graduate students, undergraduate students, postdocs, and research fellows an interdisciplinary environment and freedom to develop their own research focuses. Additionally, the institute also function as a national think tank and provides convictive intellectual support to the policy making processes of the nation on related topics. Shaohan Wang is a postdoc at the institute and is currently working as part of the academic team led by Prof. Hardy Yong Xiang from the Peking University.

# Protection Versus Development: The Family-run Hotels at the Maijishan Cave-Temple Complex

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## Abstract

The Maijishan Cave-Temple Complex has been nominated as a component of the "Silk Roads: the Route Network of Chang'an—Tianshan Corridor". Since the preparation stage of the nomination, the games between heritage management authorities and local communities began. Although the family-run hotels located at the site have business licenses, they have become semi-informal enterprises due to the fact that the way they were constructed did not adhere to the protection regulations for World Heritage sites and disturbed the view of the landscape. The shifting of the family-run hotels from formal to semi-informal, is a result of the classic conflict between protection and development as well as the absence of local communities in heritage management.

**Key words:** Maijishan Cave-Temple Complex, family-run hotels, World Heritage protection, local communities

## Introduction

The Maijishan Cave-Temple Complex (Maijishan) took shape in the 5th Century and prospered for eight hundred years. Since the 13th Century, the Maijishan Cave-Temple began to decline and only a few works were passed on from the Yuan Dynasty (1271- 1368 AD) to Qin Dynasty (1644-1911 AD). Currently 198 caves, in which numerous sculptures, murals, inscriptions and tone tablets are found, remain in Maijishan. Besides the caves, two buildings remain (Ruiying Temple and a pagoda) and 800 pieces of movable cultural relics are also housed in the site area. Maijishan was nominated as a component site of the World Heritage "Silk Roads: the Chang'an – Tianshan Corridor" because it contains Buddhist cave-temple remains of the 5th-10th Century in China and is thus an important transport location and has outstanding value in attracting numerous tourists from all over the world. The upright peak with scattered caves at various layers has become the cultural landmark of the current Tianshui City due to its remarkable artistic and historical value (Figure 1).



*Figure 1: The upright peak with scattered caves at the Majishan Cave-Temple Complex*

The Maiji District of the Tianshui City, to which Maijishan now belongs, was also in great need of poverty alleviation. According to the statistics in 2016, the number of poverty-stricken populations in the district is 58 400 (12.79% of the total). This number was reduced to 45 400 in 2018 due to the implementation of local supporting policies, among which developing rural tourism was key. The support of local government for tourism encourages the development of the hospitality industry. However, most hotels around Maijishan are operated by local villagers spontaneously and are part of the informal economy. The irregular management of these family-run hotels brings massive management pressure to bear on the On-site Protection Unit of the Maijishan Cave-Temple Complex. The conflict between the family-run hotel operators and the site managers worsened during the World Heritage nomination process.

During my visit to Maijishan, interviews with the managers of the On-site Protection Unit revealed that the expansion of family-run hotels threatened the integrity of the landscape. Unfortunately, no effective data was collected from the local government representatives and family-run operators about their opinions about the conflict during my fieldwork. Thus, this case study will try to understand the development of local family-run hotels and their informal character from open-access statistic data,

satellite images, customer comments as well as the local development policies. The discussion will also cover the aphasia of local communities and the legalisation of heritage protection in policy making.

## The family-run hotels at the Maijishan Cave-Temple Complex

With the steady growth in tourism, the need of the visitors for accommodation, food and beverages encourages the development of the local service industry (Figure 2). Till now, there were over 20 family-run hotels in the core site area (Figure 3), about three of which were located just beside the scenic spot of the Maijishan Cave-Temple Complex (Figure 4). Services provided are totally determined by the needs of the visitors. Accommodation, refreshment, pickup service, shuttle bus and car parking are the basic services that these family-run hotels provide their customers. To extend the stay of the tourists, some hotels try to create new services such as a ticket office (for the entry of the Maijishan Cave-Temple Complex), play room (card games, Maijiang, karaoke etc.), barbeque equipment and a laundry etc.

With all these additional services on offer, choosing which hotel to stay is still determined by convenience and location. According to the customer comments at Trip.com[1] from the top



*Figure 2: The Family-Run Hotel in the Site Area, satellite images, accessed from Baidu Map.*

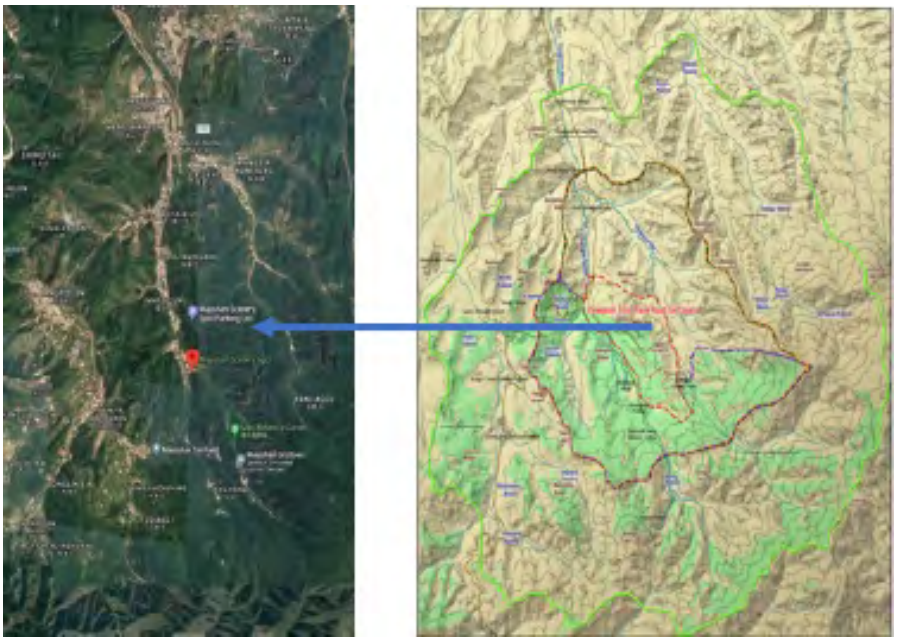


*Figure 3 The core site area of the Maijishan Cave-Temple Complex (left: the satellite image of Maijishan, accessed from Google Map; right: the map of the Maijishan Cave-Temple Complex, made by the Institution of Architectural History, China Architecture Design Institute Co.Lto)*

*1 Trip.com, a top global online travel agency in China with the 74.72 million monthly active user, ranking No.1 (according to the data of 2019, accessed from https://xw.qianzhan.com/trends/detail/506/200828-e61bb246.html)*

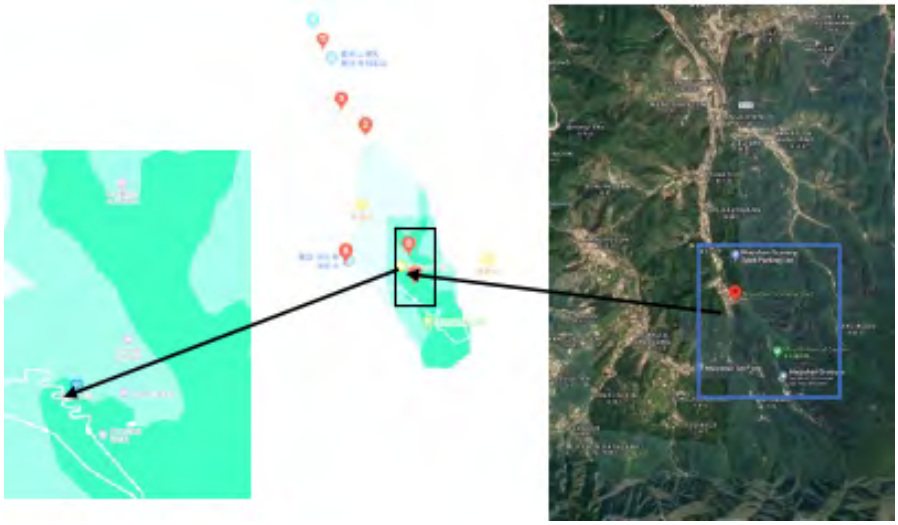


*Figure 4 The location of the family-run hotel that besides the scenery spot of the Maijishan Cave-Temple Complex (left & middle: the core site area of Maijishan, accessed from Baidu Map; right: the satellite image of Maijishan, accessed from Google Map)*

| Hotel name | Score | Number of comments | Most regular positive comment with statistic |
|---|---|---|---|
| Hai Yun Xuan Family-run Hotel | | 328 (324 positive comments) | "Have shuttle service" (153)<br>"Within the site area" (69)<br>"Good location" (47)<br>"Have a car park" (30) |
| Mu Zi Li Family-run Hotel | | 217 (all positive comments) | "Have shuttle service" (71)<br>"The host is warm and thoughtful" (50)<br>"Good location" (35)<br>"Within the site area" (25) |
| Fu Xing Ge Family-run Hotel | | 124 (123 positive comments) | "The host is warm and thoughtful" (35)<br>"Have shuttle service" (26)<br>"Within the site area" (23)<br>"Good location" (21) |
| Tianshu Si Hai Ren Jia Family-run Hotel | | 68 (66 positive comments) | "The host is warm and thoughtful" (26)<br>"Within the site area" (22)<br>"Good location" (14)<br>"Have shuttle service" (8) |
| Kuai Le Family-run Hotel | | 30 (24 positive comments) | "The host is warm and thoughtful" (7)<br>"Within the site area" (7)<br>"Good location" (6)<br>"Have shuttle service" (38) |

*Table 1 Positive comments for the top five family-run hotels on Trip.com (with statistic)*

Maijinshan, "Have shuttle service", "Good location", "Within the site area" and "The host is warm and thoughtful" are the most commonly seen positive comments (Table 1). More importantly, all the top five family-run hotels in the site area are within a walkable distance to the core site area (where the cave-temple complex is located). However, it is their location that make these hotels informal.

## Semi-informal tourism enterprises and the conflict

If we define informality as "a range of behaviors and practices that are not regulated or controlled by the state or formal institutions, including those related to income generation, service provision and settlements" (Chen et al., 2016: 336), then the family-run hotels in the Maijishan Cave-Temple Complex are semi-informal tourism enterprises. It is true that these hotels are registered individual businesses and are under the management of the local governments. However, some of these family-run hotels do provide services that are not listed on their license. For example, on the business license of the Haiyun Family-Run Hotel, their scope of service is limited to catering services (Figure 5). However, it still provides accommodation services to a wide number of tourists and is one of the top-ranking hotels in the area.

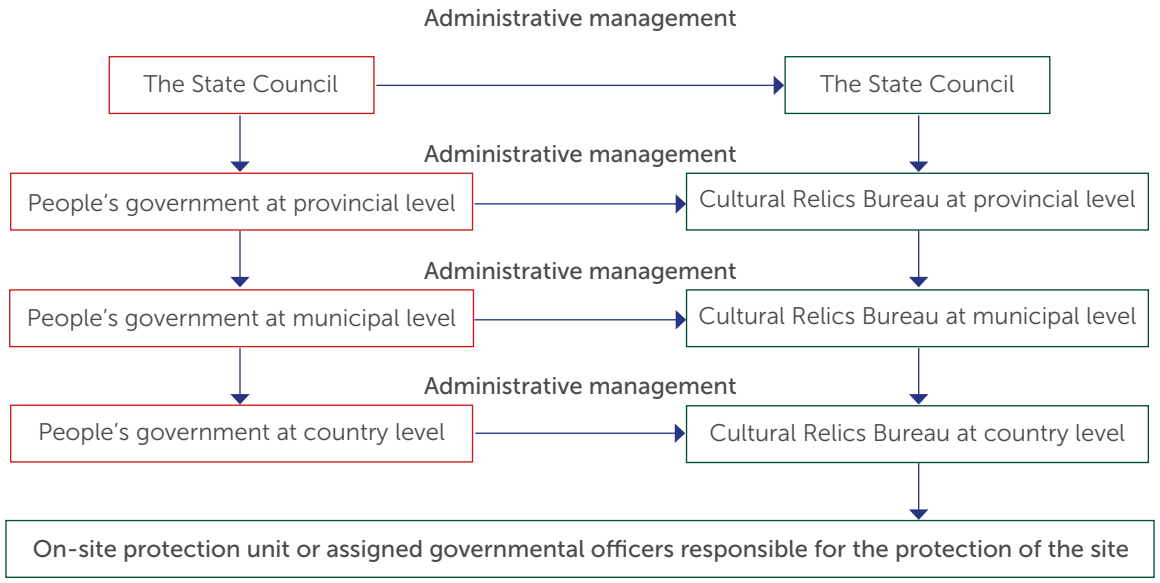
The informal character of the family-run hotels is that they break the regulations concerning the

protection of the Maijishan Cave-Temple Complex. In 2014, the site was inscribed in the World Heritage List as a component of the serial property "Silk Roads: the Route Network of the Chang'an –Tianshan Corridor". Being protected by the World Heritage Convention means that the site manager needs to apply more strict protection regulations to the site, including limitations to the construction work in the site area as well as the buffer zone.

A buffer zone in theory creates a transition area between the World Heritage site and its surroundings. With limitation of land use, it could protect the view from being disturbed by constructions that can be disharmonious with the site/landscape (ICCROM, 2009). Within the limitations, development plans are encouraged to help benefit the local community and promote the sustainable development of a site (ICCROM, 2009). Because of the location of the Maijishan Cave-Temple Complex, a buffer zone is essential to protect the site from being damaged by local development plans and agricultural activities or disturbed by residents surrounding the site. Under the regulation of UNESCO, strict restrictions are given to the local government regarding the development of adjoining areas and buffer zones in order to protect the authenticity and integrity of World Heritage sites. This situation sharpens the conflict between heritage professionals and local authorities, especially in regions with high populations.

Those in charge of local development have to consider the World Heritage status of the Maijishan Cave-Temple Complex and regulate the construction plans in the site area as well as the buffer zone. However, in practice, the restrictions exist on paper only. During my visit to Maijishan, the multi-story family-run hotel buildings in the site areas attracted my attention. The site manager explained that both the owners and local governments understand that these buildings have influenced the view of the landscape. However, demolishing them could antagonise the local residences as they are expecting the site to bring them economic profits. The significant tourism potential of World Heritage and the social impact of the tourism industry on local communities as well as the related site itself are both criticized and extolled in a large number of intellectual arguments (e.g., Timothy and Nyaupane, 2009; Shepherd, 2013; Shepherd, R.J. and Yu, L, 2013; Khirfan, 2014; Gao, 2016a; Gao, 2016b; Akbar et al., 2019). For the local government, the tourism industry is also the priority of the Tianshu City in their city development plan. They hope the tourism development at the Maijishan Cave-Temple Complex will improve the living standard of the local people. With the different standpoints, it seems that restrictions on construction within the site area of World Heritage sites will impede the objectives for economic development. In other words, the current requirements for site protection are incompatible with the local development plans.

The conflict is faced not only by the Maijishan but by all the visited heritage management sites. China has faced the most pressure in balancing heritage protection and local development during the nomination process. As people without proper awareness of what heritage protection entails, they could not understand what World Heritage is and why the government wants to develop it. It is a common issue for most heritage sites in China. Even the local governments do not fully understand the link between the city/district/town and their heritage sites. They know, for the nomination, they have to improve living conditions within the selected sites, but after nomination, the degree of cooperation from the local government often decreases. Currently, the nomination does not bring better framed development plans to the site. How to cooperate with the reality and identify the position of heritage sites in social promotion is an issue that is worth future research. This fact refers to the issue of how the knowledge gained over years of study would benefit individual component sites.




*Graph 1 The departments involved in the heritage management process*

## The need of a stakeholder engagement approach

The Maijishan Cave-Temple is a major historical and cultural site protected at a national level. It is managed under the most stringent set of rules according to laws and legislations in China. According to the heritage management bodies for sites protected at national level (Graph 1), the voices of local communities are missing from this hierarchical system.

Dealing with the relationship between the local governmental bodies, citizens and the site is a difficult task for site management all over the world. The above five-tiered management system illustrates a closed, top-down management structure of the heritage protection, conservation, and development work in China. It caters to the responsibilities of State Parties to the World Heritage Convention and ensures the efficiency of the management thereof. However, at the same time, it disempowers at the local level and ignores the Strategic Objectives of the World Heritage Committee on "Communities".

The heritage management system in China is something that would be difficult to change. Within the framework, heritage professionals need to find a way for the site to contribute to the sustainable development of the local area. 'Coordination' will then be a forever topic in the process of balancing heritage protection and local development. Among the academic debates on achieving sustainability, two key issues are often repeated by scholars: community and stakeholder engagement (e.g., Harrison, 2013; Hassan and Rahman, 2015; Su et al., 2016; Kim, 2016; Martinez, 2018). In 2007, the World Heritage Committee added 'communities' to their Strategic Objectives[2] "to enhance the role of communities in the implementation of the World Heritage Convention"[3]. Through this new approach,

*2 The Strategic Objectives for the World Convention is set out by the World Heritage Committee in the Budapest Declaration of 2002. It is usually referred as the 'Five Cs' accessed at https://whc.unesco.org/en/convention/.*

*3 The Fifth C for "Communities", the decision (31 COM 13B) at the 31st Session of the World Heritage Community, accessed at < https://whc.unesco.org/en/decisions/5197/>*

the World Heritage Committee intended to encourage 'stakeholder engagement' in the nomination process and the holistic development of the site (Albert, 2012: 33).

Stakeholder theory is originally used in managerial studies, focusing on different power structures and their impact on an organisation (Freeman, 1984; Sharma & Henriques, 2005). Since the start of the 21st Century, stakeholder engagement has increasingly attracted academic interest from heritage professionals, especially concerning the World Heritage management (Haddad, Waheeb, & Fakhoury, 2009; Landorf, 2009; Su & Wall, 2012). According to McDonald (2011) engaging local communities in the heritage management work would increase their personal attachment to the site and inspire spontaneous heritage protection activities which are of significance to the communities. In addition, World Heritage sites are identified as important sources for enriching local people's lives and promoting the sustainable development of local economies[4] .

However, stakeholder engagement is such a challenging task for the World Heritage management. The following issues would all become barriers for the involvement of different stakeholders in the heritage management works:

a the diverging interests among different stakeholders (Bell, 2013);

b. the absence of communities in the decision-making process (Garrod et al., 2011);

c. the negative perception of the communities regarding heritage management actions (Erdogan & Tosun, 2009);

d. the power of decision-making is in the hand of few elites (Harrison, 2004).

Using Edinburgh's Old and New Towns, the Derwent Valley Mills and the Antonine Wall as examples, Lochrie concludes that stakeholder engagement is possible if 'an active role in management' is given to the locals via 'community led ventures or representative mechanisms which permit idea-exchange and project development' (Lochrie, 2016: 1410).

Since the Burra Charter[5] , value-based approaches are widely used in the formulation of international charters and conventions (McClelland, 2018), as seen in Europe's Faro Convention. It not only put emphasis on the social and economic value of heritage but also pays close attention to cultural heritage connectivity in the context of stakeholder engagement. The Faro Convention tries to take the perspective of human-rights and intends to strengthen the link between people and cultural properties (Bogataj, 2017). Based on the convention, a Faro Convention Network (FCN) was established for the heritage communities using the self-assessment principle.[6] In other words, it is a free association that encourages communities participating in democratising heritage management to establish community-led affiliations linked with FCN [7]. This community-led approach corresponds to the research of Lochrie (2016) and would be of reference value to European countries (e.g., Bonacini, 2019; Rabbiosi, 2019). However, considering the unilateral heritage management structure in China, whether or not this European approach could provide a potential way for stakeholder engagement in the Maijishan Cave-Temple Complex needs further research.

## For a sustainable future

Currently heritage management work has a very top-down approach that has led to the role of local communities being completely ignored during the whole process. Case studies present how World Heritage nomination could be attractive to local communities as a means of earning a living. However, the aims of heritage protection

*4 https://whc.unesco.org/en/sustainabledevelopment/*

*5 https://australia.icomos.org/publications/charters/.*

*6 https://rm.coe.int/the-faro-convention-the-way-forward-with-heritage-brochure/16809e3627.*

*7 https://www.coe.int/en/web/culture-and-heritage/faro-community.*

and local development are often different. 'Heritage' is the priority when talking about protection, while the 'local resident' is the priority of development. How to combine protection with development is a question that should be priorised by experts, national administrative sectors, and local managers.

The long-term interest of the local government and citizens in the site is focused on economic benefits. This issue is pretty clear according to the current development of Maijishan. The tension between the sites and local communities/authorities threatens the sustainability of the component sites. Practical advantages and economic returns are expected by the local communities as well as local governments. If the aspirations of both stakeholders are not satisfied, how would the site attract support from the local government? Stakeholder engagement approaches are required at this stage to tackle this challenge in order to provide more flexibility around the engagement of local communities and to rethink the value of heritage sites within the sphere of social development.

There are vast academic studies about the sustainable tourism of World Heritage Sites (e.g., Demas et al., 2015; Cheung, 2016; Logan & Larsen, 2018; Zhou, 2018). The recent development of the Mogao Caves could contradict the prejudice from local government. Mogao Caves is a major tourism destination in China and attracts over a million visitors per year. This could easily prove unsustainable for the site.[8] The outcome of the research from Martha Demas, Neville Agnew, and Fan Jinshi (2015) on the tourism development at the Mogao Caves, leading a team from the Getty Institution, would be a great reference for management plans with regards to the tourism development at the heart of a site. By assessing the visitation at the Mogao Caves, the Getty team worked out a Visitor Experience and Resource Protection (VERP) model for the site (Demas et al., 2015: 41-46), which could assist the local governments in developing a sustainable approach for the tourism industry at Mogao Caves (Demas et al., 2015: 89-103). Through new approaches and using convincing evidence, the site managers of the Mogao Caves gradually embedded a sense of sustainability within the local development plan as well as the visitors by explaining the need of site preservation methods to ensure long-term development.

Using similar methodologies, the Maijishan could embark on a research project at their site in order to provide practical advice to local governments around combining tourism and social development. The research from the Getty team intends to find the threshold for visitation at Mogao Caves which provides flexibly for tourism development at the World Heritage site. Respecting the aspiration of local communities for a better life would create a wider social buy-in to the site. In return, this new approach would provide a great opportunity for the heritage managers to spread the identity and narrative of the Maijishan Cave-Temple Complex and encourage individual behaviors towards an understanding and acceptance of the relationship between the site and the local communities.

The European approach (FCN) proves that local social groups are of great potential value when protecting heritage sites. In addition, the experiences of the Mogao Caves research into sustainable tourism mentioned above proves that through impact assessments of the pressures associated with visitation, heritage sites can deal with ongoing problems and find a balance between site protection and economic interests. Thus, a more open attitude can be fostered towards the tourism activities at the sites. Successful examples of the power of local communities are also worth researching. The premise of the principles and criteria for these new approaches should be practical investigations according to the condition of the sites. More importantly, these studies need to acknowledge the needs of all stakeholders and the knowledge gained from them should be explained to a wider audience.

*8 https://www.latimes.com/entertainment/arts/la-et-cm-mogao-grottoes-buddhist-caves-dunhuang-20140928-story.html*

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# Investigating informality in the financing of culture and creative businesses in Kenya: A Case Study of the Uhuru Textiles Market in Nairobi



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*HEVA is Africa's first dedicated finance, business support and knowledge facility for creative industries. We have raised more than USD 10 Million, invested in more than 50 creative businesses and directly supported over 8,000 creative practitioners in the fashion, digital content and television, live music and gaming value-chains.*

*From Nairobi, Kampala, Kigali, Arusha, Lamu to Dar es Salaam, the creative sector is where the creation of new products and new cultural experiences are happening. We want to be at the forefront of helping producers of cultural goods and services to build high-value, profitable businesses where new ideas will come to life, and where the highest potential for great profits, great jobs, and happy people will be found.*

*Contributors: George Gachara, George Aloo Karanja, Wakiuru Njuguna, Nehemiah Kabugi*

## Section one

**Case Description:** This paper seeks to understand the nature of financing in the informal sector with a focus on Uhuru Market, an informal market ecosystem in Nairobi.

**Geographic area of research:** Kenya.

**Cultural economy sector focus:** Fashion (textile production).

## Methodology for the investigation

Desk research of a report generated from a study conducted in 2019 and 2020 at Uhuru Market by HEVA to better understand the financial, infrastructure and governance needs of the traders of the market. A sample size of 220 traders was developed following a process of stratified sampling. Focus group discussions were held to elaborate on the findings of the main study. For the purposes of this report, additional online desk research was conducted to contextualise the findings of the Uhuru Market Report.

# Investigating informality in the financing of culture and creative businesses in Kenya: A Case Study of the Uhuru Textiles Market in Nairobi

*George Gachara*

## Introduction

Many business commentators and reputable business writers of major business publications often describe informal businesses in the Global South, Asia, Latin America and Africa only through the lenses of informality, a concept which has not only become monolithic but the definitive characteristic of businesses on our side of the world.



In these presentations, informality is seen as either a euphemism for unregulated businesses, which are usually run by people unemployed in the formal sector of the economy, with low specialisation, low capitalisation, low productivity and with few protections, or as unethical and illegal businesses which operate " under the radar," always "circumventing the law through loopholes" promoting "chaotic business environments with open secrets, unwritten rules and hidden practices of getting things done".

From this vantage point, formalisation is the panacea: informal businesses can only be motivated by nefarious ends such as tax dodging, rather than by enlightened and legitimate business strategies consisting of a cost-benefit evaluation which highlights the difficulty corruption, inefficiency and the harsh time penalty formalising can have on small ventures. These sets of assumptions crystalise into a mainstream suspicion of informal businesses which limits interest in investigating and developing prototypes which would help build the necessary understanding and introduce the transparency which is critical to the underwriting of responsive public policies needed to encourage investment and growth.

In this paper, through a case study approach on the Uhuru textiles market in Nairobi, we have attempted to dissuade ourselves from any fixed notions of informality and informal business conditions through asking numerous questions and addressing these questions with a degree of courageous honesty. We have allowed the insights from this inquiry to confront and test our assumptions.

## What does informality look like?

To avoid falling into the self-indulgent business school bias that we often and easily resort to — the unthinking transfer and application of western economic epistemic models - it is important to remember to consider the cultural context of businesses in the many Global South societies. In Kenya, as in most African societies, informality has been and remains ubiquitous to all human activities. Formal engagements were only recently introduced along with formal governments, religion, schooling and a regulated private sector.

According to Ananya Roy in her publication, ***Slumdog Cities: Rethinking Subaltern Urbanism***, informality is 'the overlapping and intersecting relations between authorised and unauthorised, or between regulated and unregulated activities.' This paper seems to favour Ananya Roy's articulation as it attempts to acknowledge the complexity of the relations, the range of permissions and the impact of location on the informal sector.

According to the World Bank (January 2016), informal businesses

(the Jua Kali sector) make up 95% of all enterprises in Kenya and, according to the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (2014), contribute to 87.2% of all employment. This is indicative of the pervasiveness of informality in Kenya and, indeed, in most African countries. If the implications of these statistics were to be truly taken into consideration, the question of informality would not be viewed as a fringe market condition but as the dominant economic epistemology.

## Why Uhuru Market?

At the commencement of our research we recognized the tremendous opportunity for wealth, jobs and dignity in the textile sector in Kenya. We also accepted that most of the businesses remained small and in their early stage of growth as a result of numerous constraints. These include competing with expensive imported fabrics and inputs, as well as a shrinking domestic market as a result of western countries dumping second-hand clothes in African countries. After many years of investigating local private fashion brands, it was time to move out of our comfort zone and lead an inquiry into the micro and small garments venture which serve the domestic market and which form a majority of businesses in the sector.



*Trader stall in Uhuru Market*

## Complexity of the industry

From our vantage point, it was clear that informality was not a uniform experience and that it was important to inquire and build understanding on layers and intersections that constitute the specific type of informality in our sector. It is our assumption that informality is caused and sustained by the low level of market sophistication which is symptomatic of low investment appetite. This causes the practitioner to remain at the early stage of business growth for a long time.

It is also our assumption that low consumer demand is a result of price distortion due to the dumping of cheap second-hand clothing from developed nations. This has a negative impact on the competitiveness of local products as they have a limited source of fabric, high labour costs, limited design offerings, high costs of production, etc.

## High cost of formalisation

Without a graduated or disaggregated approach to formalisation in terms of business growth, most early-stage businesses in the textiles sector cannot justify the cost of formalisation. This causes a reduction of capital available for business activities, negatively impacts set- up time, and limits benefits from the investment. It is common for a small business to be required to undertake business registration as a limited liability company or a sole proprietorship at the company registry which is a costly endeavour. It exposes the business to additional recurrent expenses for statutory filings and delays set-up as it takes more than a month.

Additionally, this registration comes with statutory tax registration requirements, along with a costly investment in a digital tax register infrastructure, as well as

the requirement to register each employee with public pension and medical schemes. Before setting up the business an annual city license, along with a fire license and the national bureau of standards license must be purchased for each product line. All these are the requirements before operations can commence. A whole set of requirements — legal filings, contracts, accounting, insurance, etc., continue to increase the cost of doing business and impact on profitability.

### *Demographics*

According to the World Bank in their report on Gender Equality and Development (2012), 76% of informal businesses are female owned. These woman also suffer the penalty/ burden of care work for their families and face unequal treatment by markets and institutions. It is true that most women are unable to access formal credit due to low access to fixed assets which can be mobilised as security. They often resort to informal lending — which can be limited to their own savings and exploitative in its cost. It is also true that women often accumulate capital at a slower rate than men in the same trade, due to the time spent taking care of their families and young children. These are additional factors that contribute, reinforce and sustain the state of informality in the textiles industry; even for businesses that would like to adopt a level of formalisation.



*Trader Health Registration*

## Findings: What did we discover in our inquiry?

Access to finance remains an important consideration for the majority of small and medium businesses, particularly those in the creative industries. Many businesses in the cultural and creative industry are financed by their owners through personal savings, loans from family and leveraging personal assets for informal debt. In order for these businesses to take advantage of new business opportunities, especially during peak business seasons, they often require additional capital for operations to finance growth, new market entry, new product development, machinery, supplies etc. Some businesses with a certain level of formalisation can access short term debt but many resort to reducing salaries and informal debt to finance growth. It is clear that without additional capital most of these businesses remain at the precarious early stage.

Limited enterprise growth (Göttingen, 2013) is a factor of "market forces, social-political factors" but most importantly "finance availability." As a result of limited possibilities to upgrade operations and scale their productive activities, informal enterprises are unable to improve returns, and support overall growth.

In order to finance day-to-day operational costs as well as growth, traders at Uhuru Market have developed the following solutions:

### 1. Traders Savings and Credit Cooperative:

250 of the approximately 1000 traders at the Uhuru Market are members of the traders cooperative which is registered by Sacco Societies Regulatory Authority. The cooperative has an open membership recruitment process and offers numerous benefits to members. Loans, relative to members own

savings and contributions, are given at favourable interest rates and flexible payment periods are able to be negotiated. The members of this cooperative also collectively own assets such as business equipment for lease, and land.

***Notes:***

- This cooperative is a formal financing mechanism in a cooperative model. It is both registered and regulated.
- To access credit one has to be a member and have saved consistently for 6 months.
- Members can only access credit of up to 3 times their savings.

## 2. Informal Savings and Credit Groups (Merry-go-round)

Merry-go-rounds are informal savings and lending groups composed of 10 to 20 individual traders. These groups form their own savings and lending rules. The members are often required to save a fixed amount on a daily, weekly or monthly basis. The collected contributions are then either handed out to members as loans with favourable interest rates or as revolving grants to each member, without the obligation to pay back.

The most common practice is the lump sum grant given out monthly to one member at a time on a rotational basis. This approach does not build capital and does not leverage members' contributions over time. It is able to meet the one time, short term financing needs of the members but is limited by the amount of savings and the number of members, as well as by the time it takes for a member to be eligible for another grant.

***Notes***

- This informal mechanism suffers the limitations of informality as it is dependent on the members' own social relationships.
- The reliance on social contracts and trust makes it easy to access financing but the mechanism cannot deliver the benefits of scale, leverage and business integration.

## 3. Mobile Loans

Mobile lending digital applications on mobile phones have become an easy source of credit for Kenyans who don't have accounts with banks and other traditional financial institutions or the regular income needed to borrow from such establishments. According to the Central Bank of Kenya in the report in Financial Access (2019), financial inclusion in Kenya rose from 26.7% in 2006 to 82.9% in 2019, driven largely by the growth of mobile money. A digital credit report (FSD 2019) established that 13.6% of Kenyans had borrowed loans from a digital lender, citing their convenience and ease of access.

At Uhuru Market, 8% of the traders had reported using mobile loans as a source of business and personal finance. Most prefer this source of credit as it provides instant cash and has a short turnaround time from application to disbursement, often with no requirement to collateralize the facility.

***Note***

- These platforms offer the most expensive loans in the market by charging as high as 400% per annum interest rates. This has led to a high level of debt among the users of these platforms.

## Social political factors affecting access to finance?

Since the cooperative model was the favourite and seemed more responsive to the traders in this ecosystem, we sought to investigate which other factors were common to the market cluster as a result of their unique financing mechanism:

### *1. Social-cultural factors*

A cooperative movement is a member-driven institution which has high returns on the ownership and agency of its members. Because of these characteristics, the cooperative can also be vulnerable to numerous perception issues including but not limited to exclusiveness, where the main institution is seen by some as being exclusive to tribe, gender or age, which limits its appeal to potential members.

### *2. Political challenges*

The leadership of the cooperative has been the same group of people for many years. They are accused of non-inclusion and have made no effort to change this perception through holding regular elections. There is thus a general apprehension towards this institution which causes many traders to join other cooperatives outside the market. This has a negative impact on the growth of the capital pool for the cooperative.

## What can be done to improve the prospects of this cooperative model?

1. Rebuilding trust, expanding membership and better communication by those in leadership to both their members and non-members.

2. Development of competitive financial products to improve the understanding of market business cycles as well as to leverage the existing business relationships.

3. Developing innovative products that can be accessed by groups to benefit the 'merry-go-round' schemes through collecting their savings, increasing their pool of resources and leveraging their savings for the cooperatives.

4. Increase efficiency by adopting digital practices and due-diligence for lending to reduce defaults and therefore pass on the resulting gains to the members.

5. Leverage formal relationships to increase the pool of lending capital available to the traders in order to ensure that there is enough financing to meet the business needs during peak seasons (e.g. school uniform season, holiday season etc.).

## Acknowledgements

HEVA would like to thank The British Council and PEC. This project is undertaken by the PEC International Council and supported by the British Council. The PEC International Council is a network of leading policy and creative economy practitioners from across the world. The group is convened by The British Council and is an international advisory body to the Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre (PEC), which is led by Nesta.



# Redefining Creative Initiatives through the Formal-Informal Interface

*By Omar Nagati, Amin El-Didi, Maria Suescun*

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*Cairo Lab for Urban Studies, Training and Environmental Research (CLUSTER) was founded in 2011 in Downtown Cairo, as a platform for urban research, architecture, art and design initiatives. CLUSTER seeks to provide a space for critical urban discourse and design practice. It aims at promoting a sustainable urban environment and more diverse and accessible public spaces, investigating new approaches to learn from informal practices and explore alternative modes of urban development.*

## Two case studies from Cairo

CLUSTER: Cairo Lab for Urban Studies Training and Environmental Research

## Abstract

The intersection between creative initiatives and the informal economy is not an abstract hypothesis in cities in the Global South, which are largely dominated by informal practices, and where the organic linkages between the formal and informal processes are manifest in many sectors in the service economy.

This research highlights this formal-informal continuum through two projects in Cairo by CLUSTER between 2018 and 2021, whereby creative initiatives are redefined beyond the narrow boundaries of art and design, extending to crafts and small workshops within informal areas. The research contests a clear delineation between the formal and informal sectors and areas, proposing an understanding of the organic and dynamic nature of their

interface instead. Further, it argues for rethinking this interface as a generative framework to redefine creative initiatives in cities in the Global South.

## Part one: Premises and Frameworks

This essay is hinged upon two main premises that frame the case studies presented below. The first is redefining creative initiatives and industries beyond the classical definition (Florida, 2002), and the second contesting the dual understanding of cities in the Global South through a formal-informal divide.

### *Redefining the creative economy*

Creative cities and creative economy are discursive terms that emerged in the 1990s to characterise the transformation of cities in Europe and North America from an industrial to post-industrial economy as part of a global neo-liberal turn. In Cairo, as in many other cities in the Global South, the response to deregulations and the dismantling of welfare programs has been largely manifest in the informal economy. Left on their own, communities developed creative solutions to their daily needs and challenges, developing a parallel sector in absence of state's provision. From that perspective, it could be argued that informality is creativity, which calls for a revision of the Euro-centric definition of a white-collared, formally-educated and globally-connected "creative class" towards a more inclusive understanding of creative initiatives. Having said that, it has become too fashionable to romanticise urban informality as an alternative to regulated economy, arguably enabling communities to pursue their own interests, while absolving the state of its own responsibility towards its citizens and as the guardian of public good. Informality is about private actors pursuing private interest and should not be advocated as a long-term progressive agenda, but rather as an interim condition until a strong democratic state is redeemed.



*Fig 1. Facade painting workshop in Ard al-Liwa*

This strategic agenda raises important questions concerning the tactical role of creative actors in cities dominated by informal economy and urban practices. The question of how to stay relevant through meaningful engagements with a prevailing condition of informality, embracing neither an outright dismissal nor uncritical romanticisation, is a pragmatic position actualised through multiple approaches: a) by carving out an independent position between the state's and real-estate market forces; b) by developing creative solutions, while maintaining an advocacy position towards inclusion and urban justice; and c) through negotiating a diversified scope of practice including reflective observations, critical mapping and interventions on the ground through pilot projects to validate broader hypotheses.

### *Formal-informal interface as a spectrum*

In Cairo, and cities of the Global South at large, the term 'informal' is often used to describe the methods through which people access

land, housing and services. This informality, of course, is positioned next to its corollary, formality. Assumed to be a binary, this duality informs how cities are understood and how policies to address informality are constructed and implemented. While understanding informality is vital to understanding Southern — and particularly African cities — understanding the formal/informal as a binary does not do justice to the complexity of dynamics which exist in African cities (McGee 1978; Roy 2005).

The concepts of formal and informal constructs should be seen as analytical categories rather than discrete conditions with clear boundaries. This essay supports a view of formality as a continuum, wherein "formal" and "informal" activities are intertwined across this spectrum. In addition, informality exists within formal structures and vice versa, both geographically and institutionally. This position echoes authors who argue that informality and formality exhibit "strong, complex, and dynamic complementarities and interrelationships" (Arfvidsson et al. 2016:101; see also: Groenewald et al. 2013).

To further demonstrate these organic linkages and integrated ecosystem, the remainder of this essay presents two case studies based on CLUSTER's projects in both the historic city centre and outlying informal areas, critically maintaining a delicate balance within the formal-informal interface at different scales, while creatively engaging communities of practice along this spectrum. Sites and journeys below are illustrative of the intertwined nature of the formal-informal interface as a generative mode of creative initiatives.

## Part Two: Sites and Communities

### *A. ALFABRIKA Creative Lab: Site of formal-informal encounter and knowledge exchange*

ALFABRIKA was launched by CLUSTER in 2019 to address the gap between formal training and practical/grounded knowledge. It is located in Ard al-Liwa, which is one of the most vibrant informal neighbourhoods to the west of Cairo, an area having an extensive network of small industries and craft

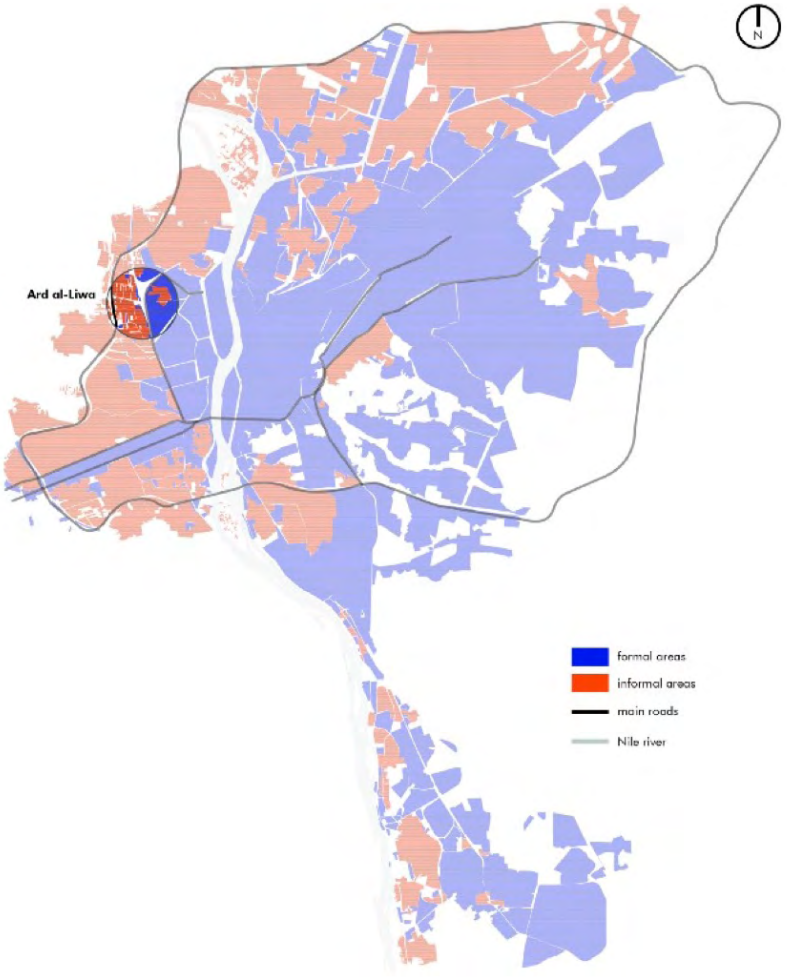



*Fig 1. Ard al-Liwa as situated within Greater Cairo*

workshops ranging from carpentry and upholstery to metal and glass work, in addition to hosting the second largest garbage recycling community in Cairo (fig. 1).

ALFABRIKA is envisioned as a space of encounter, bringing art students and young designers together with craftspeople and owners of small workshops. Through a series of thematic workshops around upcycling, palm reeds craft and social furniture, the teams engage in intensive knowledge exchange using manual and high-tech tools through a process of research, design, manufacturing and branding. While students, on the one hand, learn how to manufacture products outside their university labs and abstract modes of knowledge, craftspeople, on the other hand, can gain insights into the latest design directions and the use of high-tech machines (laser cutter, 3D printer, CNC, etc.), through a complementary design-make exercise. ALFABRIKA thus not only challenges the boundaries between formal and informal modes of knowledge production, it also contributes to redefining the role of creative actors in a city awash in a sea of informality (fig. 2).



*Fig 2. Design-craft workshops by ALFABRIKA*

### *B. Urban backstage: Art houses and artisan workshops*

A second site of interface between formal and informal modes of production is manifest in CLUSTER's interest and previous track record in art and culture as catalysts for urban regeneration, in both the historic city centre and outlying informal areas where emerging art spaces interact with a network of local crafts and workshops. Two interrelated projects, developed and implemented in 2020–21, may best illustrate this linkage.

In the neighbourhood of Ard al-Liwa, the project focused on enhancing the visual identities of a number of businesses around ALFABRIKA, creating attractive and contemporary landmarks in an otherwise monotone urban fabric. With DUCO public art initiative as implementing partner, the contribution of artists Ibrahim Ahmed and Ibrahim Khattab, and the participation of art and design students from various universities, a workshop was organised aiming at the redesign and implementation of three storefronts: ALFABRIKA's own shutters, the shutter of al-Ibrahimayn Art Studio, and the exterior walls of the Nour al-Quran nursery. The workshop emphasised enhancing the visibility of these locations, the quality of the streetscape, and training students while engaging with craftspeople who in turn acquire new skills while passing on their expertise.

In the provincial capital al-Mansoura, the site in question offered a different historic and cultural context of a derelict Greek cafe built in the early 1900s. This required a more sensitive approach and allowed for an opportunity to consider traditional signage techniques that are no longer in use. With Cairopolitan art house as implementing partner, the design process involved an array of skill sets and crafts, both traditional and digital, including calligraphy, metal making, laser engraving, silk-screening and more. This part of the project entailed working through a complex web of different contributors with different degrees of formality, with CLUSTER as the main designer and mediator, constantly negotiating the design through dialogues with the respective parties.

### *C. Urban Journey: Through formal-informal transfer points*

The design and implementation process, which is further detailed below, entailed a direct collaboration between designers and craftsmen, whose studios and workshops are located between the city centre and informal areas at its periphery. The journeys between these sites traverse the boundaries of official districts and their lines of demarcation. Using multiple modes of transportation, in themselves a combination of formal and informal systems, each journey offers a lens into the intertwined



*Fig 3. Routes traversing the formal-informal divide*

nature of these systems. In 2018, CLUSTER developed a research project interrogating these points of interface and traffic junctions, using a typical transportation journey from an informal area at the city edge to its centre as both an analytical framework and experiential narrative.

Transportation is one of the city's systems that best represents this continuum and the overlaps between formality and informality (fig. 3).

Transportation serves as the mediator and actor as it is the means by which diverse areas of the city are interconnected. Social transformations often occur at a higher pace than infrastructural changes in the city, so transportation is the mechanism by which the city can function "cohesively" even through rapid and abrupt shifts. The formally planned parts of the city are in constant exchange of labour and goods with the informal neighbourhoods and vice versa, and it is through transportation that both realities come together. The informal community's ability to develop solutions to address the lack of public transportation in their neighbourhood is an example of a creative answer to a very tangible problem.

In order to illustrate the nuances of transportation in such a unique context, CLUSTER's research team adopted a methodological approach which includes a flow, or a pathway (from a source, through a transition, and to a destination). These stages are then analysed through specific variables (quantifiable, mutually exclusive, spatially manifest) to

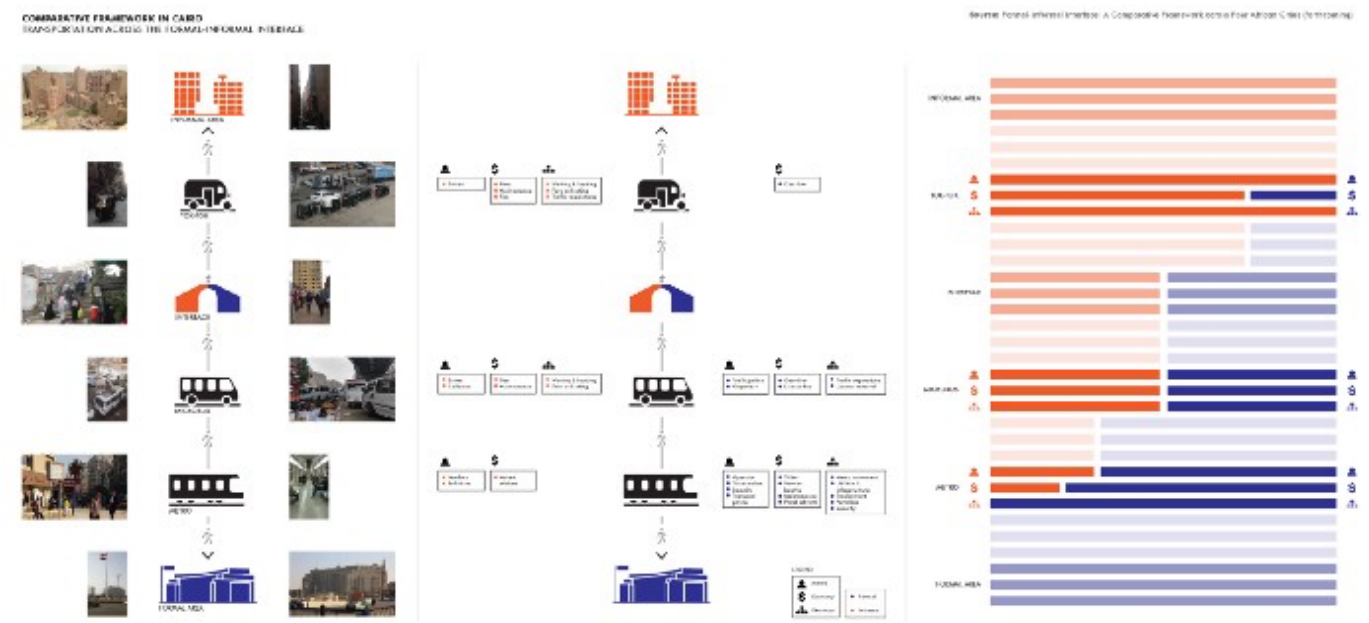


*Fig 4. Formal-informal spectra along a typical transportation journey*

weigh the interface between absolute values of formality and informality. Using definitive values of 'actors', 'economy', and 'organisation', it becomes possible to move from abstract concepts to substantive and measurable units through which to weigh the interface. The above diagram illustrates such exchange between formal and informal areas of Cairo, and makes visible the nature of transportation as a spectrum by assigning red and blue to informal and formal respectively, and assessing degrees of formality of the respective modes of transportation (fig. 4).

While the spectra can be delineated through categorical variables as previously shown, a typical commute from Cairo's informal periphery to the formal city centre can be more accurately described through the following animation, which attempts to capture the different manifestations of both formal and informal presences at each step of the way.

## Part three: Process and Engagement

Within the above three sites of encounter, the following sections outline the main stages of the design, production and installation processes, each engaging the creative interface between actors, tools and economies for both the formal and informal sectors (fig. 5).

The rather detailed narrative below highlights the blurred boundaries between the various modes of creative production with varying degrees of formal education, training and regulations.

### *Design phase*

The design process of ALFABRIKA's shutters began with the CLUSTER team holding internal competitions and reviews to determine a design direction. The agreed-on final iterations drew inspiration from ALFABRIKA's design-craft workshops, creating a unified colour palette, and aiming to reflect both the fabrication lab and the urban lab's purview through a transition of scales from the dense to the scattered periphery. Such a process was largely limited to the design team inside CLUSTER's studio.

Conversely, the proposals for Nour al-Quran nursery and al-Ibrahimayn Art Studio went through different iterations where the input by each space owner in the informal area of Ard al-Liwa entailed rethinking the design strategy. For example, initially

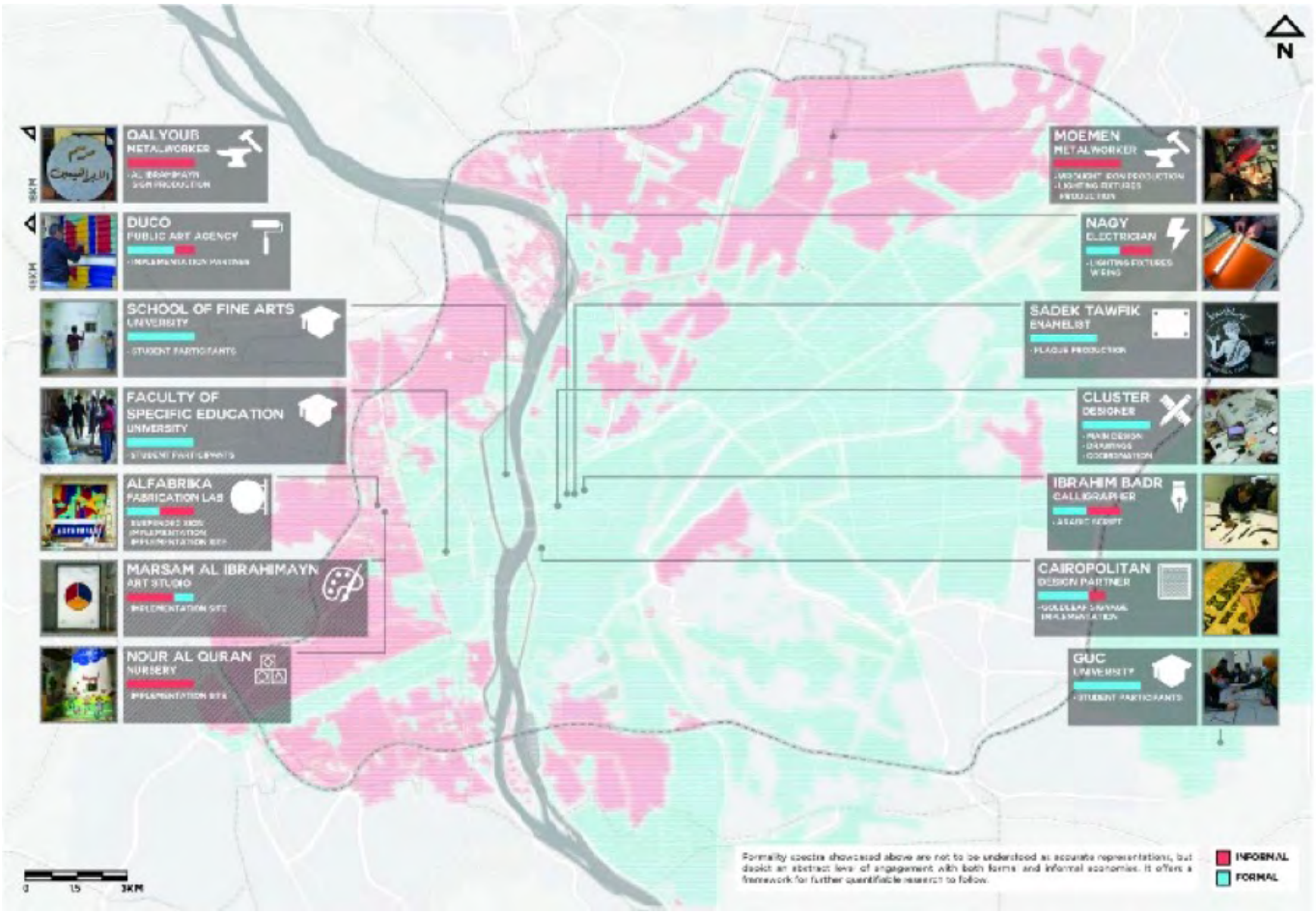



*Fig 5. Network of project stakeholders and their different levels of formality*

the team debated whether the nursery could have ancient Egyptian motifs on its wall, but it became clear that those illustrations might not be comprehensible to the local context or, worse, viewed as of pagan connotation in such conservative milieu of a rather orthodox religious interpretation. A more neutral design was thus suggested treating the wall as a child's art sketchbook, incorporating scanned illustrations by children, and adding a colour scheme that was varied and bright in the otherwise heavily shaded area. Similarly, for al-Ibrahimayn Art Studio, having an unclear legal status within an informal area, the artists preferred a rather minimalistic and subdued approach, opting to not stand out within their urban block. In short, both the design philosophy and community engagement had to be delicately positioned at the borderline between an artistic vision and abstract ideals on the one hand, and priorities and concerns of neighbours on the other, in such a legally precarious business environment (fig. 6).

As for Mansoura's Andrea Cafe, the process began with determining how best to intervene with the facade in order to achieve a contemporary yet historically representative signage system. This was done by researching precedents and the equivalent local artisans available for the tasks ahead. As the storefront provided three bays with their respective signage spaces in each language (Arabic, Greek and English), this presented an opportunity to experiment with traditional displays made with contemporary methods.

Gold leaf is produced by hammering




*Fig 6. Designs of the sites in Ard al-Liwa, reflecting their disciplines while prioritizing context sensitivity*

gold into extremely thin sheets; the application of those sheets to wood, metal, glass, or ceramic is gilding. In Egypt, the technique was commonly used until the middle of the 20th century. People started to lose interest when new printing technologies started to appear and so it almost became a dying craft. With the historical integrity of Andrea Cafe and the possibility of reviving the perishing technique on the glass bays, the team started by looking for artisans practicing this method, and soon realised that none of the master craftsmen were still alive. Luckily, the team was guided to Ahmed Hefnawy, an artist and co-founder of Cairopolitan who is knowledgeable of the technique and has been part of the process of Cairopolitan's own gilded sign's production. The design process was then reconfigured, engaging master calligraphers in Cairo, Alexandria and Mansoura, while consulting Ahmed Hefnawy as an interlocutor to bridge the gap between design and production processes.

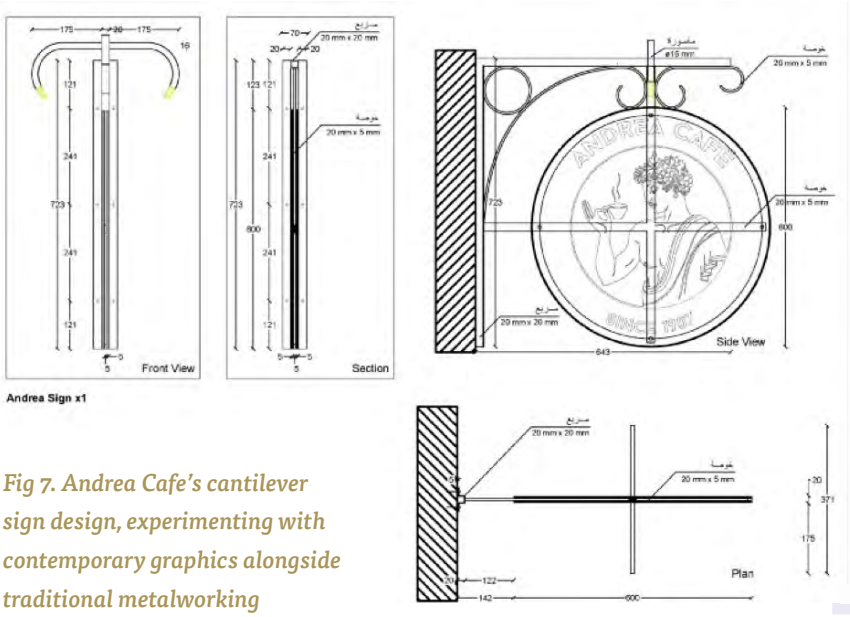



*Fig 7. Andrea Cafe's cantilever sign design, experimenting with contemporary graphics alongside traditional metalworking*

In addition to the frontal glass signage, the team experimented with the design of a metal cantilever sign perpendicular to the facade, that would allow for more visibility for passers-by along the street (fig. 7).

This provided an opportunity to add to the cafe's visual identity in the way of a branding logo that could also be used with the cafe's associated paraphernalia, from menus to cups and coasters. The process of developing an abstract visual language as holistic branding had to be repeatedly negotiated with the owner who insisted on drawing inspiration from Greek mythology, utilising reference material from vintage design heirlooms found in the cafe. Further, the team supplemented the facade's metal sign with custom-made ambient wall lights and their wrought iron supports, following the established design language. This could only have been done through an informal assemblage process whereby many artisans were consulted, given that formal markets only held limited catalogues of prefabricated typical light fixtures, and were thus less imaginative.

While the design process involved a number of iterations and revisions through a fluid exchange of design concepts, sample materials and prototypes, it was only after the project was completed that a reflective moment was possible. In retrospect, one could revisit these milestones and critically examine the formal-informal boundaries through actors, materials, capital and, most importantly, modes of creativity and knowledge production. The following section continues this investigation of abstract versus grounded knowledge through the manufacturing and installing processes.

### *Production phase*

During the production phase, the role of the manufacturer in the design process was prominent and visible. In a more European setting, the demand for the type of signage designed (the cantilevered sign) is higher and the industry for it already exists. In Cairo, the informal sector offers an ecosystem providing alternative solutions to what is not otherwise available in the market. Given these gaps in the established industry, design houses seek the craftspeople that are up to the job, even if sometimes it is the first time they engage in such a venture. Compared to formal contracts, the design and production process are less clearly delineated as design decisions are hinged on available sections and details are negotiated back and forth with local craftsmen to attain a design that is constructible and within availability of resources.

During the production phase of Andrea Cafe signage in Mansoura, both formal and informal production processes were intricately intertwined. The more formal production process took place at Cairopolitan art house, where they led the reproduction of gold leaf glass signs through a mix of traditional calligraphy and contemporary techniques, including digital design, silk-screening and cutter plotter. Accordingly, the team produced a plan for the production of gold sticker signage, outlining the steps with each to achieve three glass signs using a mixture of contemporary and traditional methods (fig. 8).

From a heritage point of view reviving a dying craft is very significant, as one of the biggest challenges within emerging economies is to preserve their undocumented traditions. This became evident when talking to the calligrapher as he explained that the artistic decisions he was making regarding the positioning of the "kashida" (a type of justification in Arabic cursive scripts, elongating letters at certain points) were decisions only an expert, and not a computer algorithm, could make.

On the other hand, the less formal production process took place for the metal signage and the lighting components (fig. 9).

Based on its existing network, CLUSTER contacted the metalworkers in one of Cairo's informal neighbourhoods, al-Marg, to fabricate the metal signage. During this process, the design/production boundary also became blurred as there was a constant exchange between the

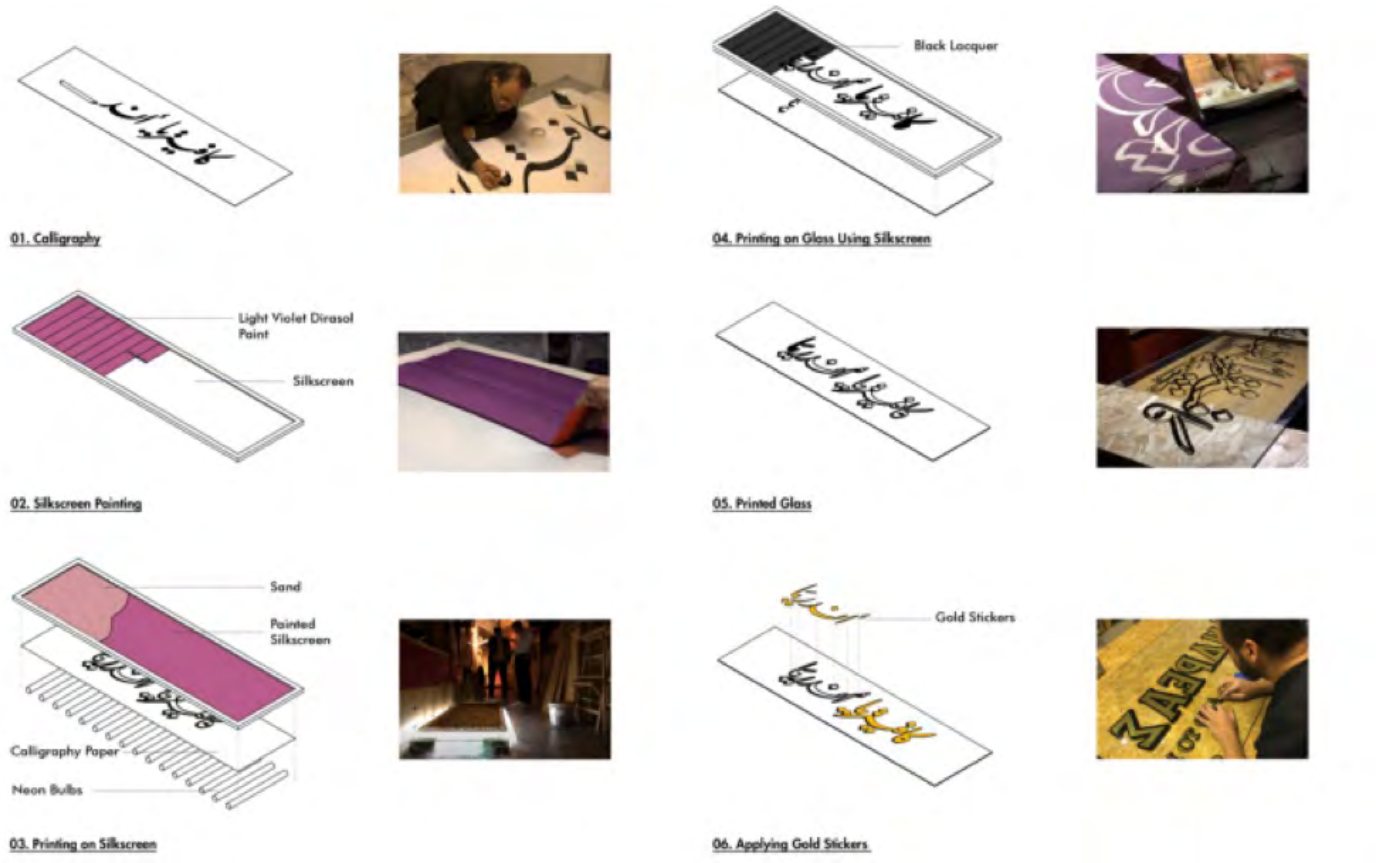



*Fig 8. Gilded signage process incorporating Arabic calligraphy*

art house and the craftspeople. Many of the decisions took place at the craftsman's workshop, with a designer's presence and/or communicating through digital application for review and approval. The availability of certain materials and specifications informed the viability of the design, limiting choices while offering opportunities to rethink on-paper schemes.

## *Implementation and Installation Phase*

While the design and production phases involved a mix of formal and informal processes of knowledge exchange and manufacturing



*Fig 9. Metal-forging process is predominantly*

techniques, the implementation phase was entirely embedded in informal settings in Ard al-Liwa and thus subject to local forces: strong community engagement and low presence of authorities. In contrast, the site of Cafe Andrea was at the city centre, half a block away from the central police directorate, which resulted in an overwhelming presence on their part during the installation phase. The contrast between both sites and contexts could not be more indicative of the formal-informal interface thesis.

During the Ard al-Liwa implementation phase, the team ran into a series of challenges, creating a certain degree of uncertainty during the process, especially with the production and the implementation of the round cantilevered sign at the Nour al Quran nursery: available materials and accessories, competence of some of the craftsmen and commitment to concrete deadlines during the precarious Covid19 business environment. Secondly, given that the project was being implemented in an informal neighbourhood, what mattered most was the community's concession rather than formal approval by the local authorities. In Ard al-Liwa, communities have a high capacity to self-organise and therefore any spatial decisions or transformations must be approved by them as their opinion will ultimately determine the fate of the project and end result (fig. 10).

This was also evident in the possibility to extend the implementation workshop time frame due to external contingencies without needing formal approvals or permits, which was diametrically opposite to the situation in Cafe Andrea in Mansoura (fig. 11–13).




*Fig 10. ALFABRIKA's shutters after the community workshop's completion*

For the signage at Andrea Cafe, the installation phase involved a certain degree of coordination between different actors at different locations. On one hand, the glass had to be transported from Cairo in a special truck fitted with shock absorbers. The metal signage and the light fixtures were also transported from Cairo. On the other hand, coordination with the local stakeholders had to be pre-planned through a local design associate on the ground. It involved synchronising installation with the Cafe owner and recruiting a local installation crew, namely for the glass, as well as wood workers and electricians (fig. 14).

During the three-day workshop, a number of unexpected issues were raised that needed immediate on-the-ground resolution. A case in point was an error in the dimension of one of the glass signs produced in Cairo that could neither be returned nor replaced. The glass workers demonstrated their resourcefulness and immediately proposed a practical solution; to carve out part of the wood-frame's interior in order for the glass to fit comfortably and still maintain the facade intact on the outside — an inventive solution outside the bounds of the design team, who would generally have opted for a reproduction with the correct dimensions which was not a viable option in this case. Numerous other examples demonstrated the capacity of craftsmen to find quick



*Fig 11-13. Shutter painting workshop in Ard al-Liwa*



*Fig 14. Craftsmen involved in the installation of Andrea Cafe's signage*



*Fig 15. Combination of gilded glass signage and branded cantilever sign*

fixes using their available tools and resources.

Conversely, there was another undeniable presence of the police during the workshop. Andrea Café is located right next to the police headquarters in Mansoura, which has very high security measures, and this proved to be a major constraint rather than an asset. The police were concerned about the implementation's documentation because they did not want any photographs of the headquarters to be taken. Consequently, the team was constantly interrupted and many times questioned on the intentions of the project. Instead of facilitating the implementation process, the police were a distractor and an obstacle. They had also parked their cars in front of the café which made it difficult to upload materials, and impossible to get a complete picture of what the facade looked like, only allowing side pictures of the final result from the narrowing sidewalk (fig. 15).

Once again, the dialogue between formal forces and informal ones became apparent with the police, being the ultimate representation of the formal authorities, requesting permits and enforcing restrictions while the team was able to dissuade their questioning by engaging in an informal manner: through colloquial talk and cultural courtesy. In summary, it was during the implementation phase that the interplay between formal and

informal systems was most apparent, having sites and communities in different parts of the city offering a comparative outlook on the nuances of the different processes necessary to create an architectural intervention within a public space, from the formal city core to the informal periphery.

## Part four. Conclusion and Lessons Learned

This essay, which is based on an empirical experience and practical knowledge, may nevertheless offer a number of reflections on the intersection of creative initiatives and the formal-informal interface. The presented research and design projects criss-cross the city's formal and informal boundaries, both geographically and institutionally, while their actors, economies and modes of knowledge are organically linked via a complex web of networks and flows. A number of themes could be discerned that are relevant to other cities and regions in the Global South.

### *1. Informality as creativity*

Informal responses to the absence of the state's provision of urban services are based on grounded creative solutions. Rather than being chaotic and unstructured, these initiatives offer a pool of creative solutions to academics and practitioners alike. The projects above highlight the need to rethink urban informality as a generative process, and develop creative modes of engagement towards more comprehensive and integrated solutions for our cities.

### *2. Modes of knowledge and communication*

The projects illustrate an interplay and exchange between two modes of knowledge and creative production. The first is based on formal training and hinged upon an abstract mode of representation by artists and designers, while the second is embedded in grounded experience and practical tools of production by artisans and craftspeople. The exchange between both requires creative modes of communication using unconventional techniques, such as volumetric representations, mock-ups and prototypes through multiple iterations.

### *3. Dual agency of creative actors: practical and reflective*

The role CLUSTER assumes in these projects as mediator and negotiator between the modes described above is representative of emerging creative practices over the past decade or two. Their practical position engages projects in which the boundaries between formal and informal economies and initiatives are blurred and are only recognised in financial and contractual documents. As thoroughly discussed, each project involves an array of actors, markets and techniques that are intermingled at every stage in both the design and production processes. Their distinction may be discerned at a later (post-production) stage, when a more reflective position could be afforded, and where analytical categories and constructs could be projected back on the formal-informal continuum.

### *4. Inhabiting the interface as a modus operandi, that is interstitially generative and often subversively creative.*

Viewing the formal-informal interface as a complex web and a continuum, including loopholes within, implies a tactical approach to inhabit as sites of creative interventions. Unlike political and spatial strategies of wholesale changes, operating on a small scale within the interstices, which is genetically informal, offers an opportunity for an incremental, yet more sustainable approach to cities in the Global South.

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## Websites

**CLUSTER:** *clustercairo.org*
**CUIP:** *cuipcairo.org*

## Videos

***Objects in Mirror are Closer than they Appear*** *as part of the study "Formal-informal interface: comparative analysis between three Egyptian Cities"*

***Enhancing Visual Identity*** *— Ard al-Liwa as part of the Ard al-Liwa part of the project "Creativity in Action"*

***Restoring Signage Traditions*** *as part of the Mansoura part of the project "Creativity in Action"*

## List of initiatives and partners

**Andrea Café**, one of the oldest cafes in the city of Mansoura, was once a gathering place for intellectuals which has now become a favourite place for the young generation. It was established by the Greek Khawaja, Costasius Andrea, in 1907, to be the first café and meeting place for Greeks in Mansoura.

**AURI** (African Urban Research Initiative) was initiated in 2013 to support existing and future Africa-based research centres to inform and enhance the policy-actors and networks responsible for sustainable urban policy and management in different African contexts.

**Cairpolitan** is a design concept store and art gallery based in Garden City, Cairo, driven by the practical details of contemporary life in modern day Cairo, designing product lines that document everyday life with an aim of branding the city.

**DICE** (Developing Inclusive and Creative Economies) is a programme developed by the British Council that seeks to support the development of creative and social enterprises in the UK and five key emerging economies: Brazil, Egypt, Indonesia, Pakistan, and South Africa.

**DUCO** is a creative agency, production house and future platform dedicated to urban art and outdoor luminous hand-painted wallscapes powered by a commercial approach while contributing towards an urban cosmetic development by operating at the intersection of lifestyle, construction and media industries.

**Ibrahimayn Studio** was founded by artists Ibrahim Khattab and Ibrahim Ahmed, both mid-career artists with extensive local and international experience, who have decided to locate their studio in Ard al-Liwa to engage in current themes and develop grounded practice outside mainstream galleries.

**Nur al-Quran Nursery** is a local nursery in a small dead-end street in Ard al-Liwa. The nursery serves the local community's children, catering to different age groups and offering a range of art, reading and basic math classes in addition to regular Quran reading sessions.

# We need New Narratives of Informality in Global South Cultural and Creative Economies: Case Study of Nigeria



*Ojoma OCHAI, Managing Partner of The Creative Economy Practice at CC Hub*

*Ojoma Ochai is Managing Partner of The Creative Economy Practice at CC Hub which has a mission to stimulate innovation and technology application to catalyse African Creative Economy growth.*

*Previously she was the Regional Director for Arts and Creative Economy Programmes for the British Council in Sub Saharan Africa. In this role, she works with colleagues across Sub-Saharan Africa and the UK to devise strategies and lead programme teams to deliver positive artistic, social, economic and Cultural Relations outcomes, particularly for young people working in the Arts, and the Creative and Digital Economies.*

*Ms Ochai also sits on the UNESCO global expert facility for the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. In this capacity, she advices the multilateral agency and has supported national governments (e.g., The Gambia, Jamaica and Nigeria) to implement the convention and grow their Cultural and Creative Industries.*

*She has also worked on various international creative and digital sector development efforts for example for World Bank and Swedish Arts Council. She has spoken around the world on trends and opportunities in the African Creative and Digital Industries. These speaking engagements have included: the 8th World Summit on Arts and Culture, Malaysia, World Press Freedom Day, Ghana and the 1st OECD summit on Culture and Development in Italy. She has also spoken in UK parliament about opportunities for UK – Nigeria collaboration in Creative Industries.*

*Nominated as Young Person of the year by the Future Awards in 2010, Ojoma is a Fellow of the DEVOS Institute of Arts Management, University of Maryland, an Associate Fellow of the Nigerian Leadership Institute and sits on the board of the African Technology and Creative Group*

## Introduction

The dominant narrative of Informality often centres around illegality, poor quality, poverty, precariousness and lack of protection for workers. This is often a true reflection of Informality; but only some of the time.

## A Precarious Environment

It is probably true in the context of informal businesses that drove the historical narrative of Nollywood as a direct-to-video industry with the 'unique' distribution models, related 'piracy' or illegal copying that are often talked about. I am sure that many in the audience have seen images of shops in Alaba Market or 51 Iweka Road (both in Nigeria) with stacks of DVDs haphazardly displayed in dingy open markets. This dominant narrative is probably also true within the disruption of the Nollywood piracy industry, which is where one can take one's phone or flash drive to Alaba and get illegally copied film content on one's device for a small fee in a shed with quite

dodgy electric connections. It is probably also true in the context of fashion and garment manufacturing where often men and women in the informal sector work in a dingy back room, mending and making clothes for their neighbours.

It is true when you consider the findings of a recent survey of Lagos' creative and tourism sector industries. The survey sample covered 97% of the art and craft, film and video, performing and visual arts sectors over a period of 1 year. The majority of companies surveyed had been in business for four to seven years. The survey showed that less than 30% of these companies have a monthly income above 20,000 USD. 55% of the surveyed businesses have more than five members of staff. When the average monthly income is placed in the context of the number of workers that have to be paid from these endeavours, it is easy to frame informality in the context of poverty and precariousness.

That is one narrative.

## A Thriving Sector

The other narrative of informality in the cultural economy and the CCIs that is not commonly heard includes the fact that Nigeria has one of the highest ratios of informal economy contribution to its GDP. About 50%- 60% (depending on source) of the GDP of Nigeria comes from the informal sector. So, all things considered, were it not for the informal economy, Nigeria with all its oil wealth would lose 50-60% of its GDP. The dominant narrative also does not talk about the inclusion of people who would otherwise be excluded from economic activity. There are many examples of successful informal enterprises.

### *1. The Skit Economy*

There was a recent study by the African Polling Institute on the Skit economy – the economy related to the short, often comedic videos that you see on social media featuring personalities in Nigeria like Mark Angel, Maraji, Shaggy and Josh. The study found that there is a massive audience for the Skits on social media. The billions of combined views translate both to fame and revenue from the platforms as well as to ancillary revenue through commissioned adverts from big brands and live performance at shows (well, when we could do live shows). This is a source of income that many of the Skit makers would only dream about were they to try and enter the formal economy.

There is also an inherent value for the audience. 91% of respondents believed that Comedy Skits are useful in creating awareness about social trends (for example around COVID), 83% highlighted the role of Comedy Skits in correcting societal ills, and 90% acknowledged the potential of Comedy Skits for employment generation in Nigeria.

### *2. Fashion*

The dominant narrative also often does not take the informal fashion industry into account. Those we have taken to calling Instagram designers are making high quality clothing, accessories and other items and reaching consumers through Instagram ads and promotions. It does not talk about the value chain of these Instagram designers that includes graphic design, photography, and logistics. I was looking at a list of top 1000 fashion influencers on Instagram in Nigeria as I prepared for this. Some of them are artists and celebrities but many of them, maybe most of them, are creating these fashion brands that I speak of. They have a combined reach of way over 100 million followers on Instagram, providing a captive market through which people, who potentially otherwise would not have been successful, are able to earn a living.

These examples highlight for me not illegality and precariousness and lack. They highlight creativity, versatility and quality. They highlight agency, livelihoods, self-employment, work life balance and entrepreneurship (which is not a dirty word). They do not highlight the illegality of tax evasion, but rather the illegitimacy of the state and a lack of trust in the social contract based on years of historical misrule that predates independence. They highlight a context where people thrive not because of the state (and structure) but in spite of the state, and where they have to

contend with multiple taxation, no discernible benefit from paying taxes and excessive regulation.

## An African Context

I will close by arguing that in our African context, art, creativity and our culture and heritage are often spontaneous and based on community or individual expression. They are therefore not well served by the current rules of economics, based on a prescribed formality, that have been developed in the Global North. The danger of the single story of 'informality' enables the 'othering' of our sector, a lack of recognition for our business models, and gives rise to global frameworks and protocols that do not work for us. The global Intellectual Property protocols, for example, have no way of remunerating communities for their inventions and creations such as design patterns, textiles and forms of expression from which corporations and celebrities have made millions within the formal economies.

## A New Narrative

I was glad to hear Avril Joffe's opening keynote because it aligns with work we are doing in the British Council under a project called New Narratives, which we are developing to support more plural narratives between the countries of Africa and the UK. The project came into being because increasingly, through our work, we were seeing that the narratives of Africa were standing in the way of international collaboration and cocreation, particularly with the UK.

These narratives present Africa as a single homogenous entity seen through the lens of poverty and aid. Our first commissioned research project studied narratives with Africa and the UK, particularly between its young people aged 18 -35. We identified what we are calling narrative touchpoints – direct, mediated, iconic and bridged. The research also told us that the dominant narrative of Africa in the UK is through what we are calling imagined topographies – it is perceived not quite as one country but as clusters of countries with broad characteristics including landscape, athletic ability and corruption. The research showed us clearly that to engage with young people across Africa, we need to work differently.

Through our work with New Narratives, which is launching later this year, we are hoping that in Arts and Culture, Education and English we can start to be more thoughtful about how problematic narratives and biases affect the way that we programme. We hope that, in response to this, we design programmes differently: recognising the agency of our participants and in cocreation with our audiences. We want to ensure that power asymmetries between the Global North and South are not reinforced by the work we do and the way we do it.

## Conclusion

In closing, bringing the conversation back to the informality in the cultural and creative industries and in line with what Avril Joffe, George Gachara and Omar Nagati have presented, I invite colleagues from the PEC and other researchers looking at the CCIs in Africa to look at new definitions and new paradigms as they research this notion of informality. I invite them to challenge conventional wisdom that suggests informality is bad and formality is good. I invite them to highlight new narratives about the African and Global South Cultural and Creative Economy.

# Cultural Kasi'preneurs of Daveyton: Looking through the lens of informality[1]



*Dimakatso Motholo, Project Manager for the SO Academy and The Centre for the Less Good Idea*

*Dimakatso Motholo is a performing artist, researcher in cultural policy and arts management, and is the Project Manager for SO | Academy and The Centre for the Less Good Idea.*

*Having interned with organisations such as Moving into Dance Mophatong, Wits Art Museum, The Point of Order, and the Arts & Culture Trust, Motholo has considerable experience in both arts administration and stage management. Motholo has also worked as a stage manager for Seasons 1,4, and 5 of The Centre for the Less Good Idea. Motholo attained her MA in Cultural Policy and Management at the University of the Witwatersrand.*

*Season 7 of The Centre for the Less Good Idea sees Motholo working as assistant project manager and stage manager throughout the duration of the Season, as well as assisting the curators, co-animateurs, and artists across the workshopping sessions, rehearsal periods, and the lead-up to the Season's performances.*

## Introduction

Locations, kasis or townships can be defined as areas that were designed under the apartheid regime for cheap labour workers that were mainly classified as 'African' (Department of Co-Operative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA), 2009: 6). Spatially, Africans were located far enough to have a clear distinction of social differences (Mahajan, 2014: 3). Unlike many other countries (Brazil to India), the marginalised, the poor, the working class, the informal and, in South Africa, black population, have been excluded from urban development by being located in geographically distinct areas at a distance from economic and commercial activity. Many of the townships in South Africa are still characterised by the apartheid geography and legacy; they still currently serve the dual purpose of providing cheap labour to cities (McGaffin et al., 2015: 10).

The history of the townships has shaped the socio-economic status of those that live and operate in them (COGTA, 2009: 6) and, because of this displacement, job seeking and access to economic opportunities is excessively expensive (Mahajan, 2014 and McGaffin et al., 2015).

Due to South Africa's unique political history, townships are exclusive to South Africa and therefore the emergence of the township economy resonates only with this country. As a result, there is little literature that focuses on the township economy. However, recent scholars and government officials in South Africa have shown great interest in understanding and supporting the growth of the townships, and of the township economy in particular, through commissioned research. For example, a significant study by the World Bank on Diepsloot shows that this township has a R2 billion economy, most of which is

*1 A project within the broader Informality in the cultural economy of the Global South project funded by the British Council.*

spent in the suburbs of Sandton and Fourways; only an estimated 25% of money generated in the townships is spent in the township (Mahajan, 2014). The impact of this World Bank study emphasises the potential the township economy has for the entire economy. However, there are more complex aspects that influence the economies of townships such as the health, cultural experiences and well-being of its residents.

Although the township economy is unique to South Africa, other parts of the world have economies that exist in similar informal complexities. In the study of Diepsloot, Mahajan (2014) intertwines the concept of the township economy and urban informal economy; they are characterised as similar to each other and, from a global stance, the township economy can be referred to as the urban informal economy.

Inspired by the Diepsloot study, the geographical focus of this study is Daveyton, a township located in the Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality east of Johannesburg, South Africa. It has a total population of 127 967 and is 14.45 km² in size (StatsSA, 2011). It was established in 1952 but only achieved municipal status in 1983. The racial make-up is 98.5% black African people (StatsSA, 2011). From a cultural perspective, Daveyton is home to iconic artists such as Lebo Mathosa[2], Lerato 'Lira' Molapo[3], Victor Ndlazilwane[4], Rhoo Hlatshwayo[5], and Percy Mtwa[6]. In 1986 Mtwa wrote and staged a play titled Bopha! It was later adapted to film, directed by Morgan Freeman and shot in Daveyton. One of South Africa's ground-breaking television drama series, Yizo Yizo was set and based in Daveyton.

## The Case Study

The study focuses on cultural kasi'preneurs in Daveyton, highlighting how informality is used to activate their businesses. The identified cultural kasi'preneurs have either lived in Daveyton most of their lives or came to Daveyton at a very young age. They are identified as black, male, and between the ages of 25 years and 40 years. Their qualifications range from a matric to a degree, they are mostly solely founders or started the business with friends and their businesses have been operating between five years and 15 years. The businesses are located in the various sectors of the cultural and creative industries such as music, fashion, events, graphic design, e-commerce, and the visual arts.

The term cultural kasi'preneur refers to Thomas Aageson's definition of cultural entrepreneurs as "risk takers, change agents and resourceful visionaries who generate revenue from innovative and sustainable cultural enterprises that enhance livelihoods and create cultural value for both creative producers and consumers of cultural services and products" (2008: 96) and fuses it with the circumstances of the townships. Cultural entrepreneurs in the townships navigate the space from ideation to production and deliver to a market under oppressive conditions. This makes them a different breed of the

*2 Mathosa was a successful South African kwaito artist who started her career at the age of 17 with South African popular band Boom Shaka in 1994. Mathosa was one of the first female artists to secure full publishing rights and ownership of her own work during a time when this was unheard of in the industry. This year marks 15 years since she lost her life in a tragic car accident in 2006 (Mbendeni, 2020).*

*3 Lira is a multi-platinum selling and South African Music award winning Afro-Soul vocalist. She fuses her music with elements of Jazz, soul, funk, traditional African music. Her album, All My Love (2003) title track knocked Beyonce's single Dangerous in Love off the charts (Forbes, 2015).*

*4 Ndlazilwana is a South African singer, tenor saxophonist, and composer. He led the harmony group the Wood Woodpeckers. Ndlazilwana passed away in 1978 and to honour his memory the community hall in Daveyton is named after him.*

*5 Hlatswayo was an actor, popularly known for Merchants of War (1989) and Skeleton Coast (1988). A community arts centre was named after him. Roo Hlatswayo Arts Centre was established in 2005 as a non-government organisation that focuses on programmes of arts development for the youth.*

*6 Mtwa was born and grew up in Wattville, which is a neighbouring township to Daveyton. Mtwa joined Gibson Kente's company as an actor, singer, and dancer in 1979. As a playwright and actor, Mtwa and co-actor and playwright Mbongeni Ngema with influential theatre figure Barney Simons created the iconic improvised political play Woza Albert! (1981).*

cultural entrepreneur that is non-confirming, unapologetic, adapting and constantly embracing their situation.

## Research Methods

This study continues from a research study titled Cultural Kasi'preneurs of Daveyton: *Cultural entrepreneurs and their processes of creating cultural value in the township*. The data collected from the research study was relooked from an informality perspective. Further research was conducted to understand how the informality of networks and spaces allow the cultural kasi'preneurs to produce cultural and creative products and services. Furthermore, this study focuses on understanding the benefits and challenges of informality in the cultural and creative industry.

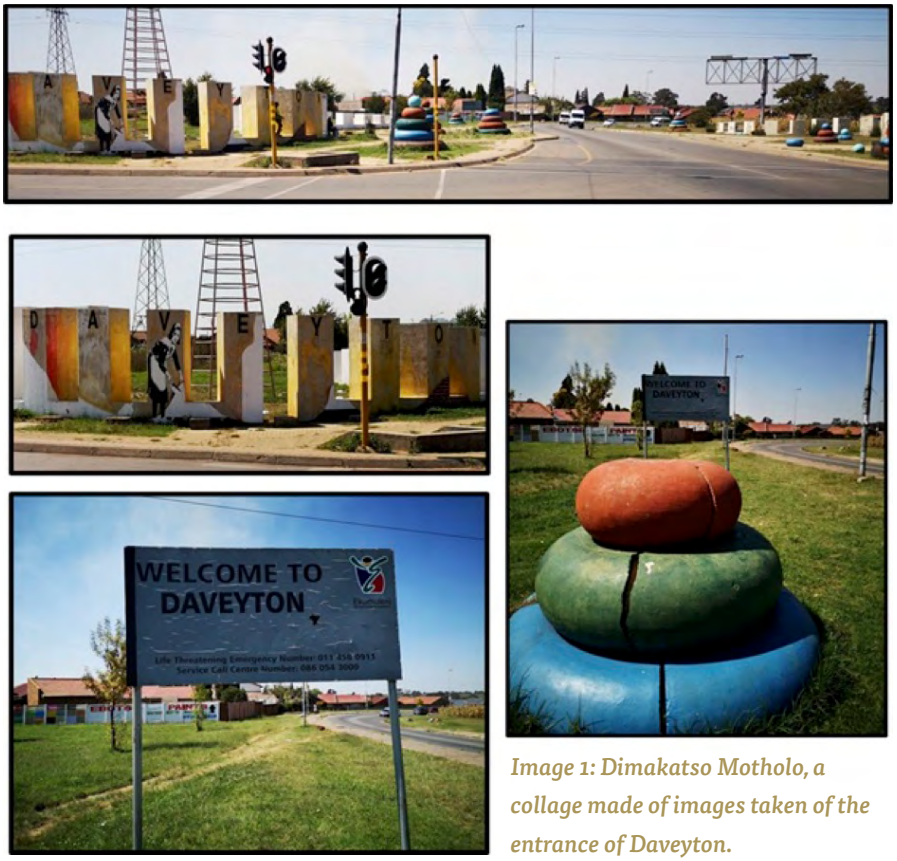



*Image 1: Dimakatso Motholo, a collage made of images taken of the entrance of Daveyton.*

The study was conducted using a qualitative approach and in conversation with another researcher. The methods used to conduct the study were semi-structured interviews with 11 participants that are founders or co-founders of their businesses, as well as participant observation whereby the researcher spent time observing the cultural kasi'preneurs' during their work.

Observation was not only limited to cultural events but also included following the cultural kasi'preneurs on their social media platforms.

One of the researchers, who is a resident of Daveyton, selected cultural kasi'preneurs through observation; selection was made through the visibility of invitations (physical and digital posters) to the cultural events hosted by the cultural kasi'preneurs. Although this proved to be effective, the researcher also made use of snowball sampling to identify and select additional cultural kasi'preneurs that were not as visible. The snowball sampling technique is often used to find other research participants through the researcher's current participants (Atkinson and Flint, 2001: 1). This technique served a dual purpose in this study as it was also a link-tracing method (Spreen, 1992), which connects participants and their links to each other to the larger effect of a network.

Throughout the period of research, digital posters were collected from various cultural events hosted by five different businesses whose founders were participants of the study. The analysis of the posters was not directed towards their effectiveness as a marketing tool or creativity, but rather towards the connections they made with other cultural kasi'preneurs. This data generated an overview of collaborations and networks amongst participants.




*Images 2: Examples of digital posters*

## Cultural Kasi'preneur Profiles

The section below are short profiles of each cultural kasi'preneur and their business. Throughout this study, the real names of cultural kasi'preneurs are used and they are referred to by their last names. However, one cultural kasi'preneur requested to remain anonymous therefore the pseudonym Richard Rich is used and Richard Rich (Pty) Ltd to refer to the company.

### *1. Studio 6546.*

Bhekuyise Charles Magangane, known as BMA, was the founder of Gas Chamber Productions, a music company that BMA decided to close because he felt that the industry rules hindered the advancement of upcoming artists that could not afford resources such as booking recording sessions at a professional recording studio. In 2005, once Gas Chamber Productions was no longer active, BMA started Studio 6546, which is an informal recording studio situated in the living room of his residential home. Studio 6546 refers to the physical address of BMA's home in Daveyton. BMA is the studio manager, producer, graphic designer and sound engineer for the studio. Studio 6546 provides experiences, services and opportunities that are usually accessed outside the township in the settings of a professional studio. The studio's main purpose is to serve new and aspiring hip hop artists from the townships; however, the studio has




*Image 3: Studio 6546*

received attention from established artists outside of Daveyton. BMA was influenced to start a recording studio in the township by his own personal journey in the music industry:

> Growing up I was in need of [a recording studio] and most places were in Johannesburg and that meant travelling expenses. I had to go through my schooling without being in a professional recording studio. It delayed my process of growing and working in the industry and I wanted to change that. I think I contributed to that because now there are quite a few studios in the hood (BMA, 2018).

Studio 6546 is made of a combination of new and old equipment, but prioritises the necessary equipment to create good quality music, which also maintains the studio's minimalistic look. Studio 6546 also hosts a networking event titled Weekend Jumpstart, which is a platform whereby artists from the music industry, the hip hop genre specifically, in the township come together to build on their networks.

### *2. Richard Rich (Pty) Ltd.*

Richard Rich started his own graphic design company Richard Rich (Pty) Ltd in 2017. Rich offers unlimited graphic design services such as graphics for digital magazines, branding, illustrations, digital invitations to events, marketing packages such as logos, posters, flyers, and visuals for social media. Although Richard Rich (Pty) Ltd is based in Daveyton, Rich has worked for clients such as Kellogg's South Africa and Phillips Kenya and South Africa. Rich states that his business depends on his creativity and working from home within time frames that best suit him:

> The idea was always in my head since I figured out that I can actually turn this graphic thing into a business. So, I've always had that idea in my head, I wanted to like start something of my own. The problem is I've never loved working a 9 to 5 in my life. I don't see myself doing a 9 to 5, unless a situation pushes me into doing a 9 to 5. But I don't see myself, so I've always had that thing that I want to do something of my own, that maybe at some point, or years go by its going to helps somebody from the hood or any child. It's going to employ them. This is my own baby and I know if things don't work out, I'm responsible and I'm comfortable with it (Rich, 2020).

### *3.Retrofontein Apparel.*

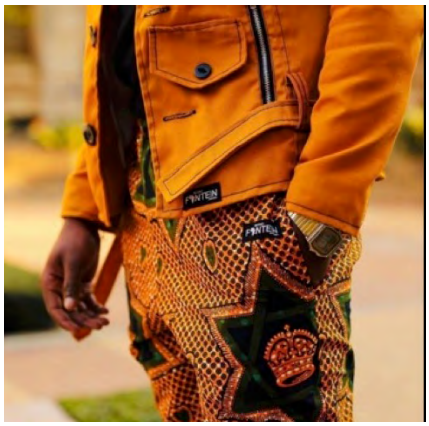


*Image 4: Retrofontein Apparel*

As you drive down Mocke Street towards Sinaba stadium in Daveyton, you will find a blue shipping container in the front yard of a residential home. This is the home of Kabelo Tsoka's flagship store, Retrofontein Apparel. Retrofontein, a retrospective fountain of creativity and design, was established in 2012 by Tsoka and his friend who unfortunately left the brand in 2014. Tsoka started the brand by collecting early 1990's retro clothing, customising it with African print and then reselling the customised denim jackets. The brand later shifted and focused on narrating township stories through urban street wear.

Tsoka's brand is popular for the statement 'Valid Dreams', he elaborates how the idea came to him:

> In late 2015, early 2016, I had applied to have a shelf at this big chain store. They replied this thing is not trendy enough and not what we looking for. I was depressed and

> thought maybe my brand doesn't meet the standards. And then same week I was watching the BET Awards and I think Black Coffee had just won an award and part of his acceptance speech, he said Lupita Nyongo said "your dreams are valid". And then light bulb! Ayi vele maan [expression of agreeing] who are they to validate what I'm doing because this is my dream, not theirs. Then I started with just writing it and thought hey man this would look dope on a t-shirt. (Tsoka, 2019).

Retrofontein is associated with validating the dreams of those in the township; the brand wants people from the township to know that their dreams are important and only they can make them a reality.

Tsoka also hosts an event called the Street Fair which promotes Retrofontein as a brand and other local brands that are similar to Retrofontein. The event is a platform for local brands to interact with each other and sell to their customers.

### *4.Chant Nation.*

Born in Limpopo, Kholofelo Dennis Mashilo, popularly known as Mochene, is a hip-hop artist and the founder of Chant Nation. Chant Nation is a music and events company that was established in 2018. The company also acts as the representative of Mochene in terms of bookings, content ownership, and general management. Mashilo started Chant Nation as a means




*Image 5: Dennis Mashilo, A digital poster marketing a listening session hosted in Maboneng by Mochene.*

to house his music within a record label while still retaining ownership rights to the music. Mochene raps in Sepedi, which is his mother tongue[7]. As an artist, Mochene uses his mother tongue because he wants to inspire children to be creative and express themselves in their own language:

> When I create music, it's for people overseas. In my head, I'm thinking this music is for London, and Berlin. It's an ambition thing. But it's also for rural kids. I have this picture of a kid in a remote area listening to my music through one ear piece because the other one doesn't work but still wants to listen to the music because we share the same language. And he hears every word and he tells himself that he is going to do this one day and bigger than the guy he is listening to (Mashilo, 2018).

Mochene refers to his rap style as chantrap; he draws his lyrical content from what surrounds him, which often reflects on working hard every day to achieve your goals. The combination of the content and the language creates music that the rural child can access, is able to relate to and be inspired to create their own world through their own means.

### *5. The Jamshack SA.*




*Image 6: The Jamshack logo*

"For the love of the music" is a phrase that has been used by artists in the music industry. This is no exception to deep house movement Jamshack SA. In 2015 Nkosana Monyemangena and six of his friends became the co-founders of the movement Jamshack SA. Imagine a place that only plays deep house music and appreciates the DJs that contribute to the genre. This is the concept behind Jamshack SA; the movement is a platform for both established and upcoming DJs in the genre of deep house:

> We were out with a group of friends and came back in the early hours of the morning and were discussing

*7 Mother tongue is a term that refers to the language one learns from birth. It is also understood to be the native language or home language.*

> how we didn't like the music. Our close friends were DJs and they agreed. We started playing music at one of the co- founder's house. We then invited a DJ who played the same genre called deep house. They were locally based and they have helped Jam Shack to grow in terms of their support. We always gave them the platform to play and they would never reject this. The music comes from the DJs that we would hire (Monyemangena, 2019).

Jamshack SA is an event for a niche market, whereby deep house lovers come to appreciate the music and be in good company. The six co-founders all have a role in the conceptualisation of the movement and ensuring that the events are a success. The responsibilities are shared according to their strengths and include portfolios such as technical, production management, marketing and brand awareness and finance.

Jamshack SA has opened up a different cultural experience in the township by also creating opportunities for local business through stalls which allow the experience to be holistic: food, fashion and music (offering music and lifestyle). Although the movement began with a focus on Daveyton, co-founders of JamShack SA are now focusing on the entire Ekurhuleni district, bringing together all the townships of the East Rand through music. JamShack SA places deep house music at the forefront of the movement, the purpose of which is to make the subgenre attractive.

### *6. 1520 Online.*

1520 Online is an online business that was started in 2015 by Zuko Soyizwaphi, who is originally from the Eastern Cape but moved to Daveyton in 2006. Soyizwaphi is assisted by his wife, son and friend and colleague Brian Dubazana. 1520 Online has three streams of income generation:

- selling watch and sunglass boxes online;
- online marketing services such as web design, online business profiles, and the creation and maintenance of a company's online presences; and
- automation, whereby Soyizwaphi sources retired automated parts from various suppliers upon request.

The naming of the business 1520 is two dimensional. Firstly, 1520 is Daveyton's postal code which marks that the business's location and, secondly, 1520 is a number; there is no gender or race attached to it. Soyizwaphi explains that, unfortunately, being a black business owner from the township comes with negative connotations such as lack of trust, and a number has no identity attached to it:

> Sometimes one had to hide their identity because when white people find out that you're black and from the township, they don't want to do business with you. 1520 is a number and took the race thing away and was just a business that is online (Soyizwaphi, 2018).

### *7. Thato Molele (Pty) Ltd.*



*Image 7 : Thato Molele using fabric paints to customise a client's sneakers.*

French fashion designer Christian Louboutin once said, "Shoes transform your language and body. They lift you physically and emotionally". As people, we make connections with each other and objects that bring meaning into our lives, including our shoes. Thato Molele started his business from customising his own shoes:

> I was lazy to wash my shoes then I decided to paint my all-stars instead. People saw my shoes and I asked me to do a pair for them which they were willing to pay for. The same day when I delivered the pair another person wanted to give me two pairs to customize. So that's how I started without the knowledge of drawing. Regardless of the request, even when the request was a Flintstones themed shoe. I

> was forced into a situation of having to draw but I surprised myself and managed to do so (Molele, 2018).

Thato Molele established his business, Thato Molele (Pty) Ltd, in 2015. Thato Molele (Pty) Ltd houses two brands: TM Customs and TM Sneaks. TM Customs believes in reimaging your old shoes and re-establishing the bond you formed when you first bought them. Having started with one yellow fabric paint and one paint brush, TM Customs customises new and old shoes with painted designs that range from African prints, logos and even cartoon characters. People can bring their old shoes or purchase already customised shoes. TM Sneaks is in the process of designing its first boat shoe but will also focus on designing sneakers and heels.

### 8. Igumbi Art Room and Tourism.




*Image 8: Invitation to an Igumbi Art Room event*

Brian Dubazana started Igumbi Art Room and Tourism as a platform that acts as a coordinator, curator and consultant through the hiring of a mobile art gallery. The concept behind Igumbi was to find many different ways of creating a room that is filled with artworks, rejecting the formal gallery language. Furthermore, the platform organises cultural events that include live performances, poetry, musicians and dancers. The business aims to educate, grow, and create employment whilst promoting Daveyton within mainstream tourism. They also offer 10km cycling tours of Daveyton, whereby you can either attend with your own bicycle or rent one from them.

### 9. Capture and Release Visuals.

Street photographer, videographer, and artist Sibusiso Ncwana started his business in 2013 with a partner who later left the business. Ncwana called his business Capture and Release Photographer but later diversified and called it Capture and Release Visuals. In the naming of the business, Ncwana was inspired by the concept of fishing as a hobby where the act of capturing and releasing the fish is more intriguing to fishermen than the fish itself:

> Sharing the art with people and sharing information is important. Art needs to breathe, it needs to be seen, take the centre of attraction at any given moment, it sparks conversations. The concept of fishing as a hobby, capture and release of the fish gave me the idea. The experience is priceless. Sharing is more important than the actual price of the art. The art and content come first (Ncwana, 2018).




*Image 9: Sibusiso Ncwana making industrial furniture.*

For Ncwana being a photographer is about capturing moments and sharing the art; the art and the content are prioritised; he values the process of meaning making. Capture and Release Visuals offers services in photography, videography and the making of industrial furniture such as rondavel chairs, wine racks and bar tables. Rondavel chairs are designed from old tyres and rope, whilst the wine racks and bar tables are made from pallets of wood. Ncwana also has a hire and maintenance element to the industrial furniture aspect. As a photographer, Ncwana photographs social events and private shoots. However, the work that he cherishes the most is his series works such as his most recent titled The Skill Trade Series. The work focuses on ordinary people in Daveyton making a living from their own hands often on the side of the street such as the

man that repairs shoes or the ladies selling clothes. Ncwana is inspired by photographer Fhatuwani Mukheli from *I See A Different You*, which focuses on changing the world's negative view of Africa into a positive one through telling our own African experiences through an African lens.

### *10. Centre Creation.*

Growing up in Daveyton, Floyd Masuku was influenced by the fashion and recycling industries. With no leisure money for the movies or arcade games, Masuku and his friends would collect cans and sell them to recycling companies. Masuku used the money to buy clothes for himself. His interest in fashion was piqued by fashion magazines such as Vogue which his aunt would bring from work. Masuku was inspired by the clothes in the publication and wanted to dress like the models:

> So looking at those magazines, I was inspired by the clothing those people were wearing. At the time, I didn't think of making the clothes but rather that I want to dress like them and look good like them. But as time progressed the desire to make the clothes came (Masuku, 2018).

In 2007, Masuku started his own brand called Centre Creation. Centre Creation alters, designs and makes most forms of clothing. Masuku is popular for creating shirts and dresses for people attending events such as weddings and parties. He also creates garments from off cut material, which ensures that the garment is unique as it cannot be reproduced.

### *11. Shokcoll.*



*Image 10: Models wearing Shokcoll collection.*

Thabo Collen Shoko began as a stylist, styling himself and posting different clothing combinations on his personal Facebook account; through this he was able to style musicians for their music videos:

> I've always loved clothes but I never loved crowds. I had a lot of friends but was always the odd one out. I was working on my profile of being a stylist, it was easy because I already had a number of people who thought that I was a designer. It was easy to agree with them and say yes I am a designer. I sold people dreams that I made come true (Shoko, 2018).

Shoko's love for fashion grew when he became a designer, wearing clothes that he made himself. In 2014 Shoko began his own clothing brand called Shokcoll. Shokcoll focuses on custom designs such as dresses and suites for high class events. The brand also has a ready to wear collection that Shoko releases yearly. Shoko describes his designs as functional, eco-friendly, cultural and timeless. The brand also celebrates individuals that have survived being ill-treated by society because of their gender, race, disability or religion.

## Resourceful visionaries creating sustainable livelihoods through informality.

The environment of the townships has provoked cultural kasi'preneurs to be concerned with new ideas and production processes that can emerge from the environment for positive change. Mbaye (2011) highlights that cultural entrepreneurs in Africa explore opportunities for the sake of adapting to a challenging environment and economic development. The focus of their innovations is based more on problem solving in their community than on being profit driven. The following sections highlight the findings of this study through the four identified themes:

i) the experience of learning: learning and unlearning;
ii) multiple income streams through multiple skill sets;
iii) friends and family as networks; and
iv) the transformation of spaces: creating productive work spaces.

### *Theme 1: The experience of learning: learning and unlearning.*

Many people in the township struggle to go on to study at a tertiary institution because of the financial situation at home (the average cost of tuition and accommodation per year is R60 000) and, of those that manage to go, some drop out because of the debt that is being accumulated. Without a bursary or scholarship, the financial capacity in a household determines whether the individual furthers their studies or finds a job to help support the family. Although access to higher learning has such financial implications, it is still viewed as pivotal to the successful narrative of a black child from the township. Cultural kasi'preneurs found it necessary to explore other means of learning as discussed below.

Magangane was studying music but felt that the curriculum emphasised history and theory rather than music production:

> I dropped out.
>
> I felt that I had the basics of everything. I started feeling that formal schooling wasn't working out for me. Especially the fact that we were coming into the information age, whereby technology was advancing. Things that you can learn at school are available online and are advanced and directed to your needs because you are learning in your own time and at own pace. I could create my own online programme (Magangane, 2018).

Although Magangane's reasons for leaving a higher learning institution are not related to financial circumstance, he suggests online-learning as another form of learning and experience that is beyond what formal institutions are able to provide. For individuals without the support of a formal structure to acquire knowledge, other means of acquiring knowledge become necessary. Self-teaching becomes the access point for knowledge for the cultural kasi'preneur. They take initiative by finding means of learning through online platforms, from people with experience or in the simple efforts of trial and error. Although the COVID-19 pandemic ensured that online learning has now become the new norm, cultural kasi'preneurs saw the potential and opportunities in this form of learning way before this time. The internet has offered a lot of self-teaching tools in various skills, from graphic design to business management and finance.

The informality of learning online allowed Magangane to study at his own pace, acquiring skills as and when he needed them. This is also viewed as an easy and affordable way to acquire knowledge. Magangane expresses how he was able to design his own curriculum that attended to his needs and those of the business. He further explains that there is a quick turnaround in applying the skills learnt online to the business as he tends to make use of them immediately. However, this informal way of learning is not without its challenges: the skills learnt are not supported or recognised by accredited institutions and, as a result, potential clients, competitors, and other businesses underestimate the credibility of the business and the cultural kasi'preneur.




Another informal way of acquiring skills is through observation and practice. Self-teaching becomes the access point for knowledge for the cultural kasi'preneur. They take initiative by finding people with experience to learn from or in the simple efforts of trial and error. Ncwana learnt his skills by using different software without prior knowledge:

> I started playing around with software, there was a studio at the mall called Parasol. From the visits to the studio I learnt Software: Picasso (editing of the pictures), pricing, props for photo shoots (Ncwana, 2018).

Ncwana learnt his photography skills through observing how other photographers worked in

the studio. He further used this technique of observation to learn how to make industrial furniture. Ncwana learnt to make rondavel chairs and industrial furniture such as bar tables and wine racks through observing a fellow craftsman.

The difficulties in learning through observation is the constant need to access someone's process of working and often professional settings do not accommodate this informally. Ncwana was fortunate enough to have relationships with people working at the photographic studio and his fellow craftsman. It is because of these relationship dynamics that there is a willingness to share knowledge. The skills learnt during observation are tested through a trial-and-error process which requires a space that allows you to work through material and be open to failure as part of learning. This also results in extra costs as some material is wasted during this learning phase. Trial-and-error is time consuming and repetitive; the individual becomes both student and teacher at the same time, constantly correcting and practicing until the skill is mastered.

With an art form such as graphic design new trends are constantly emerging, requiring the skills set to be regularly upgraded. When a graphic designer is constantly working on their skills set, this allows them to be diverse and able to be competitive in the market space. The trial-and-error way of learning is not without risks as the business can fail in some aspects because of the lack of experience and incorrect knowledge. This is where mentorship can be of assistance; learning from someone with experience and expertise provides access to knowledge.

Mentorships or job shadowing are learning strategies used both formally and informally. Shoko describes how he learnt to make clothes through working for local designer, Masuku (cultural kasi'preneur who is also part of this study), referred to below as Floyd:

> At the time I was working on being a stylist and didn't know that I could be a designer. I helped Floyd with alterations and that's when I learnt how to sew, how pants are made from undoing and putting them back together. After Floyd I went to Transnet for a year and six months. I was good at welding but my heart wasn't in it. I woke up one day and decided that I couldn't do this anymore and that I wanted to do fashion (Shoko, 2018).

This informal mentorship offers direct access to an experienced individual and expertise. Shoko's desire to learn motivated him to use reverse engineering as a process to examine and analyse the detail of making a garment through deconstruction to discover and be able to reconstruct the garment. This form of learning exposes you to the reality of problem solving and how things are made; it is not a hypothetical situation. Shoko describes how during this process he felt empowered and was able to develop his knowledge and directly fill the knowledge gaps he felt he needed to.

### *Theme 2: Multiple income streams through multiple skill sets.*

As a result of these alternative forms of learning and the fact that they are easily accessible, affordable, circumstantial, and imbedded within the everyday lives of what the cultural kasi'preneur is exposed to or who they are in contact with or who they are related to, the cultural kasi'preneurs are able to develop a diverse skill set. These skill sets provide opportunities for multiple forms of income within their businesses because they enable diversified revenue streams. For example, Igumbi Arts Room provides a number of products and services which translate to multiple income streams; it hosts events such as the backyard market and the township tours, as well as selling industrial furniture.

The need to have multiple skills that translate into multiple income streams when used in the business is a circumstantial agenda as one income stream is not sufficient to maintain both the livelihood and the sustainability of the business of the cultural kasi'preneur. There is a core business activity that is either supported or supplemented by other activities provided by these




additional skills within the business.

In the formal structure of business there is often the need to be categorised in a certain manner and there is an expectation to follow certain protocols. Depending on how the business is registered, it is often then limited within those parameters; the business must be conducted in a certain manner. The informal structure would allow the business to navigate and go beyond these limitations and diversify its revenue streams.

Capture and Release Visuals offers services in photography, videography, and the making of industrial furniture such as rondavel chairs, wine racks and bar tables. Rondavel chairs are designed from old tyres and rope, whilst the wine racks and bar tables are made from pallets of wood. Ncwana also has a hire and maintenance element to the industrial furniture aspect. As a photographer, Ncwana photographs social events and private shoots.

Ncwana works as a photographer and visual artist. He has diversified his business based on his skills and capabilities. Through his business, Ncwana has created multiple jobs for himself that support his series photography; this is possible through sales and services rendered income (maintaining and hiring) from industrial furniture and part-time Deejaying:

> The business is not yet structured but mostly I have become a consultant in a way. I'm breaking down the business into smaller businesses that can stand on their own but also can feed into each other (Ncwana, 2018).

Often the other activities within the business are linked to the core activities and extend the business. The need to diversify is a response to the possibility of the loss of an income stream; diversification creates income streams that support one another. It can also be viewed as a strategy to overcome financial issues that could occur in the business in an effort to protect the business. For one to be able to diversify, there is a need to seek opportunities beyond what is on offer and for expansion of the business within their skill set.

Magangane is the studio manager, producer, graphic designer and sound engineer for Studio 6546 which provides experiences, services and opportunities that are usually accessed outside the township in the settings of a professional studio. Magangane's multiple skill set allows him to have a holistic approach to music production; he is able to group his services together and offer a full package or an experience and still offer a single service depending on his client's needs. Magangane offers a different perspective to the motivation of having multiple skills; for him, having all these various skills is cost efficient and allows him to offer his clients the best services and quality music at an affordable price. This also allows him to align with the purpose of the business which is to offer musicians from the township affordable music production that produces quality music able to compete with well-established recording studios.

Jamshack SA offers a different example to Studio 6546. For this business multiple skills are sourced



from various individuals that share the same passion and love for creating or providing a certain cultural product or service. For Jamshack SA the multiple skills of the co-founders do not translate to multiple income streams but the co-founders do alternatively finance the business through their personal finances. Each co-founder is either employed or running another business. Their personal finances are mostly used to hire good quality sound equipment. Monyemangena emphasises that the experience of the music is crucial to the brand, thus having bad sound is not an option. Throughout his interview he constantly supports his strategies with the phrase "music stays winning".

### *Theme 3: The transformation of spaces: creating productive work spaces*

Cultural kasi'preneurs have found ways to transform unconventional spaces into working and productive environments. The lack of infrastructure in the townships has not prevented the inception and growth of businesses.

The ability to cut costs in the creation of cultural products and services is a major priority. Working from home allows cultural kasi'preneurs to use the money that would have been spent on commuting on the business, the funding of material costs, paying suppliers, contributing to salaries and any travelling costs that may occur during distribution. Financial support is very limited for businesses in the township. Being able to run a cost-effective business therefore allows greater opportunity for the business to be sustainable. Many residents of the township spend most of their time commuting to and from work. This is not only time consuming, but means that a large portion of salaries and wages is spent on transport; when this travelling cost is cut, the money can be saved and invested into the business.

Most of the cultural kasi'preneurs work from home because of circumstance and not necessarily by choice. Often the circumstance is a result of the lack of finance. The assumption exists that life is affordable in the townships. For small businesses trying to grow, however, this is not the case. Office space or retail stores for rental are expensive and as a result the cultural kasi'preneurs find themselves working from home to avoid this cost. This also removes the pressure of a rental fee every month, allowing the business to focus on its core activities. Working from home can be convenient for the cultural kasi'preneur in that they have more time to focus on ideation and producing content for their business. The cultural kasi'preneur is not subjected to specific time frames within which to work; instead they are able to work at a time that is convenient to the cultural kasi'preneur.

During the COVID-19 pandemic 'working from home' became a norm and a safety measurement for many businesses. This did not, however, shift the perception people have around businesses in homes in the township. In many cases people judge businesses based on their physical environment. Although working from home has advantages that assist to overcome financial constraints, it is not without challenges. One of the major disadvantages of working from home is that clients may view the cultural kasi'preneur as unprofessional



and do not trust that the product or service will be delivered within the requested time frame. Shoko describes his difficulties:

> Some of the challenges of working from home is that people don't always take you seriously and the environment can hinder your creativity. Where is the fitting room? Some people judge you based on the machine that you have so they tend to want to see the machine (Shoko, 2018).

As a result, one can lose clients without being given the opportunity to provide the product, or service. This also highlights that when working from home, the product or service offered needs to work harder to prove its value in the market space. Clients can easily misinterpret the value of a product or service based on the environment within which it is created.

Working from home requires discipline as there are more distractions; time can easily be wasted on matters that do not concern the business. With the lack of separation between home time and work time the boundaries are not clear and focus is easily lost, resulting in a lack of balance. The cultural kasi'preneur can easily lose confidence in their own product and services as they feel that their business is not growing beyond the home environment. A lack of confidence within the cultural kasi'preneur can slow down the process of creating value. Rich highlights how working informally can be stressful and emotionally straining because of the irregular source of income and the need for the business to constantly prove its value.

> Creative block is a big setback. I tend to meditate. It relaxes and it helps me block out the unnecessary noise. And think of what I want to think of. I start thinking of ideas for the work, I use little things to create big ideas (Rich, 2018).

The creation of cultural and creative businesses within the township leads to the transformation of spaces within the township. For example, a simple backyard is transformed into an outdoor gallery that offers a different experience to the consumer. The format of the gallery is challenged yet the space is transformed and redefines itself.

The idea of the workspace at home can also be viewed as the reason for these businesses to be located in the township of Daveyton. Businesses are forming in the homes of cultural kasi'preneurs and working from home has proved to have both advantages and disadvantages.

Other spaces such as abandoned buildings are able to house the needs of a cultural and creative business. An abandoned bus factory is turned into a co-working space for various organisations and enterprises located in the township. The space is transformed into a production house for industrial furniture and future streetwear brands:

> Working at Bus Shed, you meet people in the same line of work as you and sometimes have more experience. They offer help by referring technicians to fix the machine. In a crisis you can call the technician and they come to you to fix the problem (Masuku, 2018).

Co-working spaces foster



collaborations which can be viewed as intentional or unintentional. Within a co-working space resources, information and expertise are shared amongst those that cohabit the space. From this sharing experience, people become connected and a network emerges.

### *Theme 4: Friends and family as networks.*

In the township, business support from formal structures and access to financial assistance is scarce. This is often due to a lack of records and documentation about the business. Although all the businesses of the cultural kasi'preneurs in this study are registered, this was not the case when some of the businesses were starting out. As a result, cultural kasi'preneurs have had to seek other forms of support for their businesses.

Friends and family have become informal support structures for various aspects of the business. Cultural kasi'preneurs refer to a network of "friends" rather than acquaintances to gain access to relevant information, collaboration or human resources for the business. The cultural kasi'preneur's social capital (Bourdieu, 1984) is reflected in the amount and value of these personal relationships and how they contribute to the survival of the business (Lizé, 2016: 45). The core idea of social capital is that social networks have value and this affects the productivity of individuals (McLean, Schultz, & Steger 2002: 4). These influential relationships form strong networks that cultural kasi'preneurs are able to draw on during the process of creating cultural products and services. During the interviews, cultural kasi'preneurs referred to establishing their networks through their childhood friends and meeting influential people through people they grew up with. Through these friendships, there is a sharing of resources and collaboration with each other when working on big projects. Whilst working on certain projects together, consumers begin to affiliate certain products and services with each other. In most cases, the affiliation has had positive effects for the businesses.

In the process of production, the cultural kasi'preneur's network is crucial to assess possible resources, partnerships, collaborations, customers and employees (Scott, 2012: 244). Their network reflects their social capital and when this alternative form of capital (Bourdieu, 1985) is mobilized and converted into the needed resource, cultural kasi'preneurs are able to access resources they did not possess, increasing both their use-value and exchange-value (Scott.,2012: 246). Working informally, the cultural kasi'preneurs rely heavily on their networks to conduct their businesses.

Rich describes how he gained access to resources he needed to start his company:

> I started with a laptop, with nothing. I had no money. They had just bought me a laptop here at home, I got software from my homies[8]. They taught me how to use most of them. I was like you know what I'm

*8 Homies is a colloquial term used to refer to friends or sometimes acquaintances.*

> going to change this nothing into something (Rich, 2018).

It is through his family and friends that he was able to start his business. His 'friends' shared information, skills and knowledge without requesting a monetary exchange but rather shared with him based on their friendship. This also reflects that within these networks, cultural kasi'preneurs do not see themselves as competition but rather as support structures with opportunities for future collaborations. For cultural kasi'preneurs such as Rich, networks are the foundation of their businesses and they are able to create sustainable livelihood because of these networks. This unconventional system of sharing knowledge is based on trust and the willingness to teach and learn (self-development).

Furthermore, strong networks have the ability to support the growth of the business. During his interview, Ncwana emphasises how most of the big orders for his rondavel chairs were as a result of his existing network. This suggests that the links formed amongst cultural kasi'preneur are beneficial in that they provide access to a market. The referrals brought more clients, more revenue, and assisted in building a reputation for the business. Referrals can also be viewed as 'word of mouth', which is a marketing strategy based on trust and personal recommendations amongst clients.

A niche market has influence which contradicts the belief that large enterprises focus on investing in cultural and creative products whose conventions are widely shared, whilst small enterprise are left to focus on genres that seem to be less appealing (Dubios, 2012). However, there is no doubt that this niche market is also constrained by the social relations and institutional trusts, networks, norms and beliefs. All the cultural kasi'preneurs indicated that their market is mostly from the township. Not only do their businesses receive large support from the residents of Daveyton, but when they promote their business outside the township they find that they are mostly supported by residents from other townships such as Soweto, Voslorus, Katlehong, Thembisa and even Pretoria. Markets can therefore be understood as embedded within existing broader societal conditions; they cannot exist in isolation, but rather within a specific context (Lee, 2006: 301).

Marketing is viewed as a human exchange of relationships (Lee, 2006: 302). This idea of marketing as a human interaction allows cultural kasi'preneurs to understand and think differently about the marketing strategies they employ. The interaction with consumers is facilitated by the cultural kasi'preneurs' ability to tell their story. Lounsbury and Glynn define cultural entrepreneurship as the process of storytelling that mediates the access to resources and capital in order to create wealth (2001: 545). Storytelling is viewed as a form of




identity creation and legitimacy for new businesses (Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001: 546); stories are important symbols that make use of verbal, visual and written language.

The identity of the business becomes the key element to attract investors, providing a competitive advantage, access to consumers and new market opportunities (Lounsbury and Glynn, 2001: 545). It is through these stories that cultural kasi'preneurs are able to communicate the value of their products and services. The story becomes the link between the cultural entrepreneur's business and the rest of the world. The data from this study suggests that cultural kasi'preneurs combine personal and professional stories to assist the consumer to connect with their offering, which contributes to the running of a successful marketing campaign. Retrofontein Apparel and Mochene's personal stories are linked to the business to market their products and services. The link between the business and their personal stories is embedded in the cultural value of the products and services.

The friendship between Tsoka (Retrofontein Apparel) and Mashilo (Mochene) has brought their brands together, thus supporting each other through association:

> He (Tsoka) started doing clothes and one day he asked if he could take pictures of me in his clothes. I've been wearing his clothes ever since; I perform and go to events wearing Retro most of the time. Both our brands just seemed to align well (Mashilo, 2018).

The two brands indirectly endorse one another. The local hip hop artist and a local clothing brand combine two niche markets to create a bigger market to share. Based on their friendship and trust, Mashilo is the ambassador for Retrofontein; there is no official contract that binds them, but only the contract of friendship (network). Mashilo's fans purchase the Retrofontein brand to relate to the artist, whilst supporters of the Retrofontein brand are also likely to be introduced to or know of Mashilo's music. This is also made possible because of the geographical space they share within the township. Tsoka and Mashilo's relationship can also be viewed as the formation of a network.

Cultural kasi'preneurs have found ways to align their brands together in order to share a market and take advantage of social media platforms for storytelling. Storytelling by cultural kasi'preneurs plays a critical role in enabling the growth of the business, possible opportunities and resource flow towards the business and the creation of wealth.

Sometimes resources and knowledge are acquired through an inheritance from a previous generation. Shoko received his first domestic machine as an inheritance from his great grandmother, who owned a number of sewing machines. Although he never learnt to make clothes directly from her, this inheritance gave Shoko his first opportunity to make clothes. The machine gave him one of his first experiences of learning to make garments from a sketch; he was able to elevate his skills from being a fashion stylist to fashion designer.

Shoko expanded his resources through buying second -hand equipment from his mentor's client. A good quality industrial machine costs between R10 000 and R30 000 depending on the brand. The client had an industrial machine in her home but desperately wanted to get rid of it and was willing to part with it for R2 000. This offer was initially made to Masuku but he already had a machine and no space. Although Shoko didn't have the money, he still managed to get a loan from family members to purchase the industrial machine. He received a loan worth R1 000 from his grandmother and the other R1 000 from his sister but the terms of loan from the sister was that Shoko's father would pay her back. He describes the favour his father did for him to be helpful but also as spoiling him because he did not feel pressured to work hard to pay off the



loans as he was only paying back the first half to his grandmother.

Shoko highlights the impact of the pressure to pay back the loan:

- You work harder and seek more opportunities;
- You are motivated to succeed as your success is not only your own but also everyone who supported you;
- You want to pay back the money to maintain the relationship for future support, building the trust; and
- You want to build a reputation for the business and yourself as an entrepreneur.

The system of access to finance through family members is based on trust, relations, and the need to be supportive of each other. There is no contract, however the agreement between the two parties can be verbal. There is often no deadline or interest charged on the initial money borrowed.

**Access and flexibility afforded by informality.**

Despite the South African government's ongoing efforts through initiatives set up by the Department of Arts and Culture such as the Cultural Industries Growth Strategy (1997), Mzansi Golden Economy (2013), South African Cultural Observatory (SACO) (2014), and the Cultural and Creative Industries Federation of South Africa (CCIFSA) (2015), there is insufficient direct support available to cultural entrepreneurs in the townships. During interviews with the cultural kasi'preneurs, none of these government initiatives were mentioned as providing support to cultural entrepreneurs and their businesses. They also had no knowledge that these initiatives existed to understand and provide support to the cultural and creative industries in South Africa. Molele's explanation for his lack of engagement with government initiatives is that his independence and survival requires action, and waiting for the government to provide assistance is not an option.

The cultural kasi'preneur offers a different definition of success for the black child in the township; their stories inspire and influence these children to know that opportunities and dreams can exist within the township landscape and that there are dreams being realised in the township. Cultural kasi'preneurs are transforming their townships through their own vision, cultural value and by moving between formality and informality. Working primarily informally gives access to new learning experiences, access to resources and flexibility within the business. Cultural kasi'peneurs are driven by the need to succeed and make a difference; they constantly find themselves reimaging how they operate their businesses because of the nature of their environment.

Cultural kasi'preneurs make use of informal networks to access information and resources. The system of the network is embedded in friendships formed over the years and are therefore based on trust and reciprocal. The cultural kasi'preneur also recognises the power of affiliation: affiliating the business and the brand with other local businesses and brands allows cultural kasi'preneurs to share a market. This also reflects that survival is sometimes dependent on sharing rather than competing. To be able to share this market, the cultural kasi'preneurs ensure that their stories are relevant but also different from one another. Storytelling through online platforms is one of the most popular and cost-effective way for the cultural kasi'preneur to communicate the values of their cultural products and services.

Townships are a major consumer space because of their large populations. Despite this huge potential, however, businesses in the township struggle to attract the attention and the investors needed to grow the business because of their geographical location and the way in which both informal and formal methods are incorporated into the business model. Public policy needs to move towards making townships attractive and sustainable for both livelihood and businesses. Townships are unique to South Africa and, in reality, are growing. The cultural and creative industries in the township have the potential of making our townships attractive to investment.

Cultural kasi'preneurs provoke us to think of the township as a space capable of existing and recreating itself beyond the boundaries of its historical formation (Mbhele, 2020). The township is more than just a place that we constantly dream of escaping; it is rather part of the dream and the success we aspire to. Unlike their cultural predecessors that reiterated the need to leave the township, cultural kasi'preneurs are finding alternative forms of existing, creating meaning, seeing, surviving and thinking about the township. They have a sense of appreciation for the potentialities of the township which are outside the norm that anything that tries to find life is already dead (Mbhele, 2020). The cultural kasi'preneur understands that there is no other option but to create cultural value and redefine success.

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# Day Four:

# *Cultural Entrepreneurship | Cultural Economy | Cultural Industries*

**Introduction:**
**Johanna Mavhungu**

**Jenny Mbaye, Can Zhu and and Ribio Nzeza Buketi Buse**

**Panelists:**
**Boitumelo (Tumy) Motsoatsoe, Marcus Tebogo Desando, Mariapaola McGurk, Lot Kafes and Gail Syger and Cobi Labusgagne**


1. **Introduction**
   **Cultural entrepreneurship challenges and successes in Africa**
   Johanna Mavhungu
2. **Urban Cultures and Entrepreneurship in African Contexts**
   Jenny Mbaye
3. **Cultural Entrepreneurship in China**
   Can Zhu
4. **COVID-19 Economic Impact on African Creative Sector: Lessons for Cultural Entrepreneurs**
   Ribio Nzeza Bunketi Buse
5. **Cultural Entrepreneurship Business and Arts South Africa (BASA) Programmes**
   Boitumelo (Tumy) Motsoatsoe
6. **Toward Relevant and Tangible Development: Long Game is the New Sexy**
   Marcus Tebogo Desando
7. **THE CREATIVE UPRISING HUB: Transwerke Studios: From birth to new life**
   Mariapaola McGurk
8. **The Cav'Townships Creative Economies Project of the Goethe-Institut**
   Lot Kafesu
9. **The Wot-if? Trust**
   Gail Styger
10. **Funding Cultural Entrepreneurs in Crisis during COVID-19**
    Cobi Labuscagne

# 1 Cultural entrepreneurship challenges and successes in Africa



*Johanna Mavhungu*

*Johanna Mavhungu's work draws from her experience as a budding creative, entrepreneur, independent cultural and media worker and the many years she worked as a researcher and lecturer at the Sol Plaatje Institute for Media Leadership (SPI) at Rhodes University. Her research outputs are used by media practitioners and students reading for courses in Media, Arts and Cultural policy and management. She has collaborated in film and research with organisations such as the International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX), the Open Society Foundation for South Africa (OSF-SA), the Media Development and Diversity Agency (MDDA) and the South African Department of Communications with a specific focus on community television, the press and digital cultures. She is a lecturer in cultural policy and management at the Wits School of Arts, and a PhD candidate at the University's Link Centre PhD programme in Interdisciplinary Digital Knowledge Economy Studies. Her research interest are in film and television and the digital knowledge economy.*

## Introduction

The International Summer School was organized by the Cultural Policy and Management department (CPM) and Institute for Cultural Industries at Peking University. The event took place online because of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2021. Despite the obvious challenges that came with hosting any event during the pandemic, the contributions were solid, robust, and engaged with the changes that were becoming noticeable second year into the pandemic and accompanying national lockdowns. The papers presented on the 4th day focused on the concept of cultural entrepreneurship. The day was divided into two sessions: the morning session delivered academic papers and papers from practitioners, and the afternoon session student presentations.

This introductory report focusses on the proceedings of the 4th day, with additional information included from the later substantive

submissions made by colleagues post the summer school once they had been revised and refined for publication. These include papers by Buse (2021); Labuschagne (2021) and McGurk (2021). The speakers for the day were Dr Jenny Mbaye, Professor Ribio Nzeza Bunketi Buse, Can Zhu, Boitumelo "Tumy' Motsoatsoe, Marcus Desando, Mariapaola McGurk, Lot Kafesu and Gail Styger. Their combined knowledge and experience spans academia, business, arts development, arts education, arts administration and cultural entrepreneurship, to mention but a few specialist areas within the cultural economy (Anheir and Isar 2008). This also extends to global trends because of their professional practice.

The summer school took place during a time of uncertainty across the globe. The presentations delivered throughout the 4-day event tackle how these uncertainties are impacting the livehoods of those in the arts and culture, creative industries, and related sectors (SACO 2021; Buse 2021). These papers contribute to our collective understanding of who a cultural entrepreneur is, and how they have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic on the African continent more specifically. The contributions are mainly from African scholars who are stimulating conversation about cultural policy and management, while acknowledging different geopolitical and political economy issues within the continent.

Nyamnjoh says that the cultural economy in Africa lacks cultural diversity, and claims that often plurality is mistaken for diversity (Nyamnjoh 2007). He adds that "to minimise investment and maximise profit global entrepreneurs often streamline, standardise and routinise cultural production and consumer palates to target individuals directly as consumers, and not as members of a cultural community..." (2007: 123). Buse (2021) concurs that "competition is fierce. Major companies have large market shares and are more resilient than Small and Medium Enterprises" (8). Informality in the cultural and creative industries is a key characteristic. Buse (2021) adds that "the understanding of 'an entrepreneur' in Africa cannot be separated from the informal characteristic of the major part of the whole continental economy. The creative sector as part of the economy is also part of this informality. This leads to the lack of access to financial services from the private sector on top of the fact of lower support from governments" (Buse 2021: 8). The theme of informality resonated with most of the contributions during the summer school and particularly on the fourth day.

Aageson (2008) states that cultural entrepreneurship is an emerging concept within the broader cultural/ creative economy discourse. He defines a cultural entrepreneur as "a risk taker, change agent and resourceful visionary who generates revenue from innovative and sustainable cultural enterprises that enhance livelihoods and create cultural value for both creative producers and consumers of cultural services" (2008: 96). Scholars have discussed the importance of cultural capital and cultural value with respect to need for resources and outputs that resonate with the value of the arts in society (Aageson 2008; Bourdieu 1993). According to Aageson (2008), cultural entrepreneurship matters because cultural entrepreneurs are the 'missing link' between creative talent and the market (2008: 93).

The first contribution of the day was delivered by Dr Jenny Mbaye (2021), Senior Lecturer at City, University of London's Centre for Culture, and the Creative Industries (CCCI). Her presentation contextualised urban cultures and entrepreneurship in Africa, which was also the title of her presentation. The presentation centered around the practice of cultural entrepreneurship within cultural policy making and the intersection with urban culture. She says that in African contexts civil society [including cultural entrepreneurs] are policy makers defacto disconnected from formal public institutions; because of a lack of policy at local levels to support entrepreneurial activity, these actors create their own rules. Government and private sector efforts have resulted in what she refers to as policy imports from the Global North, such as 'creative precincts'

- Maboneng in Johannesburg for example. She questions whether these initiatives serve the interest of diverse local arts communities because, historically, cultural policy processes have been influenced by colonial policy-making processes.

The presentation foregrounds the importance of enabling citizen agency and capacity to engage in the reimagining of their space and work. She proposes two concepts that expand on her notion of a 'governing cultural polis' with concepts from scholars/artists AbdouMaliq Simone and Koyo Kouoh, which are 'people as infrastructure' (2004) and 'alternative institution-building' (2012). These two concepts are used as a lens for examples such as the Godown Arts Centre[1] in order to demonstrate how grassroots aspirations and a vision for the sector can manifest themselves in the form of a knowledge powerhouse that is rooted locally yet has a strong production Centre able to reach global competitiveness. She draws on Kouoh's work to highlight the lingering colonial heritage in policy making using an example from Francophone Africa, where she posits there has been a lack of public support for private arts initiatives. Moreover, government's presence in the arts permeates the different aspects of doing business and can become an obstacle to growth. She argues that cultural entrepreneurship has not been supported systemically by governments in Africa, but served with much politics.

The presentation also highlighted the interdisciplinary nature of the field of cultural policy and management, using concepts from urban regeneration and the arts to weave her argument. She brings to our attention the notion of a **'relational city'** (Pieterse 2008), thinking of the city as an ecosystem: a space where diverse stakeholders can add value to culture and creativity and include communities through work that speaks to the well-being of its inhabitants. Her examples demonstrate how cultural entrepreneurship can be used to instill a sense of ownership of place, history and renew the cultural scene. In her analysis of local examples, she explains how cultural entrepreneurship can function at both the local and national levels. She concludes that moral and ethical value motivate cultural entrepreneurs to contribute to the cultural vibrancy of their contexts.

While Mbaye's presentation was concerned with the macro policymaking context and processes that affect the growth of cultural entrepreneurship in the city, the title of Professor Ribio Nzeza Bunketi Buse's presentation was based on a research study, *Covid-19 economic impact on African creative sector: LESSONS for cultural entrepreneurs*. The study was first undertaken in the Democratic Republic of Congo where he is based, before expanding to 5 other countries in Africa i.e., "Senegal, Kenya, Uganda, Namibia, and South Africa" (2021: 2). His research method uses research studies that document the impact of the pandemic in the different regions of Africa, using a comparative analysis. His presentation quantifies the economic loss of income to the sector and jobs lost by individuals.

His paper sought to understand the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, and relief measures introduced by governments to support and retain employment opportunities. The research found that COVID-19 had a negative impact on the cultural and creative industries value chains and jobs. Key findings include the fact that six countries combined had a loss of USD 1.5 billion with the majority of the loss being South African at USD 1.49 billion (2021). The most affected sectors were "performing arts (live music, dance, theatre, and events) and heritage sectors. The content industry subsector (audio-visuals, cinema, visual arts) came second" (2021: 3). He argues that this decline can be attributed to the following five factors: i) the informality of the sector, ii) the prevalence of freelance work, ii) small size companies, iii) part-time jobs and short-term contracts, iv) the general small sizes of companies; as well as the high

1 *The Godown Arts Centre is based in Nairobi, Kenya (https://godowntransforms.org/).*

level of human interaction during production into the rest of the value-chain.

The research also found that for those sectors with a digital or technological advantage, COVID-19 had a low impact on their ability to remain productive. He developed a matrix, called the COVID-19 Impact Analysis, which he used to measure the degree to which each of the cultural and creative sectors are impacted and the socio-economic conditions that influence them, starting from low and moving to medium and high impact. Buse (2021) has also made it easier to understand the findings by creating an infographic interactive map of Africa that aggregates the impact of the pandemic using the different African regions. The report also aggregates the responses to the pandemic in the form of relief measures and support programmes that were devised by public institutions, private institutions, donors, and funders from the global North.

He recommends that cultural entrepreneurs understand the importance of interconnectedness and networks that allow one to do business in the global marketplace, and also that they pursue the use of technology to remain resilient and bring new innovations. He suggests that cultural entrepreneurs should have an 'anticipatory mindset', which includes 'monitoring and evaluating trends constantly, making decisions, and acting proactively', which he calls the MMA approach (Buse 2021). He concludes that the cultural entrepreneur needs to continuously upskill their digital competencies, be creative to adapt to rapid change, improve project management, and most importantly have a collective sector voice using civil society's role as 'defacto' policy makers (Buse 2021; Mbaye 2021).

The keynote panel also consisted of a presentation from a PhD candidate, Can Zhu, from the Institute for Cultural Industries at Peking University. The focus of her presentation was Cultural Entrepreneurship in China. Her research maps the history of management within the commerce disciplines to understand its genealogy and subsequent application in the cultural industries. The theoretical approach to her research also demonstrates an interdisciplinary approach between business management and cultural policy and management.

The central subject of her research is cultural entrepreneur Rui Chen, CEO of BiliBili, a video sharing platform popular among young people in China with 172 million active users every month (Zhu, 2021). This platform she adds has been called the 'YouTube of China'. In her paper, Cultural entrepreneurs are defined according to those that live a creative lifestyle; these are either artists or those who are interested in the professionalisation of creativity and productisation of creativity. The cultural entrepreneurs use artistic methods and aesthetic rules in some way to achieve commercial interests. The company rose to success under his leadership as both CEO and Chairman of the company, a rare delegation of authority to occupy both positions of power with respect to cultural governance. His background in software development seems to have been instrumental in understanding the suitable business model. It also enabled him to build a small company with local cultural tentacles to a registered business on the stock exchange in China. She concludes that cultural entrepreneurship is not a mere business activity, but the integration of economic activities with an artistic mindset and management skills and a strong sense of advancing one's cultural mission/ ethnic or national identity. The case study is an example of the resilience of technology driven CCI initiatives. This presentation concluded the keynote presentations.

The following speakers were made up of practitioners from the field of arts, culture, and heritage management, namely, Boitumelo Motsoatsoe, Marcus Desando, Mariapaola McGurk, Lot Kafesu, Gail Styger and Cobi Labuscagne. The panel session had two presentations focusing specifically on work that

is being done by funding bodies[2] i.e., BASA and ACT, and two about projects aimed at supporting cultural entrepreneurs, one of which is supported by Constitution Hill[3] and the other by the Goethe Institute office in South Africa and implemented by a local NGO. The last presentation was about the Presidential Employment Stimulus Programme (PESP); the programme was in its implementation stage at the time of the summer school and will be discussed later in the paper.

Boitumelo Motsoatsoe from Business and Arts South Africa (BASA) started with a presentation titled *"Cultural Entrepreneurship"*. Motsoatsoe's presentation was an overview of the work done by BASA to support entrepreneurs in the cultural industries in South Africa as discussed above. BASA offices are based in Johannesburg, although their programmes are aimed at artists throughout the rest of South Africa. According to Motsoatsoe, BASA has two capacity building programmes for cultural entrepreneurs within the creative sector. These are BASA Scale-Up and BASA Debut. Both programmes are aimed at building the capacity of cultural entrepreneurs primarily from an information/knowledge sharing perspective. Some key challenges facing cultural entrepreneurs in South Africa identified through the programme include access to business and digital knowledge skills, access to capital, access to markets and access to support and mentorship despite capacity building training workshops. The organisation therefore offers training in these areas and a community network to support their work after the training.

She argues that the programme design takes into cognizance that artists operate both as individuals and as organisations, the boundary between these separate identities becoming blurred, which links with the ideas on informality shared in the keynote session. She recommends that organisations doing similar work to BASA must think of systematic forms of collaboration to share knowledge and resources to avoid duplication. Furthermore, socio-economic barriers necessitate that they provide access to care and mental support in their programmes, which she refers to as 'holistic programming', while teaching cultural entrepreneurs to effectively communicate the value of culture through their work. Mbaye (2021) spoke earlier about the need to focus on meaning/full work that cultural entrepreneurs produce in difficult contexts.

The *"Long game is the new sexy"*, was then Arts and Culture Trust (ACT) CEO Marcus Desando's presentation title. ACT offices are based in Johannesburg as well, although the programme disburses grants throughout the rest of South Africa. He started off by explaining that ACT works through their five different programmes namely the ACT Development Programme, ACT Conference, ACT Scholarships, ACT Awards and ACT Building Blocks; these have since changed names and additional programmes have been added to the organisation's list. ACT's focus is also capacity building for artists and like BASA they also provide grants to the performing arts and visual arts sectors. He concurs with Motsoatsoe that since the pandemic artists require more support with respect to self-care and management skills, especially financial management. He adds that the ACT strategy plans to pivot their offering to enable the sector to thrive and shed its 'beggar'/welfare mindset.

As a grantmaking organisation, he explains the development of a new

*2 Business and Arts South Africa (BASA) and the Arts and Culture Trust (ACT) are both public private grantmaking organisations based in South Africa. These receive part funding from, and work closely with the South African Department of Sports, Arts and Culture.*

*3 Constitution Hill is a public heritage site that is supported through public funding, it is based in Johannesburg, South Africa. "Constitution Hill is a living museum that tells the story of South Africa's journey to democracy. The site is a former prison and military fort that bears testament to South Africa's turbulent past and, today, is home to the country's Constitutional Court, which endorses the rights of all citizens... Constitution Hill is also a place of contrasts: of injustice and justice, of oppression and liberation. Our precinct is testament to the importance of preserving sites of atrocity for posterity, and also to recreating them so that they can serve the purposes of the present and serve to mould the future" (ConstitutionHill.org.za cited in McGurk, 2021: 2).*

strategy that looks at grantmaking as a process of developing micro-businesses and small organisations in the arts and culture sector for sustainability. The principle of 'building blocks', was a recurring metaphor used in his presentation to explain the importance of a scaffolded approach to unlock solutions for cultural entrepreneurs, and thus 'playing the long game' according to Desando (2021). Other key terms referred to in the presentation included digital skills and Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) as future departure points for engagement with the sector.

Mariapaola McGurk presented on the development of the Creative Uprising Hub, an initiative spearheaded by Constitution Hill. Constitution Hill is a key heritage precinct in the city of Johannesburg and it hosts the country's Constitutional Court. The presentation stressed the need for support structures for cultural entrepreneurs working in a landscape where most companies in the creative sector in South Africa are micro enterprises (SACO 2021; Buse 2021). She concurs that cultural entrepreneurs seek economic and social benefits for artistic work. Her contribution highlighted distinctions between arts and culture sectors that need public support/ grant funding to sustain their activities and creative industries, which have the potential to generate employment because they are technology driven (Henry and de Bruin 2011).

The approach of the hub is a long-term strategy to generate cultural entrepreneurial activity at Constitution Hill. It offers opportunities for creatives to be involved in a range of activities, some of which have started such as festivals (e.g., Basha Uhuru), exhibitions and events. The hub has 25 creatives that are receiving mentorship and stipends to start developing their prototypes. The initiative works on a free membership where members can access these services, including access to a recording studio, which is made possible by a partnership created with a non-profit recording studio. The hub offers a hot desk or rental option in Transwerke, a space managed by Constitution Hill. Creatives use Wi-Fi or rent an office and payment options include the option to barter using their skills, services, or programming. McGurk believes in the idea of creating a family (Kaiser et al. 2013).

Lot Kafesu and Gail Styger presented a project called Cav' Township. The project is part of the Creative Economies project, supported by the Goethe Institute. The project aims to support creatives geographically based in townships[4] in South Africa by working with existing creative hubs and incubators based in the same geographical locations and spaces. The primary target for the support is young people and women. They provide training and mentorship for creatives and for the hubs, to ensure adequate capacity and resources. They have a partnership with Wot-if Trust, a tech hub located in a township called Diepsloot, north of Johannesburg. The Wot-if Trust's flagship project is Kasi Creative Propeller. The propeller worked with 30 creatives in 2019/2020, mostly from audio-visual disciplines, which were funded through the Cav Township project.

One of their key findings has been the need for personal and business development of the participants. Participants living in townships are said to manage business transactions well within the township context. Styger argues, however, that township cultural entrepreneurs struggle to compete when it comes to quality because of lack of resources, and this limits their opportunities for securing new audiences and scaling up. For example, basic mobility to other spaces because of socio-economic barriers such as access to transport at odd hours and personal security become barriers to success. The project organises remote bootcamps, retreats, pitching sessions, skills development workshops for cultural entrepreneurs (i.e., how to find clients, costing products etc.), and these have been found to be useful. In addition, Styger suggested

*4 A settlement reserved for blacks and legislated by apartheid law to settle them in an underdeveloped location.*

that creative entrepreneurs from the township could benefit from working with a creative director in an environment that simulates real life. The project is looking to pilot a creative agency to meet this need.

The final presentation was delivered by Dr Cobi Labuscagne. At the time of the presentation, she held a yearlong contract position with the National Arts Council (NAC) as an Organisational Effectiveness practitioner. She spoke on the Presidential Employment Stimulus Programme (PESP), a programme aimed at assisting with economic recovery for artists and arts organisations from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Labuscagne explains that:

> "On 21 April 2020, the President announced an economic recovery stimulus package of R500 billion. Within that was an allocation for job creation and retention of R100 billion. The Special Adjustment Budget recommitted to the R100 billion stimulus over the coming period, with R19.6 billion made available in the 2020/21 financial year. For 2020/21, the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture had been allocated a provisional budget of R1.2 billion [5]" (Labuscagne 2021: 4).

The allocation was later revised down for the arts and culture sector. According to research, the arts and culture sector were the hardest hit by the pandemic because events were cancelled as discussed by Buse (2021). Moreover, short-term contracts, which the sector relies on to secure skills, were cancelled due to lack of live artistic performances. The stimulus fund support was aimed at sustaining wages and funding for projects. Labuscagne argues that the project faced challenges from the outset. These included the NAC having to disburse ten times more funds than what it normally disburses in a financial year and a lack of capacity and understanding of how the arts and culture sector operates by different government departments. Labuscagne adds that the success of the project would later be measured based on the amount of 'job opportunities', even though a job opportunity in the arts is different from what National Treasury defines as such. Labuscagne (2021) discusses the tensions that arose between government and civil society because of government misunderstanding of what a 'job opportunity' in the CCI entails.

She posits that because the DSAC and NAC did not anticipate the scale of need in conjunction with pressured time frames and changes in leadership, the situation quickly deteriorated into frustrations and controversy. She highlighted the potential difficulties of a spontaneous, multifaceted, and non-conformist sector interfacing with bureaucratic institutions, the pressures of administrative compliance and informality (especially around tax matters], the role of intermediaries and notions of the public sphere with emphasis on the 'governing cultural polis' mentioned by Mbaye (2021). In conclusion, she highlights the tensions that exist in how government interacts with the sector and vice versa.

The need to reimagine the cultural economy resonated with all speakers, as well as the need for agency by cultural entrepreneurs to engage with the existing limitations of government support, market access and a rapidly changing digital technology driven environment. In addition, the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the arts and culture sectors both globally and locally was acknowledged. This led to the biggest loss in revenue in the sector experienced in recent history. It was therefore apt that funding, job losses, training/capacity building and retention surfaced as key topics. Capacity building that goes beyond skills, but also includes mentorship and holistic mental support and self-care was recommended by participants as a route that would inform their future strategic interventions; this approach could assist cultural entrepreneurs find meaning in their work.

The agility of the project initiatives

*5 Presentation circulated by the Office of the Presidency by way of introducing the nation-wide objectives of the Presidential Employment Stimulus Programme in August 2020.*

to adapt to the changing digital landscape during COVID-19 was commendable. For example, BASA had migrated their application process for the Debut programme to the international instant messaging operating system, WhatsApp. The platform operates through a freeware application and therefore the cost of accessing an application and communicating with the funder was reduced and the barrier of applying was removed to an extent, albeit that data costs and connectivity remain an issue, especially in peri-urban and rural areas. Working with local representatives and creating an arts community to support the budding entrepreneurs made it easier for BASA to disseminate information, thus the digital did not replace human communication, but worked to complement it. The operative word used during presentations was Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) applied to assist entrepreneurs to find meaning in their initiatives.

The need to formalise one's arts organisation was endorsed; however, informality needs to be recognised because it impacts on a key issue raised by practitioners around compliance. Compliance is viewed as a barrier to access funding, and formalisation is often viewed as the only route to accommodating how government works because of tax implications. Speakers suggested the sector needs to understand how it operates from a qualitative perspective, particularly with the view to understand issues around formality and informality of activity within arts organisations and the sector more broadly. This understanding will form the basis for engaging public and private stakeholders on how compliance can be designed to reasonably accommodate how the sector operates. Speakers explained that grantmaking organisations must account to institutions that make the funds available for disbursement, and they make the rules with respect to compliance.

Other recommendations from both speakers and participants included the need to coordinate interventions across grantmaking organisations specifically to avoid duplication. Creating partnerships in local areas to help beneficiaries gain access to services they need to engage with funding bodies e.g., WI-FI at restaurants, and by extension services needed to operate their initiatives was also deemed important.

The speakers did not delve in-depth into global cultural entrepreneurship and how it shapes the local cultural economy. Therefore, in closing I will refer to some of the concerns raised by Nyamnjoh (2007), when he refers to consumers/audiences as targets of cultural entrepreneurs and "not members of a cultural community that mediates what consumer cultural products and values are adopted or rejected" (123). The act of mediating requires engaging with the cultural diversity of Africans, hence predictability in terms of content and institutional arrangements is always preferred by multinational companies and global cultural entrepreneurs that invest in Africa. This is important because the African cultural economy depends on other global North and global South economies. He adds that "in Africa more than elsewhere multinational capital colludes with states at the expense of democracy, equity, and social development and in favour of sterile profitability and power without responsibility" (Nyamnjoh 2007: 125). Whether this is the case in South Africa or not, cultural entrepreneurs need to remain vigilant about cultural policy and its implications on their work i.e., to produce the type of diverse content of the standard they envision, to secure a market for their work locally and globally, and ultimately to have a positive impact on Africa's cultural economy.

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# Urban Cultures and Entrepreneurship in African Contexts



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**A transcription of the presentation by Dr Jenny Mbaye**

**Centre for the Cultural and Creative Industries**

## Introduction

In order to contextualise cultural entrepreneurship, the broader framework in which urban cultures and cultural entrepreneurship are inscribed are discussed below, with a particular focus on the process of cultural policy and cultural policy making within an African context. Cultural policy is a rational, politically motivated ideology resulting in certain types of actions and intervention. These, however, are always context dependent and inscribed in a specific time and place.

## Cultural Policy in African Contexts:

However diversified the scene is across the continent, there are some common trends, one being the terrain of government and public officials. In the African context, civil society is located at the forefront

of initiatives regarding the cultural sector. Informal policy-makers or policy-makers de facto are often marked by a disconnection with public institutions.

A second point to be made is that there is an assumption that the issues regarding arts culture creative industries and overall cultural policy making on the African continent are relatively recent when there are, in fact, a whole genealogy of policies related to the culture and creative industries. Since the Lagos Plan of Action in 1985 there has been the Dakar Plan of Action in 1992 and, more recently, the Nairobi Plan of Action regarding Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) that was adopted by the African Union in 2008. In 2011 the first African Creative Economy Conference was launched by the Pan-African network of cultural organisations, Arterial Network, in Nairobi, Kenya.

Despite this plethora of initiatives, however, arts, culture and creativity are still very much absent at the level of urban development policy within local governments. There is a lack of formality in this field and a trends to implement policy import with a tendency to try to imports experiences from elsewhere and replicate them locally, particularly with regards to the creation of satellite cities, creative precincts and a greening strategy. Although there is a regional uniformity across Africa, the different regions have been "flavoured" by a diverse colonial heritage, and that has influenced the type of approach that governments have towards policy-making.

## Governing Cultural Polis:

When attempting to contextualise cultural policy and its relationship to cultural entrepreneurship, the cultural economy needs to be rethought, not in terms of what it 'should be' but in terms of what it actually 'is'. How cultural entrepreneurs develop their practices is a reflection of what they see happening in the field which is different from the view through a normative, prescriptive lens that, at times, policymakers tend to have. It is important, therefore, that the agency of citizens and their capacity to engage processes of practical and symbolic re-imaginings of the city is prioritised. Cultural policy should be a gathering of people thinking and developing together. The field of arts and culture is really about trusting the agency of citizens and their capacity to engage in processes of both practical, but also symbolic reimagining of their city.

Two concepts that are relevant when conceptualising this understanding of cultural policy and cultural entrepreneurship are 'people as infrastructure' (Simone, 2004) and 'alternative institution-building' (Kouoh, 2012) which tackle the multiple energies composing the city.

## People as Infrastructure:

Rather than focusing on the **object** used to boost tourism or to re-brand inner-city areas, the idea of 'people as infrastructure' (Simone, 2004) emphasises the **subjects** of transformative processes. It is concerned with the soft resources, the linking value, the glue and the imagination of human bodies. This concept incorporates the knowledge and concern of its citizenry, creating a 'relational city' (Pieterse, 2008) through culture and creativity which becomes a platform or an ecosystem with high added value that increases, transforms itself and integrates new functionalities, users and partners quickly and easily. This in turn creates thought processes that integrate communities in the conception and production of arts and culture for the wellbeing of their citizens.

## Alternative institution-building:

Koyo Kouoh has been the Executive Director and Chief Curator of the Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa in Cape Town since 2019. She is a Cameroonian curator who was based in Dakar Senegal West Africa for a very long time. She assisted with the development of the concept of 'alternative institution-building' through mobilising grassroots organisations from civil society to develop a vision for the cultural sector as she believes that:

> [a]s a general rule, the types of administration inherited from colonial systems perpetuated by the political and administrative elite in Africa, has not placed an

> importance on private initiatives. This is especially true in the arts and in the situation of former French colonies, where the heirs to a centralistic model of an omnipotent and omnipresent state continue to adhere to their constitutional roles as initiator, regulator, controller, promoter, producer and critic. (Kouoh, 2012: 15)

Kuouh founded an art space called Raw Material Company which was based in Francophone Africa where there had been a tendency of not placing much importance on private initiatives. Taking their cue from French practices where the state is quite omnipresent as the initiator, the regulator, the controller promoter the producer and critic of arts and cultural, artistic and cultural initiatives, cultural entrepreneurship had been poorly supported and not taken seriously in this part of Africa. Kuouh encouraged grassroots organisations to challenge this status quo. It is also important not to rely solely on scholars, but to bring the voices of practitioners and operators, adeptly achieved through the Wits School of the Arts Summer School which integrated the voices of academics and practitioners. This concept of alternative institution-building is therefore really about recognising the modality of inclusion of urban creativity of all relevant stakeholders. When discussing the modality of inclusion for urban creativities, Roy refers to the necessity of a dialectical movement between insurgency and institutionalisation when grassroot organisations seek to construct and manage a public realm (Roy, 2009).

Alternative institution-building also necessitates a change in social conversation and political route (Canclini, 2018). Civil society, inclusive of cultural operators, cultural entrepreneurs, creative operators and public institutions, brings an energy that constructively builds within the wastelands of conventional policy-makers and urban planners. In this way the mode of production of the city within the context of sometimes incapacitated governments lacking personal, technical and fiscal capacity can be reconstructed and improved.

## Examples of 'people as infrastructure' and 'alternative institution-building':

### *1. GoDown Art Centre & NAI NI WHO? Campaign:*

The GoDown Art Centre in Nairobi, Kenya, is situated in a previously run-down warehouse that was inhabited by people returning from the diaspora who wanted to create a space that would contribute to the blossoming of the cultural landscape of Nairobi. The warehouse was transformed into what has become a multidisciplinary art space where very different types of disciplines are practiced, encouraged and promoted. It was really an invitation for communities within the city to re-appropriate the city through art practices and through a huge multidisciplinary festival, cultivating a renewed sense of ownership and



belonging. The centre serves as a source of inspiration as to how cultural entrepreneurship can unfold, and how it can foster a renewed cultural scene.

### *2. Ségou – Council for the Promotion of Local Economy (CPEL)*

The Festival Sur Le Niger was founded in 2005 in Ségou, which is a secondary city in Mali, West Africa.




This was not a disciplinary festival, but one which was an initiative of a cultural entrepreneur who was actually the owner of an hotel who wanted to bring more cultural animation within the city. He was concerned with the fact that cultural events and cultural participation were often restricted within the capital city and wanted to enhance these aspects of society within the secondary city of Segu. Over the years this festival has developed a whole set of infrastructure including a cultural centre, a small library, a recording studio, conference space and a huge cultural complex. He started by lobbying local policymakers through enlightening them regarding the role of culture and arts within the development of a city and how culture and arts contribute to the development and immersive emancipation of the city. He achieved this through the creation of a consortium, the Council for the Promotion of the Local Economy (CPEL), which can be seen as similar to the public private partnership often referred to when discussing urban cultures, cultural policy and cultural entrepreneurship.




It created an opportunity to brief policymakers, who may not have had the understanding of the impact arts and culture can play within the development of city; on what they can do to facilitate this.

This public partnership has led to the establishment of a sustainable development programme in Ségou, including the following projects:

= Ségou Creative City Project

= Ségou Woven Loincloth Project

= Ségou Cultural Policy

The formation of the CPEL is a grounded experience of cultural producers revitalising the city and a grassroot organisation that has been successful in institutionalising urban inclusion and in informing policy-makers. It challenged the terms of engagement with authorities, but not the control over urban planning and development that these authorities have. The CEPL also encouraged different initiatives in other cities and culminated in the facilitation of the interactive and constructive discussion around arts and culture which resulted in the launch of the city's first cultural policy for a local government in Mali in 2019.

### *3. Afrikayna Art Lines, Visa for Music and AME*

These three projects illustrate how cultural entrepreneurship can also be located at a national level. They all offer a response to the identification of bottlenecks on the cultural value chain and were created to address specific needs.

AME is an NGO dedicated to cultural exchange between Morocco and the rest of the continents. There is often a regional disconnection between continents that needed to first be improved through conversations and that developed into a mobility fund that allows artists and cultural producers and creators to travel within the continent; mobility being a key issue to build the market.

Afrikayna Art Lines is a Hip Hop festival held in Mauritania that offers, besides performances, space for training and education inclusive of computer assisted




music production and marketing management.

Visa for Music was initiated by a cultural entrepreneur who was not satisfied that cultural producers, cultural makers and artists of the continent had to travel overseas to access global markets. He created a platform, Visa for Music, which enables global distributors, Western producers and managers to come to the African continent to shop for products to distribute elsewhere.

All three initiatives were started by cultural entrepreneurs who were individuals from civil society intervening in the field of arts and culture.

## Conclusion: Urban Cultures and Entrepreneurship

It is very important when referring to urban cultures, cultural entrepreneurship and its relationship to cultural policy inscribed within a broader framework, to pay attention to the moral and ethical values that animate and motivate the desire of cultural entrepreneurs to contribute.

This emotional foundation becomes a motor to drive the cultural vibrancy of their creative scenes and the political efficacy of urban cultural governance (Banks, 2007).

This entrepreneurial subjectivity is steeped in the morality of collaboration, participation and mediation whereby the grassroots capability of cultural entrepreneurs recalibrates the strategies of the state itself, reinforming the what the state and formal policymakers are able to achieve.

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# Cultural Entrepreneurship in China



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**A transcription of the presentation by Can Zhu**

## Introduction

Three important characteristics of the cultural and creative industries (CCIs) are the obvious cultural benefits, the unity of cultural and social benefits and the unity of social and economic benefits. The CCIs therefore not only reflect their own cultural benefits, but also the unity of economic and social benefits. The CCIs itself has a significant driving effect on economic and social benefits. That is why the CCIs differ from other industries or entrepreneurship where the main concern is the business profit.

Cultural benefits of the CCIs include encouragement of aesthetic taste, creativity, individual and group expression, regional development, cultural branding and cultural values. They are also a driving force for the development of Gross Domestic Profit (GDP), promote service and export value, increase employment opportunities and create cultural companies. These are all economic benefits. Social benefits are that they increase spiritual happiness and cultural diversity. They also promote social identity, public culture and opportunities for education.

## Creative Management:

Peking University offers training in Creative Management. Five stages of management have been identified since the 19th century, as indicated in the table on the right.

These different management models and modes of management thinking are important to keep in mind when exploring the role CCIs play in society. Creative management combines creative thinking and business management, which has created a new theory and practice, the cultural and creative field.

*Table 1: Five Stages of Management Theory*

| |
|---|
| **Stage 1: 19th – 20th Century**<br>Rational Management (USA Fordist and Tayloristic contributions provide production line efficiencies |
| **Stage 2: Early 20th Century**<br>Incremental innovations (Japanese Total Quality approaches with structural sub-groupings provide further efficiency gains |
| **Stage 3: Mid-20th Century**<br>Humanistic experiments (European and American efforts to achieve individualized motivation within organizations and for welfare of employees) |
| **Stage 4: Late 20th Century**<br>Organizational Creativity (Institutional efforts to achieve more creative organizational practices and results) |
| **Stage 5: 21st Century**<br>Creative management (Globalized efforts achieve better diffused and integrated knowledge transfer of creative theories and practices) |
| Creative Management is emerging currently from the processes of Stage 4, and offers focus for revitalizing management theory and practice. Imitation and adoption through mimesis of the practices associated with successful companies will accelerate the transition to Stage 5. |

## Cultural and Creative Entrepreneurship

The core of the CCIs is the intellectual resources or creative talents that are the contributions of cultural entrepreneurs. They have a unique set of skills to offer which training in Creative Management can enhance.

> The training goal of cultural industry management education is innovative talents cultivation—creative entrepreneurs with the spirit of practical aesthetics. Creative entrepreneurs in the cultural industry, through different levels of creative practice, such as living a lifestyle of creativity, professionalisation of creativity and productisation of creativity, use artistic methods and aesthetic rules to realise commercial interests. In order to achieve the double balance of social and economic benefits of cultural industries, cultural entrepreneurs show their unique quality structure in thinking mode, behavior style, personality motivation and abilities. (Xiang: 2017, pp.26-30)




A good example of cultural and creative entrepreneurship, especially in Chinese environment, is the Bilibili video sharing and content platform or website.

Bilibili is one of the most popular websites or video platforms in China, particularly among the younger generation. The images above and to the right indicate the age of the target audience and main user demographic. It has a very obvious comic style based on the Japanese cartoon comic and animation culture.





Bilibili has 172 million active monthly users. The post-90s and 00S generation China consists of about 320 million young people, so that would indicate that there is one Bilibili user in every two young people in China, a significant user base in the birthplace of popular culture. The platform has very strong cultural characteristics and has also been the birthplace of popular culture in China, so is therefore a good example of cultural entrepreneurship. The chairman and CEO of the company is Rui Chen, pictured below.



Rui Chen was born in 1978 in Chengdu, Sichuan Province. He was the co-founder of Kingsoft software, one of the earliest Internet software companies in China; he was the general manager of the Kingsoft Antivirus business department in 2006; later he joined Cheetah Mobile and became the co-founder. In 2011, Rui Chen joined Bilibili (station B) as an angel investor to lead the company operation of station B. In 2014, he officially joined station B as chairman of the board. During his tenure, Bilibili has become the most popular cultural community and video platform among Chinese young people. In 2016, Rui Chen was selected into Fortune magazine's list of "China's 40 Business Elites under the Age of 40". In 2018, he led Bilibili to successfully land on NASDAQ. According to the financial report of the third quarter of 2019, the number of monthly average active users of station B is 128 million, and the number of monthly active users of mobile end is 114 million.

With Rui Chen's joining, station B began to operate as a company and began to explore its own business model. Rui Chen was educated in computer programming and had professional experience in both internet companies and the marketing field, but also had a passion for Japanese Animation and Comics since childhood. He had a dream of revitalising Chinese animation and therefore combined the informal with a formal business operation and management through Bilibili.

Rui Chen made some difficult decisions, such as resolutely buying computer servers and copyrights. Thanks to the cheap acquisition of a number of animation copyrights during the company's early years, it has not been beaten down in the subsequent copyright market competition. In 2016, FGO, a game of station B, became popular, and once surpassed King Glory on the best-selling list of IOS. With years of Internet experience, Rui Chen has led station B to realise the transformation from a minority cultural community to a public company, and has made commercial attempts to varying degrees in games, advertising, live broadcasting, offline activities and e-commerce.

Bilibili is a good case study for cultural entrepreneurship as many people think that the reason Rui Chen was so suitable for this cultural or internet company and why he has led it to such success is because he has a very artistic mindset and a passion for culture. He himself has said that:

> Touching is a very valuable thing in cultural works. If we find a cultural work we like, when we are touched or moved by it, we will never forget that feeling. This is the real cultural content.

He also maintains that:

> Mainstream culture is not determined by the number of people. The only difference between subculture and mainstream culture is whether the cultural audience has the right of social discourse. In fact, the demand of post-90s and post-00s subcultures is a direction that will dominate the mainstream of the Internet in the next 10 years. All popular culture must come from subculture.

Bilibili has a very obvious and very strong base of cultural values and culture pursuits. It has introduced new generations to Chinese popular culture. The animations are pictures that are two dimensional and flat,

and the platform enables a lot of people to understand how to love this culture. It has also helped develop the barrage culture in China. The barrage culture is when people view images and animations while live comments are showing and flashing on the screen simultaneously. Many young people love this kind of experience because they feel there is a social connection. They can simultaneously watch or engage with content and talk to each other, creating an emotional connection when they watch a video or play games. This has become a very common watching habit among the younger generation in China.

Bilibili aspires to develop a Chinese animation culture, so in March of 2017 they launched the Domestic or Original Animation Project and in 2018 they cooperated with a famous Chinese novelist and even produced their own science fiction cartoon. Since it went public, Bilibili has invested 1 billion Yuan into Chinese original animation and produced more than 104 works.

## Self-made Cultural Entrepreneurship:

Bilibili tries to explore the possibilities of more diverse content sectors and users while remaining true to the original style and the founders' aspirations. This demonstrates the balance that needs to be maintained between economic and social benefits of CCIs. Bilibili has animation that is popular, but they have invested a large amount of money into an original series of animation, which caused a financial loss in 2020 as a profit still needs to be made from these projects. They are therefore trying to keep a balance between the pursuit of profit and remaining true to their original style and aspiration: a product with both social and economic value. Bilibili has the mission to develop, enrich and promote Chinese original animation so it corresponds to China's national strategy. All these factors combine to make this company both a cultural and entrepreneurial success.

## Conclusion:

Successful creative entrepreneurship is not only a business activity that seeks market opportunities, to meet the needs of customers and win profits, but is also a kind of creative transcendence influenced by many factors such as cultural background, thinking methodologies and the social environment. Creative entrepreneurship is the integration of economic activities, an artistic mindset and management skills.

# COVID-19 Economic Impact on African Creative Sector: Lessons for Cultural Entrepreneurs



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*As professional background, he was the Senior Editor of Kinshasa's (DR Congo's capital city) successful application to the UNESCO network of creative cities in the field of music in 2015. From 2013 to 2016, he was the first Chairperson of the Music in Africa Foundation he co-founded with other African music professionals in Nairobi. This pan African organisation is headquartered in South Africa with 6 regional offices and is one of the leading and authoritative sources of information regarding the African music sector. As a current commitment, he is the Rapporteur of the National Commission for the registration and the promotion of the Congolese rumba on the representative list of the UNESCO intangible cultural heritage of Humanity.*

## Abstract

The creative sector has been affected by COVID-19, especially during lockdowns across the globe. Africa is not an exception. Data collected from surveys undertaken in six African countries give an idea of the size of the crisis. This has showcased a deep weakness in the structure of the sector. Nevertheless, it has revealed new possibilities and opportunities, such as digital tools, for its enhancement which are worth exploring. Moreover, entrepreneurial culture has been key to creating, imagining, and reinventing new models to thrive despite the crisis. The main objective of this paper is to provide some recommendations that may inspire young entrepreneurs in their daily struggles while taking into account the realities of the African context.

## Keywords

COVID-19, creative sector, Africa, entrepreneurship, culture

## Introduction

The year 2021 is a special one globally and at African scale for culture. In fact, the United Nations' General Assembly, following the proposal of the United Nations' Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), sponsored by Indonesia and joined by Australia, China, Indian, Mongolia, Philippines and Thailand, has declared 2021 the *international year for creative economy for sustainable developmen*t. The creative economy relying mainly on culture is an opportunity for economic growth, job creation and youth and women empowerment in several developing countries. It is one of the key drivers for sustainable development aligning with the 2030 SDG goals.

On its side the African Union, a continental organisation, has decided to make a special dedication to culture. "Arts, culture and heritage: levers for building the Africa we want", is the theme. What makes it unique is that culture is considered part of the development agenda. Bringing it to the forefront of the debate is not a common procedure because Heads of States have to struggle against multiple other challenges such as political stability, hunger, water and sanitation, health systems, economic integration, etc.

Unfortunately, those celebrations take place amidst the coronavirus global pandemic. The cultural sector has been severely hit by its consequences. Restrictions (lockdown, ban on gatherings, barrier measures, etc.) to prevent the spread of COVID-19 have forced many operations to postpone or to cancel planned events. Economic losses are huge even if some governments and international cultural cooperation agencies have disbursed funds to alleviate or mitigate them. Many studies have been undertaken to ascertain the scope of the impact on the creative sector in Africa. The results of surveys from six African countries on the negative impact of COVID-19 on the creative sector provide a basis for the main research question: *What are the lessons that may inspire cultural entrepreneurs after the "new normal"*?

## Background of the study

The concept of the creative economy shows the growing importance of the trade of cultural goods and services. According to the UNCTAD's[1] report on the creative economy (2018), the global market of cultural goods and services doubled from US$208 billion in 2002 to US$509 billion in 2015. Ernst & Young's study[2] (2015) indicated that cultural industries in Africa and in the Middle East are worth US$58 billion in revenue, employ 2.4 million people and contribute 1.1% to regional GDP. In the same document, we learn that the most lucrative of these industries in Africa are music, visual arts and movies. Video games as an industry is also becoming more and more important in the creative landscape.

All those figures were not taken into account in many African countries where culture is considered merely as leisure. The economic side as a driver for income generation has been absent in most public discourses until the pandemic demonstrated its impact. Cultural operators were asking for support because they could not maintain their livelihoods. Evidence was needed to demonstrate the severe social and economic consequences of COVID-19 to sustain any request for relief funds. That is why the author decided to conduct a survey on the situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo (Ribio Nzeza, 2020 a)[3] and later in six countries across four regions of sub-Saharan Africa: so, it could be possible to document the impact as has been done in advanced economies [4].

## Methodology

Finding available data across Africa was the first challenge when

*1 UNCTAD, Creative economy report: https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/ditcted2018d3_en.pdf*

*2 ERNST & YOUNG, Cultural times: https://en.unesco.org/creativity/sites/creativity/files/cultural_times._the_first_global_map_of_cultural_and_creative_industries.pdf*

*3 AGENCE D'INFORMATION DE L'AFRIQUE CENTRALE, COVID-19 : le secteur culturel et créatif a perdu plus de 40 millions USD : http://www.adiac-congo.com/content/covid-19-le-secteur-culturel-et-creatif-perdu-plus-de-40-millions-de-dollars-116642*

*4 CREATIVE INDUSTRIES POLICY AND EVIDENCE CENTER, hat is the impact of the COVID-19 on the creative industries? https://pec.ac.uk/news/how-can-the-creative-industries-come-together-to-share-how-covid-19-is-impacting-the-sector*

deciding to engage in this study. It was not easy to collect information because of the conception of culture. The "culture" of statistics on culture is not common among African countries. Public organisations were not the primary producers of such information (Ribio Nzeza, 2020 b). Nevertheless, private cultural organisations and researchers were pioneers.

An Internet search was conducted to find available data from surveys related to the impact of COVID-19 on the creative sector in Africa. Those data were, of course, early assessments as the pandemic has not yet ended. It was discovered that available surveys had been undertaken in six countries: Senegal, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Uganda, Namibia, and South Africa. This sample appears to be representative of the four sub-Saharan regional economic communities across the continent: Senegal (Economic Community of West African States) by Association des Métiers de la Musique du Sénégal; Democratic Republic of Congo (Economic Community of Central African States) by Professor Ribio Nzeza Bunketi Buse; Kenya and Uganda (East African Community) respectively by Heva Fund and by KQ Hub Africa; South Africa, and Namibia (Southern African Development Community) respectively by South African Cultural Observatory and by Creative Industry Guide Namibia. Those countries were the only ones with available data resulting from completed surveys at the time of writing the research. All of them are from online surveys conducted during the various lockdowns that occurred between March and May 2020 [5].

The surveys provide quantitative data. All six case countries were compared to highlight similarities and differences. Key findings were then made available. The comparison processed answers to questions that were not the same in all countries. Hopefully, similar and recurrent entries eased that task.

The key findings on the creative sector vulnerability are explained by factors. Diverse responses to the crisis by organisations have given a framework to reflect on the lessons that may be useful to creative entrepreneurs taking into account the constraints of the economic environment.

Before moving forward, let it be mentioned that qualitative data were discovered on the same topic. They have been produced by the Center for Strategic and Defense Studies of Ghana and by Circulador, a travelling research platform for lusophone countries (Angola, Mozambique and Cape Verde). Nevertheless, preference was given to quantitative data form surveys which were more easily comparable than qualitative ones. An interactive map [6] allows for visualisation of all data regardless of their formats.

## Key findings

The analysis of data compared offers a range of findings. The first is that financial losses (turnover) in the cultural and creative industries in Africa during the second quarter of 2020 vary significantly from one country to another. Figures range between USD 134,360 for Uganda and USD 1.49 billion for South Africa, respectively 0.002% and 1.7%, as contributions to their GDPs. The combined turnover during the lockdown period of the six countries in which the online surveys were done comes to a total of USD 1.5 billion.

Secondly, we learn that performing arts (live music, dance, theatre and events) were the most affected sub-sector. The ban on gatherings as a measure for preventing the spread of COVID-19 is the main explanation for this phenomenon. The content industry sub-sector (audio-visuals, cinema, visual arts) came second.

All the sub-sectors were not affected to the same degree. Some of them were somehow fortunate. In fact, digital media and online gaming, followed by music and audio-visual

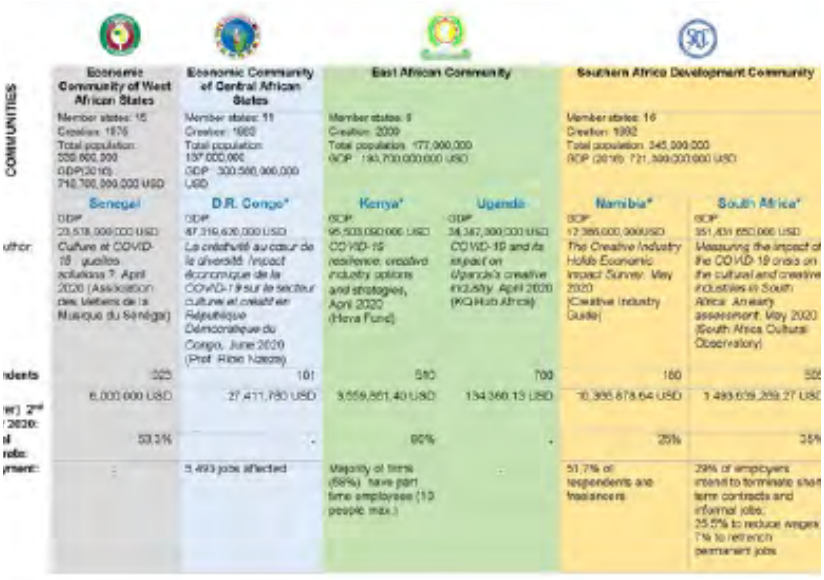
*5 Ribio NZEZA BUNKETI BUSE, Here is the first Africa-wide survey of the economic impact of COVID-19 on the cultural industries: https://the-conversation.com/heres-the-first-africa-wide-survey-of-the-economic-impact-of-covid-19-on-cultural-industries-151400*

*6 Ibidem, https://infogram.com/covid-19-impact-on-culture-africa-mapping-1hnp279v1qyn6gq?live*

contents were able to be resilient. The reason is that, unlike the performing arts which requires a high level of mandatory face-to-face interaction in their value chain, they can be created, produced, distributed and consumed using only online tools.

The vulnerability of African cultural and creative industries can be explained by five factors:

- The predominance of the informal sector (53.3% in Senegal, 51.7% in Namibia, 80% in Kenya, 35% in South Africa);
- The significant number of freelancers whose resources cannot withstand shocks (68% in Kenya). In Uganda, nearly 700 artists were affected through 3,000 cancelled events;
- The very small size of companies (47% of companies in DRC have between one and five employees; 80% have between one and ten in Kenya). This is a further handicap because bigger companies are likely to be more resilient due to better access to financial, human and technological resources;
- The prevalence of part-time jobs and short-term contracts (58% of companies in Kenya have part-time jobs);
- The mode of production and distribution requires a high level of human interaction, especially for the visual arts (such as painting and photography).



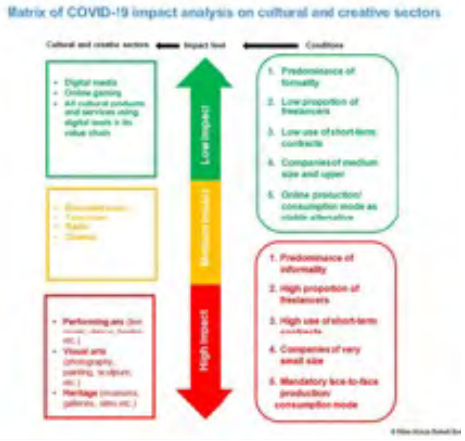
| COMMUNITIES | Economic Community of West African States | Economic Community of Central African States | East African Community | | Southern Africa Development Community | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Member states: 15<br>Creation: 1975<br>Total population: 339,800,000<br>GDP(2016) : 716,700,000,000 USD | Member states: 11<br>Creation: 1983<br>Total population: 137,000,000<br>GDP : 300,588,000,000 USD | Member states: 6<br>Creation: 2000<br>Total population: 177,000,000<br>GDP : 193,700,000,000 USD | | Member states: 16<br>Creation: 1992<br>Total population: 345,000,000<br>GDP (2018): 721,300,000,000 USD | |
| | Senegal | D.R. Congo* | Kenya* | Uganda | Namibia* | South Africa* |
| uthor: | GDP<br>23,538,000,000 USD<br>*Culture et COVID-19 : quelles solutions ?* April 2020 (Association des Métiers de la Musique du Sénégal) | GDP<br>47,319,620,000 USD<br>*La créativité au cœur de la diversité. Impact économique de la COVID-19 sur le secteur culturel et créatif en République Démocratique du Congo*, June 2020 (Prof. Ribot Nzeza) | GDP<br>95,503,050,000 USD<br>*COVID-19 resilience: creative industry options and strategies*, April 2020 (Eleva Fund) | GDP<br>34,367,300,000 USD<br>*COVID-19 and its impact on Uganda's creative industry*, April 2020 (iKO Hub Africa) | GDP<br>12,389,000,000 USD<br>*The Creative Industry Holds Economic Impact Survey*, May 2020 (Creative Industry Guide) | GDP<br>351,400,650,000 USD<br>*Measuring the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the cultural and creative industries in South Africa: An early assessment*, May 2020 (South Africa Cultural Observatory) |
| idents | 325 | 101 | 580 | 700 | 160 | 55 |
| | 6,000,000 USD | 27,471,780 USD | 3,559,561.40 USD | 134,360.13 USD | 10,395,673.64 USD | 1,493,639,259.27 USD |
| | 53.3% | - | 80% | - | 25% | 35% |
| | - | 5,493 jobs affected | Majority of firms (58%) have part time employees (10 people max.) | - | 51.7% of respondents are freelancers | 29% of employers intend to terminate short term contracts and informal jobs;<br>25.5% to reduce wages;<br>7% to retrench permanent jobs |



| COMMUNITIES | Economic Community of West African States | Economic Community of Central African States | East African Community | | Southern Africa Development Community | |
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| ed<br>y<br>ssible<br>ns: | - Solidarity fund<br>- Support fund for cultural entreprises<br>- Stimulus fund | *PMRCC-19*<br>- Funding<br>- Investment (database, creative clusters, Doing business, human capital) | *COVID-19 Crisis Strategy Matrix:*<br>- Emergency, Resilience and Transformation phases (ICT, e-trading, clustering, financial and technical assistance) | New business models in relation with digital platforms | Representatives of creative sector to be involved in Task Team finding long term solutions | - Medium term: sector support and subsidies beyond 2020<br>- Long term: careful strategic planning and assistance for adjusting business models |

'Head of state African Union co-champion of arts, culture and heritage.

ASSOCIATION DES MÉTIERS DE LA MUSIQUE DU SÉNÉGAL, *Culture et COVID-19 : quelles solutions ?* avril 2020
CREATIVE INDUSTRY GUIDE NAMIBIA, *The Creative Industry Holds Economic Impact Survey*, mai 2020
ELEVA FUND, *COVID-19 resilience: creative industry options and strategies*, avril 2020
IKO HUB AFRICA, *COVID-19 and its impact on Uganda's creative industry*, avril 2020
SOUTH AFRICAN CULTURAL OBSERVATORY, *Measuring the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the cultural and creative industries in South Africa: An early assessment*, mai 2020
MIZEZA BUNKETI BUSE, R., *La créativité au cœur de la diversité. Impact économique de la COVID-19 sur le secteur culturel et créatif en République Démocratique du Congo*, Juin 2020
https://www.unfpa.org/data/world-population-dashboard
https://donnees.banquemondiale.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD




Those findings helped me design a matrix of explaining COVID-19 impact:

The above matrix shows that there are three types of impacts: high (red color), medium (yellow color) and low (green color). The most affected sub-sectors are performing arts (live music, theater, dance, etc.), visual arts (photography, paintings, sculpture, etc.) and heritage (museums, galleries, monuments, etc.). The high impact is explained by the five above-mentioned factors:

a) predominance of informality,

b) high proportion of freelancers,

c) high use of short-term contracts,

d) very small size of companies, and

e) mandatory face-to-face production/consumption mode. On the other side, the audiovisual sub-sector (recorded music, television, radio and cinema) has been moderately affected.

However, digital media, online gaming, and all cultural products or services requiring digital tools in their value chain have been less impacted. Some of them thrived. For instance, young people could play online video games without the need of meeting each other. Lockdown was an appropriate time for boosting the consumption of such cultural products. Even for creators, digital software offers the possibility to produce content, test and distribute it without any physical contact. This could be the case for dance or theater. In the specific case of performing arts, it is important to notice that many cancelled events or new ones went online. Digital companies were lucky to create platforms that enabled the organising of virtual, income-generating concerts. Some performers could therefore generate revenue despite the harsh situation due to a lockdown characterised by a ban on gatherings. But from an aesthetical point of view, the consumer experience of a virtual concert shall never be the same as the real face-to-face experience, however technologically sophisticated it may be. When virtually presented, the artwork loses its authenticity, its aura (Walter Benjamin, 2000).

The setbacks of the COVID-19 pandemic have just been explained by five factors. It is important to note that governments, international agencies, the private sector and civil society have responded. Their aim was to alleviate the disaster. The next chapter attempts to give an overview of what happened on the continent in terms of support and relief to the sector. This step will give a context for envisaging on the micro-level how cultural operators can adjust themselves to face the new challenges of entrepreneurship in the sector after the new normal.

## Responses to the crisis

Even if most of the African governments do not incorporate the creative sector into their development plans or take necessary measures to ensure its full participation in social and economic change, the reality of COVID-19 helped to question that usual mindset. It was not easy to imagine living without culture or less culture because lockdown conditions were not appropriate to facilitate production. Moreover, cultural operators started to claim support: relief funds from governments to continue working despite the pandemic. For example, the *Association des Métiers de la Musique du Sénégal* conducted a survey assessing the economic loss to sustain their advocacy. In this time, it could be realised not only with facts, but also with figures, that the cultural sector generates income, creates jobs, and empowers young men and women despite the high rate of informality. On this late notion of "informality in the creative sector", some researchers tend to better understand its framework and its potential instead of seeing it only as a threat to the formal economy.

All surveys quoted in this paper

suggest, according to national contexts and author's perspectives, diverse types of support in order to reinvigorate a creative sector terribly hit by the pandemic. Two kinds of proposals have been made. The first is only appropriate for the short to medium term and provides resilience through solidarity or emergency funds to stop the hemorrhage. The second proposal relates to a long-term approach, probably beyond the pandemic. In fact, COVID-19 has publicly shown the already known but neglected vulnerability of the sector. For instance, the involvement of cultural operators in task forces working on long term solutions, the design of new business models, and the assistance of companies to access more ICT tools during their transformation to thrive in a new environment are among the requests. But the main issue is knowing what happened concretely on the ground.

Three major actors have been involved in providing assistance to the creative sector. On the top of the list are government and public related institutions. Some governments offered relief funds, tax measures (rate reduction, payment deferral, etc.), and business stimulus (loan, moratorium on debts payment, etc.). In Kenya, the Ministry in charge of arts and culture provided the equivalent of USD 944,287 while in South Africa it was USD 8,3M. National Arts Council in Zimbabwe, Copyright offices in Senegal and Ivory Coast and Business and Arts South Africa (BASA) were among other public related institutions to provide financial and/or technical assistance to the creative sector in order for it to be more resilient to the pandemic.

The second major actor is composed of European cultural centers that have facilitated cultural cooperation in Africa for many decades. Pro Helvetia from Switzerland launched a relief fund called "Breathing Space" with packages ranging from USD 2100 up to USD10,500. Creative people from the whole of sub-Saharan Africa were eligible to apply. The German federal foreign ministry and the Goethe-Institut created an International 2020 relief fund of EUR 3,000,000 (up to EUR 25,000 per selected project) for all countries around the world except the ones from Western Europe and North America. The French Institut joined by Agence Française de Développement created the Accès Culture programme providing EUR 15,000 per year (up to 3 years) for projects including French cultural operators and their African counterparts.

Given all this experience with the severe impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the vulnerable creative sector, there are a lot of things to learn. Not only that governments should design sound cultural policies, or higher education institutions adjust their curriculum, but also that cultural entrepreneurs need to reinvent themselves.

The African creative economy has been hugely affected by the pandemic. The above-mentioned figures confirm this. The economic value-chain contains creators, producers, distributors and consumers of goods and services. The familiar environment that those actors navigate has been challenged. Products and services can no longer be distributed as usual within a lockdown context. The main concern is being able to continue delivering in this new context which requires, for example, the inclusion of digital aspects which necessitate a new economic model. It is at this stage that the entrepreneurial culture intervenes. All actors in the value chain should work for products and services that are relevant to the audience's tastes and needs, commercial interests and artistic requirements.

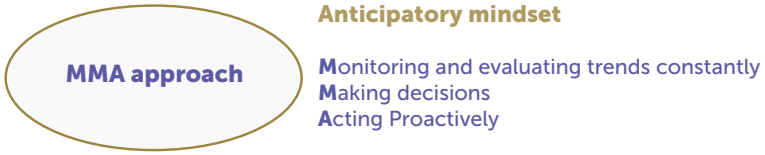
Also, the understanding of "an entrepreneur" in Africa cannot be separated from the informal characteristic of the major part of the whole continental economy. The creative sector as part of the economy is also part of this informality. This leads to a lack of access to financial services from the private sector in addition to lower support from governments. So being an entrepreneur implies that there will be struggles. The informal sector does not get formal support from the private sector and this is exacerbated by a lack of understanding of the dynamics of the creative sector by economic actors (banks, insurances

companies, chamber of commerce, some sponsors) and even by public entities (national development agencies, and relevant ministries). There are very few countries on the continent where entrepreneurs may count on the public and private sectors for support and understanding. In 2021 Ghana established a Creative Arts Agency. South Africa has an organisation called BASA[7] whose mission since its formation in 1997 is to promote greater investment of the business community in the creative sector.

Briefly, being an entrepreneur is already difficult due to the nature of the work itself. But it is more complicated to operate as such in Africa. However, it is rewarding working as a cultural entrepreneur given the social and economic impact one may have.

## Lessons for cultural entrepreneurs

A "world of people, companies, and countries still prepared to join up and do business with each other" says the DHL Global Connectedness Index (2020) [8]. That means that despite the pandemic, our world is becoming more and more connected, fast-growing and mobile, which requires a new mindset for cultural entrepreneurs. They are the targeted group in this paper because they are the ones who are going to make the change. Traditional models of public funding for culture for all its activities are breathless and collapsing. The drivers of social and economic change are among the young men and women who embrace entrepreneurship in this particular sector. In fact, creating long term value for products and services relying on aesthetics and people's taste and behavior is something which is moving constantly. Also, the competition is fierce. Major companies have large market shares and are more resilient than Small and Medium Enterprises. Another reality is the impact of the digital world; a new environment to master. Swimming in such a pool and trying to hold a medal is not simple, but is worthwhile and rewarding.




Considering this new environment, it is recommended that young cultural entrepreneurs adopt an "Anticipatory mindset" to be obtained via an **MMA approach** as set out below.

**1. Monitor and evaluate trends:** The creative and cultural sector is rapidly growing with new ideas, tools, competitors and consumer behaviors. This endeavor can be made possible by having multiple sources of information: newspapers, content curation software, social media professional groups, discussion with like-minded people, professional travels, etc. With digital tools more accessible nowadays, the only cost should be time and willingness.

**II. Making decisions:** After evaluating trends, it is time to take action in order to move forward. Cultural entrepreneurs must always bear in mind that they work in a sector where the level of uncertainty and risks are high. From a marketing point of view, the offer is often not a direct response to a demand, even if some techniques are developed to meet the market needs.

**III. Acting proactively:** It is important to enter the market with innovative ideas, goods or services. As neither success nor failure are totally predictable, it is worth trying as soon as the above-mentioned steps have been accomplished; those remain in an entrepreneur's mind and need to be concretised. Being proactive also means having the ability to be ahead of competitors. The creative sector is an innovative one. Success stories show us that the

*7 BUSINESS AND ARTS SOUTH AFRICA: https://basa.co.za/*

*8 DHL, Global Connectedness Index 2020: https://www.dhl.com/content/dam/dhl/global/dhl-spotlight/documents/pdf/spotlight-g04-dhl-gci-2020-executive-summary.pdf*

ones who acted in the market as soon as they had a simple idea, even one not approved by like-minded people, became famous and remarkable.

Having examined the MMA approach, one question remains: Which lessons for cultural entrepreneurs? Even if it is not easy replying to such a question, there are some orientations or areas of improvement that may nurture the spirit of young African entrepreneurs.

1. Almost half of the cultural entrepreneurs are gig workers and operate informally (requires an appropriate management mindset).

2. Upskilling digital competencies appears necessary to thrive in the current cultural globalised economy.

3. Creativity is needed when looking for new or alternative business models to anticipate/adapt disruptive changes.

4. Project management skills need to be improved: replying successfully to calls for projects/ tracking records of operations for accountability purposes.

5. Being united, well organised and speaking with one voice enables young entrepreneurs to be a reliable Government counterpart in any matter requiring public intervention or involvement (law for cultural operators, social security, etc.).

## Conclusion

It is true that the COVID-19 has hit the sector, but it is also realistic to note that it provides an opportunity for alternative thinking. When a familiar situation breaks down, all efforts are made to resume with a "new normal". The setbacks of the change help us learn a lot and reinvent our perspectives. That is the case in the creative and cultural sectors. Instead of recalling the negative impact of the pandemic, it is an opportunity to find alternative solutions, to reinvent, to be more creative. In fact, creativity should not only be embedded in cultural goods and services but also in the creative management process, in entrepreneurship. The MMA approach is suggested as a tool that may guide in this instance. Furthermore, the COVID-19 experience is showing us that certain skills characterising our modern world are important for success in the creative sector. These include digital, project management and problem-solving skills. Universities and training centers have an important role to play in this regard. Civil society should also equip young entrepreneurs with information pertaining to cultural policy and advocacy in order for them to be able to engage meaningfully with the cultural sector's various stakeholders.

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# Cultural Entrepreneurship

## Business and Arts South Africa (BASA) Programmes



*Boitumelo (Tumy) Motsoatsoe*

*Boitumelo "Tumy" Motsoatsoe is the Head of Programmes at Business & Arts South Africa (BASA). She is a trained performer, facilitator, arts manager and co-founder of sketch comedy group THENX. In 2019, Tumy made the Mail and Guardian 200 Young South Africans list (Arts and Entertainment) and was recently selected as one of the international fellows for the Chevening Clore Leadership Programme. In 2017 she was selected for the BASA award for Cultural Leadership and Management in the Cultural Economy. She has served on the Board of the Pan African Youth Network for a Culture of Peace as the Southern Africa regional coordinator and Arterial Network South Africa.*

*Tumy holds a Master's degree in Cultural Policy and Management and an Honours degree in Dramatic Arts, both from the University of Witwatersrand.*

**A transcription of the presentation by Boitumelo (Tumy) Motsoatsoe**

### Introduction

Business and Arts South Africa's mission is to champion business investment in the creative sector by leading research that enhances commercial confidence. BASA seeks to champion or be a connector catalyst between different stakeholders and partners in the arts and business sectors of South Africa.

### Capacity building

Capacity building is also a key mission of BASA. This is provided within the creative sector to ensure that as and when there is a partnership with other sectors, creatives are clear about their value and on how other sectors can partner with them to create a mutually beneficial relationship. BASA is shifting the paradigm for the future of partnerships between diverse stakeholders.

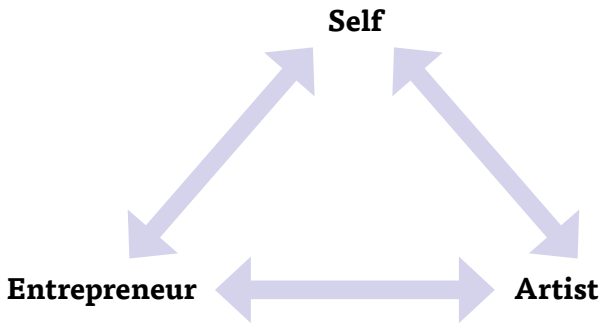
At BASA the belief is, as articulated by Sir Ken Robinson, that the role of a creative leader is not to have all the ideas; it is to create a culture where everyone can have ideas and feel that they're valued. The intention of all BASA programs is not to provide all the answers, but to create a platform where ideas can be shared and value networks created for the creative sector. The BASA Scale-Up Programme and the BASA Debut Program two of the current programmes.

### BASA Scale-Up Programme

The BASA Scale-Up Programme, in partnership with Rand Merchant Bank, aims to equip intermediary and established creatives with the relevant knowledge and tools to grow their ventures and to make a meaningful contribution to the sector as a whole.

### BASA Debut Programme

The Debut Programme, in partnership with the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture is designed




to provide information and skills development to emerging artists. It provides relevant resources from ideation to venture implementation.

## Programme Aims

BASA does not attempt to turn every creative venture into a business, but tries to create a space where creative practitioners can build resource kits that will help them become more entrepreneurial.

## Sector Challenges

Common challenges that the BASA programmes attempt to address in the creative sector are:

- Access to business/digitals skills, knowledge and training;
- Access to capital, funding and other essential resources;
- Access to relevant communities and networks; and
- Access to continuous and consistent support and mentorship.

## Programme Framework

BASA's philosophy is to see the individual as both an artist and a potential entrepreneur. It is understood that not everyone wants to be an entrepreneur, so participants, creatives and experts are each guided on their own learning path and provided with a space to develop in different ways. There are building skills provided for participants to become an entrepreneur, but also to hone creativity in their craft.

The programmes are geared towards an understanding of who each person is, where they come from and what their challenges and goals are. They also enable participants to source their inherent power and knowledge. They are therefore customised to allow the individual to grow and develop on a very direct and personal level.

The Programmes are offered through the following ways:

- Workshops, master classes and events with creative hacks and toolkits provided offline as well.
- Tiered Grant Funding opportunities and Special Awards which were added in response to the results of a recent survey and have proved to be very helpful to participants.
- Alumni Programmes and Online Networks on WhatsApp and Facebook which allow participants to continue working and communicating with other creatives beyond the programme.
- Peer-to-Peer Mentoring & Mentorship by industry professionals & BASA members.

## Recommendations

Going forward, BASA has identified areas of focus that need to be taken into consideration in order for the creative sector to thrive.

### 1. Systematic Collaboration

This is important to avoid duplication of offerings, but also to allow BASA to share this practice and resources that will enable assistance to be provided to a wider group of artists beyond Johannesburg or Gauteng.

### 2. Decreasing Barriers

BASA intends to look more intentionally at the barriers artists experience. In 2020 it became apparent that these went beyond just transport and access to spaces. Barriers such as mental health issues also prevent individuals and

organisations from really engaging in the sector and ultimately thriving. Access to data is another barrier that needs to be addressed collectively as this can cause unnecessary and unfair exclusion.

**3. Holistic Programming**

In order to provide access to mental health support groups, BASA partnered with the Visual Arts Network of South Africa (VANSA) in 2020. The relevance and impact of this initiative was really important for the success and viability of its programmes. It allowed participants to incorporate and use the knowledge gained far more effectively and also to feel healthy and able to curate a viable space for themselves going forward.

**4. Value of Culture**

In 2020 it became clear that the creative sector was not a national priority and not generally considered important to the health and wellbeing of society. Through working together as creative participants, the sector can better articulate and communicate its value.

**5. Innovation for the future**

BASA always strives to anticipate and prepare for the future. Its programmes need to consider what systems should be put in place both together and individually in order to ensure the long term innovation and viability of the creative sector. This requires a cultural entrepreneurship that incorporates artists and entrepreneurs and artists as entrepreneurs.

# Toward Relevant and Tangible Development: Long Game is the New Sexy



*Marcus Tebogo Desando,*
*Director of the Prince Claus Fund*

*Marcus Tebogo Desando, Director of the Prince Claus Fund, is the former CEO of the Arts and Culture Trust (ACT). Originally from Pretoria, Marcus (a Naledi awards nominee for best Actor in a Musical) started his Career with PACT in 1989 as a singer and moved to Cape Town Opera (CAPAB) in 1994 where his career as a director and principal singer started. As a singer Marcus sang in over 75 Operas, Musical theatre productions and Concerts in South Africa and abroad. He travelled the world singing and directing with New York Harlem Productions, Really Useful Company, Pieter Toerien Productions and Cape Town Opera. Marcus has had the honour of being invited by University of Stellenbosch, Tshwane University of Technology, UCT: college of music and UKZN OCSA (opera school) as a guest lecturer. Wth over 40 productions, ranging from Opera to Concerts, under his belt his production of Rigoletto was recorded and televised by SABC 2.*

*As a proponent for change within the performing arts Marcus has become a driving force in development and training of young South African artists and aspiring arts administrators. His passion for the arts has shown in his leadership of Gauteng Opera and now as CEO of The Arts & Culture Trust. He has worked in executive positions as Artistic Director and CEO for Black Tie Ensemble, BTE VO1ss and Gauteng Opera.*

**A transcription of the presentation by Marcus Tebogo Desando**

## Introduction

The Arts and Culture Trust (ACT), established in 1994, is democratic South Africa's first non-profit organisation to create public-private partnerships that serve the arts, culture and creative sector in South Africa. Today, the ACT administers five programmes sponsored by partners in the public and private sectors to create targeted, tangible outcomes for the sector.

## ACT Programmes

ACT currently has five programmes:

### 1. ACT Development Programme

Currently ACT's flagship programme, it has been in existence since 1994 and the primary private sponsor is Nedbank.

### 2. ACT (un)Conferences

This is an interactive conference and learning forum, with a focus on professional development of arts and culture practitioners through facilitation and interaction with industry experts.

### 3. ACT Scholarships

The ACT Scholarships Programme strives to nurture young talent and provide tertiary education opportunities to young people who have their sights set on pursuing performance and visual arts training.

### 4. ACT Awards

The ACT Awards are held annually in recognition and liberation of excellence and creativity. Industry legends such as William Kentridge and Nadine Gordimer have been honoured at this event.

### 5. ACT Building Blocks

The ACT Building Blocks Programme is a capacity building programme for organisations

and arts practitioners which takes the form of classes and project development strategies through one-on-one mentorship by arts industry leaders.

## What is Relevant and Tangible Development?

Based on consultations with a number of stakeholders and a performance review that were undertaken in 2019 and 2020 respectively, ACT realised that in as much as it endeavours to raise funds for grants, the majority of stakeholders were facing other challenges that needed immediate attention. These included:

- The need for self-sufficiency and sustainability;
- How to manage the funds that they receive; and
- Longevity of the sector for future employment and job creation.

In response to these challenges, ACT has embarked upon an in-depth process of organisational strategy revision and interrogation. This has resulted in ACT moving from being a solely grant-making body to offering development packages focussing on the sustainability of micro-businesses and small organisations in the arts and culture sector.

There has thus been a shift from the 2017 purpose of ACT being recognised as a leading custodian of arts and culture, which was quite a broad statement, to its 2021 vision which is to enable South African arts and culture practitioners to achieve sustainable futures.

## How is this to be Achieved?

ACT is planning to achieve this by investing in professional and industrial advancements through proactive, solid, solution-driven programming which will be based on development using the building blocks principle as a driving force.

## ACTion

ACT intends to adopt the 'long game' approach when dealing with organisations and all stakeholders, which will enable its work to progress towards nurturing better professional practice and development for the sector. This will be achieved through the following actions:

1. Introducing skills-development as the cornerstone of all its programmes.
2. Investing in partnerships with expert trainers and educators with specialised skill sets including:

- Digital skills;
- Asset Based Community Development (ABCD).

3. Studying and understanding the sector for improved impactful engagement by partnering with economics focused institutions for sectoral knowledge creation.

ACT also intends to focus on moving towards a more sustainable business model in order to:

a. Survive through the COVID 19 challenge and achieve a thriving environment for the ACT; and

b. Investigate and adopt, through quality research and industry feedback, methods that will ensure longevity for the ACT and its stakeholders.

## Conclusion

In April 2021 ACT will be launching its strategy in full to the general public and, later in the year, will reveal new offerings as an organisation towards a more impactful existence and advocacy for the Arts and Culture sector as a whole.

# The Creative Uprising Hub: Transwerke Studios: From birth to new life



Mariapaola McGurk

*Mariapaola McGurk is the former Creative Public Programmes Coordinator and was tasked with developing the Creative Uprising Hub at Constitution Hill. In 2014 Mariapaola founded a creative enterprise called The Coloured Cube where she was determined to prove that a creative company can both have positive social impact and generate an income. Her company worked on a variety of projects with government, embassies, organisations, universities, and creatives. Through their work, Mariapaola started realising the value and importance of developing support structures for creative entrepreneurs through creative hubs and makerspaces. This support varies from physical studio spaces, Wi-Fi access, 4IR machinery access and developmental workshops. Mariapaola completed her Executive MBA through a Dean's scholarship at Henley Africa in 2019 – it was through this opportunity that she was able to research the impact creative hubs potentially could have on the development of creative entrepreneurship in South Africa; and specifically, in Johannesburg. In her new position at Constitution Hill, Mariapaola will be implementing many of her findings and working closely with other organisations, institutions and creatives to drive the development of the Creative Economy of South Africa. Interested in both the development of the sector, as well as the value of creative output; Mariapaola is also a visual artist represented by Julie Miller Contemporary – she specialises in the traditional artform of paper cutting.*

*Constitution Hill is a living museum that tells the story of South Africa's journey to democracy. The site is a former prison and military fort that bears testament to South Africa's turbulent past and, today, is home to the country's Constitutional Court, which endorses the rights of all citizens. The development of a creative hub at Constitution Hill aligns with the vision of an historically oppressive location that has been reinterpreted into a space of upliftment, identity, growth and opportunity for youth of our country.*

**Taking an abandoned building in the City of Johannesburg and breathing new life and hope for entrepreneurship and creativity**

A case study on how one of the first maternity hospitals in Africa is being turned into a creative hub for the development and support of creative entrepreneurship in Gauteng.

## Introduction:

### *Constitution Hill*

> Constitution Hill is a living museum that tells the story of South Africa's journey to democracy. The site is a former prison and military fort that bears testament to South Africa's turbulent past and, today, is home to the country's Constitutional Court, which endorses the rights of all citizens...Constitution Hill is also a place of contrasts: of injustice and justice, of oppression and liberation. Our precinct is testament to the importance of preserving sites of atrocity for posterity, and also to recreating them so that they can serve the purposes of the present and serve to mould the future.
>
> (ConstitutionHill.org.za)

Constitution Hill Human Rights Precinct received National Heritage status in 2017 as a precursor to a World Heritage Site application. The Constitution Hill Human Rights Precinct has been submitted to UNESCO for World Heritage listing as part of a serial nomination – "The South African Human Rights, Liberation Struggle & Reconciliation Route" by the Department of Arts and Culture and the National Heritage Council. The South African Liberation Heritage Route constitutes a series of sites linked together by a common historical narrative of the liberation struggle and experience.

## The Creative Uprising Hub

The development of a cross-disciplinary creative hub at




*Transwerke Studios, Johannesburg*

Constitution Hill aligns with the precinct's vision of preserving and acknowledging atrocities of the past; while creating a better and more equal society for the present and generations to come. The Creative Uprising is an ambitious, long-term project with the vision of turning Constitution Hill into a creative hub that supports creative entrepreneurs, youth, and other creative hubs in Gauteng. Creative Hubs are not simply studios where artists work, but rather a contemporary response to how we engage, work, share ideas and teach one another. A creative hub is a space were ideas and innovation are developed through critical and creative thinking. It is the development of a community and, in South Africa, an opportunity to really find solutions to inequalities and lack of resources. The Creative Uprising Hub has a variety of physical and digital components designed to offer relevant support to creative entrepreneurs.

Developing a cross-disciplinary creative hub means that the hub needs to have a range of support structures in place that speak to the different sectors. The Creative Economy is a complex space with a variety of sectors that fall within it; a generic incubation hub will not suffice for the nuances and specialisations needed within each of those sectors. For example: a musician and a visual artist developing their careers do not need the same types of resources, support or networks; both, however, may require creative entrepreneurship training. The musician may benefit from access to a recording studio and/or a sound engineer; the visual artist from mentorship and access to




*The Creative Uprising Hub at Constitution Hill*

contemporary artists for mentorship and capacity building.

For this reason, the Creative Uprising Hub is being developed with an openness to collaboration and engagement so that there are a range of specialists from these different sectors to help in the development of relevant support structures.

There is also an openess to creative entreprenuers themselves contributing actively to the requirements of the space: they often know exactly what they need in order to elevate their businesses and careers. The diagram above outlines the different sections of the Creative Uprising Hub.

**A brief outline of the sections:**

- **Transwerke Studios:** a physical building offering low-cost studios, programmes and other support structures
- **Flame Studios:** A Music Hub with cutting edge recording equipment and the vision to both generate income and develop up-and-coming musicians.
- **Speak Truth to Power:** A venue dedicated to creative and critical thinking where corporates, creatives and the general public will be invited to attend workshops and debates designed to challenge their perceptions and ideas.
- **Products of Origin:** The Movement Store (a museum shop) to be opened in 2021/2022 with a programme called the Movement Incubation Programme that will assist creative product developers to grow their business, technical and personal knowledge. They also have the opportunity to sell products at the Movement Store, online platforms and craft markets.
- **Festivals, Exhibitions and Events:** There are two annual festivals, The Basha Uhuru Festival and the Human Rights Festival, and a minimum of ten exhibitions held annually at the space. These encompass a range of events, all with the intention of offering platforms to creatives either through access to market, work, or the development of their concepts and ideas.
- **Membership:** Currently there are 460 members of the Creative Uprising Hub. To become a member you simply fill in an online form which allows us to get insights into what types of creatives are engaging and what their needs are. Membership is free and currently only includes a monthly newsletter with upcoming opportunities and events. There are plans to develop this platform further and to create partnerships with corporates and government to increase support.

  - Some Facts about the members:
    - 43% own a company
    - 57% are freelancers
    - 70% are either micro enterprises (less than 10 employees); or work alone
    - 40% of members are visual artists, followed by those working in fashion (32,5%), design (33%), photography (26%), music 24%, craft (19%), new media (18%), arts education (18%), film (17%), advertising (17%), performance art (15%) and animation (6%)
- **Programmes**: The plan is to host annual programmes that offer a variety of developmental

support for creative entreprenuers. These would include input into capacity building, business & entrepreneurship, technical support, 4IR development, incubation, residencies, etc.

This case study will focus on Transwerke Studios; a four story building which Constitution Hill started managing in 2017.

**Images of the Creative Uprising Hub:**


















## Creative Hubs and the Creative Economy

### *The Creative Economy*

The Creative Economy is quite a new term that challenges the traditional notion of 'economy'. It is a structured network that relates to all the activities within the sectors of the creative industries. If one is to offer development and support to creatives of Gauteng, it is necessary to fully understand what the Creative Economy is, how it functions and what type of support would be relevant and impactful to its growth.



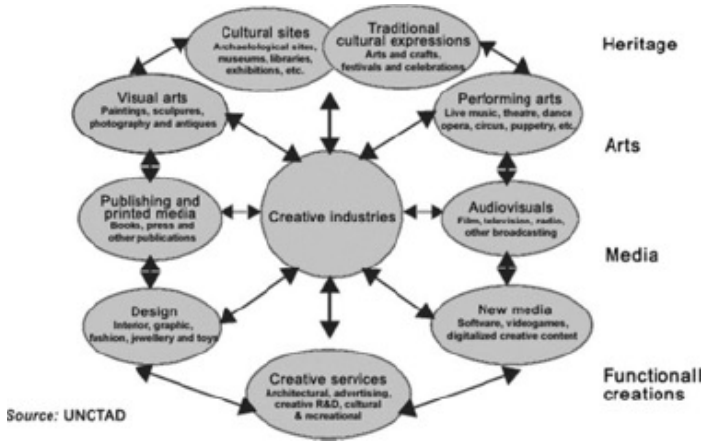




### *The Creative Economy Sectors*

The value of the creative economy is not found only in traditional economic components. It is an innovative approach to the social upliftment of society both culturally and economically. This is further explained by Ries:

> Contrary to what critics say, the creative economy is not only a collection of sectors wrapped up in a new category, but it is the symbol of a new economic cycle, which emerges as a response to long-standing global problems. It encourages and serves as the foundation to new business models, organisational and institutional processes, and relationships between economic and social agents. Within this new paradigm, which has culture as essence and technology as a driving force, the organisation of markets in networks, the partnerships between social and economic agents, the prevalence of the intangible aspects of production, the use of new technologies for the production, distribution and/or access to goods and services, and the uniqueness in production, for it is strongly anchored on singularity, are traits of this model, which assumes that sustainability is based on well-being and socioeconomic inclusion. (Ries, 2008: 47)




*(UNCTAD , 2008, 14)*

To develop the Creative Economy, we must be willing to grow in this 'new economic cycle' and accept that new business models and new approaches to heirarchy and process must be considered and explored. Innovation is impossible without the inclusion of experimentation and the possibility of failure, or the possibility of succeeding in ways that were not inititally considered.

An acceptance of process, experimentation and of potential change is essential if we are to grow the Creative Economy of Gauteng and South Africa.

## Creative Hubs

The Creative Hub is a concept that is growing globally as a response to needs within the creative economy. There is no 'one size fits all' and the hubs are, in most cases, developed in response to the needs and requirements of creatives within a specific community. They do all, however, share a similar ethos and intent: they are not in competition with one another and believe in the value of community development and upliftment. In a study by Toivonen and Friederici (Toivonen & Friederici, 2015) they found the following 4 commonalities of value proposition between all hubs.

1. Hubs Build Collaborative Communities With Entrepreneurial Individuals At The Centre.
2. Hubs Attract Diverse Members With Heterogeneous Knowledge
3. Hubs Facilitate Creativity And Collaboration In Physical And Digital Spaces
4. Hubs Localise Global Entreprenuerial Culture

The nature of a creative hub is different to an incubator where creatives are all part of a programme or attending a series of workshops. In a creative hub a sense of community, place and knowledge sharing is created by the participants. Creative hubs have shown to positively impact the sustainability of creative entrepreneurship through offering access to market and machinery, space, networking, events, community and to capacity building and skills development workshops.




*https://ssir.org/articles/entry/time_to_define_what_a_hub_really_is#*

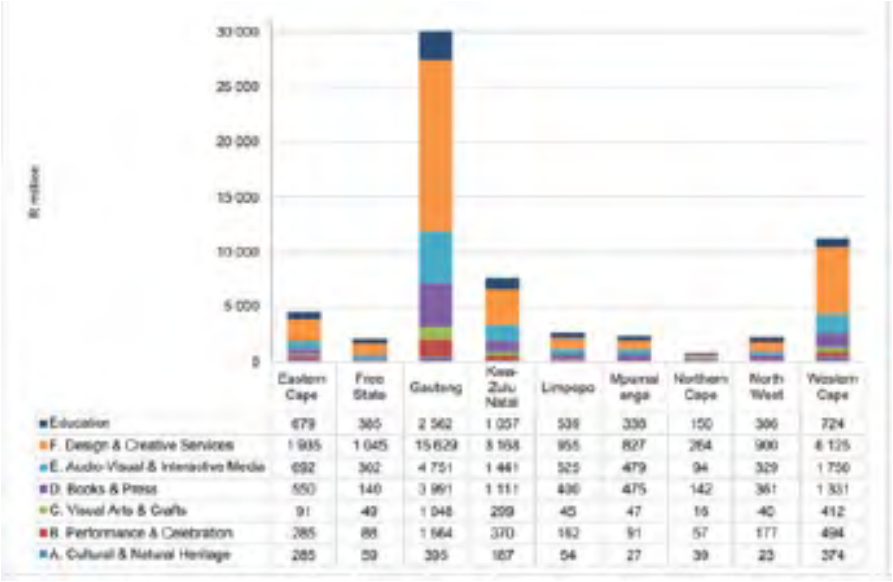
> '[m]ost will have a property element, but they will rarely be a single, isolated building. Within its neighbourhood, the hub may occupy one space, but its support activities will range across a variety of local institutions and networks. But importantly, they support communities of practice, not for profit and commercial, large and small, part-time and full-time activity – they are not just incubators for small businesses, but have a wider remit. Creative Hubs will form a network that will drive the growth of creative industries at the local and regional level, providing more jobs, more education and more opportunities...' (Dovey and Pratt, 2016)

## Transwerke Studios: From birth to new life

### *Background and history to the building*

Constitution Hill is based in the City of Johannesburg and is a subsidiary of GGDA (Gauteng Growth and Development Agency) that has the mandate to:

> ... be the implementation arm of the Gauteng Department of Economic Development and to assist the department to lead, facilitate and manage sustainable job creation and inclusive economic growth and development in the Gauteng City Region. http://ggda.co.za/




*Contribution of CCI domains to GDP by province, (SACO, 2017: 161)*

Gauteng is the creative epicentre of South Africa (SACO, 2017) and is therefore an ideal location for the development of creative entrepreneurship. The figure above shows the contribution of each province to the creative economy. Gauteng dominates with the highest contribution from the Cultural and Creative Industry (CCI) to the national GDP of 2,87% (SACO, 2017: 161). The creative economy is one of the nine priority sectors for the province.

Transwerke studios is a 10 195m², four-story building that is part of the Constitution Hill heritage precinct and belongs to Gauteng Provincial Government. The building is currently in the process of being transferred to Constitution Hill. In light of the heritage precinct status of Constitution Hill, all developments on the site need to be approved by the Chief Justice through the Constitutional Court Building Committee of Justices. These criteria and rights were fashioned to ensure that the nature of the development would be in keeping with the historic character of the site and with the Human Rights ethos of Constitution Hill as a whole. The Constitution Hill Master Plan sees the Hill developed on two pillars: Art and Justice. The Creative Uprising Hub falls within the Arts pillar, but with the fundamental values of our constitution at the heart of how the hub is developed and grown: *democracy, equality, reconciliation, diversity, responsibility, respect and freedom*.



*Queen Victoria Maternity Hospital 1939*

The building was designed in 1939 by acclaimed architect Gordon Leith as the Queen Victoria Maternity Hospital. It closed when the maternity section was incorporated into the new Johannesburg Hospital, now Charlotte Maxeke. It was then turned into 80 residential flats but was closed in 1983. In September 2017, Transwerke received a 'Black Plaque' from the Gauteng Heritage Action Group.

> Black plaques are meant to shame heritage building owners into stopping rampant decay in buildings that should be treasured as historical landmarks. (Mason 2018)

This must have worked because in 2018 Constitution Hill cleaned up the ground floor of the building and allowed creatives to have studios on site, thus beginning the development of the Transwerke Studios. A location deeply imbedded in the apartheid history of South Africa is now

bringing new life to both the building and the legacy of this living museum.

## Vision for the building

The five year goal of this building is to renovate all floors and have a four-story, 80 studio building dedicated to creative organisations, creative entrepreneurs and offering opportunities for the growth and sustainability of micro and small creative businesses. The hub will offer a range of support structures focused on the following elements:

- **The Transwerke Studio Support Programme:** Low-cost studios with the option to barter.
- **Programmes:** A variety of programmes developed through partnerships with experts within different sectors of the Creative Economy.
- **Open studios and other events:** Access to market through events and open studios. This element will only be realised fully after Covid-19.
- **The Let's Get Formal Computer LAB:** A computer lab with ten computers, access to wi-fi and support. This room is dedicated to creative entrepreneurs getting entrepreneurial support as and when needed; as well as a formal programme that will take place annually. This room is dedicated to issues such as:
  - How do I register my business and what are my options?
  - How do I get a business account?
  - Do I need to be vat registered?
  - How do I pay PAYE – do I need to?
  - What is a statement and how do I create one?
  - How do I register on the CSD government data base system so I can apply for tenders and quotations?
  - How do I do an annual financial statement?
  - How do I professionalise my proposal, etc.
- **The BASHA LAB:** The Basha Lab will be a makerspace dedicated to the introduction of 4IR machinery and equipment to creative entrepreneurs. The first set of machinery has been bought, and includes 3d printers, a laser cutter, a vinyl cutter, a large scale printer, etc. This space will be developed, alongside workshops, so creatives can realise and access 4IR machinery for the benefit of their businesses.



*The Courtyard: A Communal Space for Creatives*

## Growing the Creative Economy from the Ground Up

As explained above, new working models are critical to the development of the creative economy, and key to that is for institutions to realise that micro enterprises and creatives need to be seen as partners and collaborators rather than beneficiaries. This may seem like an irrelevant element, but how one engages with a partner is very different to how one engages with a beneficiary. Partners or collaborators come together as equals, with each party having an offering to contribute; beneficiaries and benefactors do not have an equal standing - the benefactor does the giving, and the beneficiary the receiving. This has an impact on power dynamics and introduces heirarchy. Constitution Hill may be offering a range of support to creatives but, in return, ConHill is given the opportunity to reach its targets and deliverables by having creatives engage and contribute to



*The movement incubation programme: Product development*

the development of the hub. Both parties are benefiting from the engagement. All parties need to have this fundamental approach which shifts how we work and the dynamics of who is able to contribute to the development of concepts and ideas.

The Transwerke Studio Support Programme is exploring key shifts in methodology which allow a mutually benefical approach, rather than a top down approach:

## *The Transwerke Studio Support Programme*

The majority of creative enterprises in South Africa, similar to social enterprises, are micro in size with a turnover of R500 000 or less per annum (Lovasic & Cooper, 2019). In a survey done on creative and social enterprises of South Africa, the following interesting facts about creative enterpises were found:

- The most important leadership skill for success is: TECHNICAL SKILLS FOR AREA OF WORK
- Top constraints on financing: NETWORK ACCESS AND INVESTMENT READINESS
- THE VAST MAJORITY OF creative businesses that took part in the survey received NO GRANTS.
- Leaders of creative enterprises are YOUNG, DIVERSE AND EDUCATED

(Lovasic & Cooper, 2019)

This study showed the similarities between social and creative enterprises, which often seem to overlap in their intention to positively impact community and their particular focus on youth development. Creative entreprenuers often have a positive impact on their communities but because they do not often generate high profits, they struggle to cover all their overheads. The Transwerke Studio Support Programme is an exploration of finding ways that the building can be sustainable while offering low-cost studios to creatives. The working model of 'partnership' rather than 'benefactor and beneficiary' led to an exploration of new methods where all parties contribute to the growth and sustainability of the studios.

Studios being rented out at Transwerke Studios are not being done with a generic 'lessee', 'lessor' approach, but rather with the realisation of how much creatives can contribute to the regeneration and development of the city and the growth of the Creative Uprising Hub. The programme is called *'The Transwerke Studios Support Programme'* and all creatives have the option to pay straight low-cost rent (which includes fibre and rates) or bartering to cover part of their rent. The studios are rented out from R1500 – R5000 (depending on the size) and if creatives choose to barter they have the following 2 options:

- **Option 1: Offer your Services to Constitution Hill**

This option works well for graphic designers, videographers, photographers, etc. and offers ConHill access to services. The second benefit is that creatives can show other potential clients the work they have done for this globally recognised museum and gain potential leverage for future work and the growth of their businesses.

- **Option 2: Grow the Creative Economy with us**

Creatives often do not have much spare money, but have a wealth of knowledge, passion and creativity to give. This option intends working with creatives to grow the creative economy together through the following ways:

- Host workshops where you teach other creatives your skills. Some workshops we have hosted so far or are planning to host soon:
  - poetry workshop;

- how to work with denim;
- story board writing;
- fashion planning and design;
- proposal writing; and
- how to get your music out there online.

• Become a mentor to younger creatives within your field. Some mentorships we have done or are planning to do:

- Visual arts mentorship for one month – work alongside a visual artist in their studio and get feedback on your work;
- Shadow a musician and see what they do in the industry.

• Host exhibitions/events that allow other creatives to access your markets and database. Some events/exhibitions we have done:

- Monthly solo exhibition showcasing creatives;
- Monthly events showcasing fashion, food and visual arts.

The bartering approach allows for creatives to become partners and contribute to the overall concept of the hub, while allowing for the hub to develop much faster and on a smaller budget. Creatives bring a sincerity and relevance to the institution while benefitting from lower rental costs. This initiative started in January and has allowed for the hub to be buzzing with activity and opportunity even though it does not have an allocated budget or a dedicated team. All parties bring their strengths and resources to the project in a partnership with a shared vision and intent.




## Funding

Currently there is very little dedicated budget for the development of the Creative Uprising Hub from Constitution Hill and the work being done is with limited budgets and resources but with a belief in this initiative and its potential impact. The funding comes sporadically and through proposals for specific programmes or initiatives. In 2021 we will be opening the first floor of studios to creatives with the vision of the entire building being in operation by 2025.

If we are to start considering creatives as our partners, then there may be new methodologies we can implement to achieve our goals. One of those methodologies is to creatively use what is within your reach. What can we do right now with the resources we have? Rather than waiting for a comprehensive budget to be available – what is possible today? This approach leads to innovative solutions that link to collaboration, action and impact. If we are to approach the Creative Uprising Hub in this way it will also allow for the development of the hub to be process driven and not defined before it has even begun. Through collaborations and partnerships the silo approach – so often evident within government – can be tackled and broken down one idea at a time. This creative process, which has proven to be successful, is how Transwerke Studios is being developed, including its approach to funding and budgets.

> The creative process is the evolution of an idea into its final form through a progression of thoughts and actions. The creative process involves critical thinking and problem-solving skills. From songwriters to television producers, creative individuals generally go through five steps to bring their ideas to fruition—preparation, incubation, illumination, evaluation, and verification. (Masterclass, 2020)

In practical terms this approach has led to the following:

• **What do we have?**

The Creative Uprising, and in particular Transwerke Studios, has many elements that would be considered to be low hanging fruit.

We have:

- a team of people who are gainfully employed;
- a building that can be used on the ground floor;
- second and third floors that can be renovated;
- many studio spaces that can be used for a variety of elements;
- walls that could be painted and contribute to projects and the overall aesthetics of the building;
- furniture in storage which could be used to develop different spaces within the building;
- a small budget that can go towards developing programmes;
- a network of potential partnerships that we could approach to offer various support to one another without having to be funding based;
- creatives, both based at Transwerke and a waiting list of creatives wanting to move into Transwerke.

- **What could we do with all of this?**
  - we can think like a creative and 'DO', 'ACT', 'EXPERIMENT';
  - take the low hanging fruit and turn them into actions;
  - think of ways that the studios could be best utilised, partnerships implemented; and
  - get the ball rolling.



*The Creative Uprising Hub Site Tours*

## Budget should not lead to action – Action should lead to budget.

It is through a creative process that one can explore ideas and see where budget is really required. That motivation for budget will be specific and outcomes based; it will not be the only action taking place within the project.

Recently the MEC of Economic Development for Gauteng stated:

> Constitution Hill is in the process of reinventing itself as a creative industries aggregator focused on youth self-employment, as a compliment to its role as the anchor of a redeveloped inner-city precinct that will be spearheaded by GGDA. (MEC Parks Tau Budget Speech June 2021)

This statement could assist with the development of the Creative Uprising Hub and its large infrustructural requirements such as the renovations to the second, third and fourth floor of the building. Although identifying the low hanging fruit is an element of this development, as is using creative methodologies, projects of this scale require large support for the infratructural requirements in order to succeed. The MEC of Economic Development in Gauteng acknowledging the vision and the potential of ConHill as a creative industries aggregator is key to the development of the Creative Uprising Hub.

## Conclusion

The approach to the development of the Creative Uprising Hub is to think creatively and innovatively, while working with what we have and the support we receive. This is how the creative economy functions:

- work with the elements that are in front of you;
- prove the model works and build it; and
- show the results and garner further support.

The project grows through the needs and requirements of creatives, allowing them to give input and direction to the overall vision. This hub will be developed with creatives and not just for them. It has a long way to go but the results are already visible – even at this early stage.

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# The Cav'Townships Creative Economies Project of the Goethe-Institut



*Lot Kafesu*

*Lot Kafesu is the Project Manager for the Cav'Townships creative economies project of the Goethe-Institut which aims to develop and implement enabling strategies for young creative people in townships through local cultural and creative hubs such as Wot-If? Trust, in order to address unemployment and income generation. He is also passionate about youth development, having invested his early professional life developing and running youth empowerment projects. The Goethe-Institut is the Federal Republic of Germany's cultural institute, active worldwide and promotes the study of German abroad and encourage international cultural exchange.*

**A transcription of the presentation by Lot Kafesu**

## Introduction

The Cav' Townships project is part of the creative economies project of the Goethe Institute. Cav' is a South African vernacular expression used to say "check it out" or "understand".

The Cav' Townships project develops and implements enabling strategies for young creative people in townships. It promotes and supports local cultural and creative hubs, in order to address unemployment and income generation and encourage innovation in those areas. The project works through township-based creatives and creative hubs to support creatives and multipliers of creative entrepreneurship in townships.

## Project Implementation

During the first phase, the Cav' Townships project worked with the Wot-If? Trust in Diepsloot, Leaders in Motion Academy (LiMA)

in Eersterust and Ekasi Labs in Ga Rankuwa. Since 2019 more than 300 creatives have been trained and provided with mentorship across the three townships. Training is provided in adobe, sales animation and virtual reality and an internship programme is offered as well.

The hubs have to comply with four criteria in order to qualify for training and support:

1. They must have a significant percentage of creative industry entrepreneurs;
2. They need to be in a township;
3. They need to have programs in business and skills development; and
4. Support a significant percentage of young people and women in those townships.

Hubs provide improved business models and skills training and access to markets for entrepreneurs.



# The Wot-if? Trust



Gail Styger

*Gail Styger is the founder and a Trustee of the Wot-if? Trust which has operated in Diepsloot for the past 8 years. Wot-if? Trust provides spaces, programmes and platforms for freelancers and small businesses in the creative sector by running skills programmes, making resources and equipment available and connecting township creatives to market access opportunities. In doing this, Wot-if? aims to facilitate sustainable income and thereby impact resilient and thriving livelihoods for their participants.*

**A transcription of the presentation by Gail Styger**

## Introduction

The Goethe-Institut not only supports creatives and creative entrepreneurs, but also "hubbers" as they call organisations such as the Wot-if? Trust.

## The Kasi Creative Propeller

The Wot-if? Trust launched the Kasi Creative Propeller in 2019 and ran it through 2020. The word "propeller" and not "incubator" was used because a propeller provides thrust and lift no matter what level one is at and not all the creatives were at the same level, both from a craft technical point of view and also from a business development point of view.

30 creatives were selected to become part of the Propeller. They were mainly visual artists, photographers, filmmakers, graphic artists, fashion designers, some musicians and a tattoo artist.

Some of the challenges presented were:

- The creatives all had different skills levels. Not just technical skills, but business skills and levels of personal development.
- A lack of understanding market needs. Businesses were well able to service clients in the township where they had a greater understanding of what would work or not, but when serving clients outside of Diepsloot, they were not always able to compete with regards to quality and meeting deadlines.
- A lack of access to the right equipment. A photographer who is trying to be an entrepreneur, but does not have professional equipment will struggle to compete

with those who do.

- Unreliable, expensive and limited transport systems work against township creative entrepreneurs working outside of the township.

Some highlights of the process were:

- **Business Boost Camp:** This was held in partnership with the Goethe-Institut. Small businesses from all three hubs were taken on a retreat where they were taught entrepreneurial skills, offered mindfulness meditation and given time to share and discuss their issues.
- **Industry pitching sessions and industry mentors:** Creatives were offered the opportunity to pitch their concepts which were then critted by industry professionals who also provided follow-up mentorship.
- **Business Development Skills:** This training included advice on how to find clients and cost products cost correctly.
- **Covid-19 in the Kasi Campaign during lockdown:** During lockdown the Trust launched a "Covid in the Kasi" campaign with their creatives. A number of them were encouraged to be citizen journalists who gathered stories, photographs, video clips and poems about what lockdown look like in a Kasi.

The Trust managed to raise a lot of money for people who were not able to source the food parcels on offer, animals who needed to be fed and other issues that arose as the result of electrical outages and water shortages and service delivery problems.

- **Research into a Kasi Creative Agency Concept**: Towards the end of 2020 the GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit) provided funding for research into a Kasi Creative Agency Concept. The purpose of the research was for creatives to work under a creative director in order to earn and learn with real clients, but in a simulated environment. There was a huge response from the creatives both within the Propeller and other parts of Diepsloot. They appreciated the opportunity to learn in an environment where they could hone their entrepreneurial skills, business skills, costing, invoicing and also, obviously, their craft.

## Looking Forward

Because of the success of the Kasi Creative Agency Concept, the Trust plans to do a Creative Agency Pilot. There has also been a lot of interest expressed in the implementation of a Content Development Campaign, possibly through Community radio who would be looking for content. The themes that have been raised as relevant are:

- Vaccinations and Covid Resilience;
- Wellness (Financial, Mental, Physical);
- Food Security; and
- The climate debate, including waste removal and the greening of the township.



*The Wot-if? Trust's creative hub in Diepsloot.*

## Resilience for Creatives

Resilience can be provided through the following initiatives:

- The ability to earn an income and get on their feet through the Creative Agency.
- Employing pivoted business models or freelance thinking.
- The Trust's agencies are also looking at employability. Many creatives feel that it is a sign of failure to be employed in the industry. They would rather run their own business because that is what they believe an entrepreneur should do and this can narrow their opportunities within the industry.
- Resilience for creatives requires meaningful work and validation. Through the Creative Agency they will actually be able to see the outcome of their work out in the industry.

The Wot-if? Trust aims to facilitate sustainable income for creatives and entrepreneurs that will lead to resilient and thriving livelihoods. This may take many forms in circumstances of dire poverty, but the hope is that ultimately all young people of South Africa will have the opportunity to attain their personal and professional goals.

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# Funding Cultural Entrepreneurs in Crisis during COVID-19: The case of the Presidential Employment Stimulus Programme managed by the National Arts Council of South Africa



*Dr Cobi Labuscagne*

*Cobi Labuscagne currently holds a contract position with the National Arts Council of South Africa as Organisational Effectiveness Practitioner. She works closely with the CEO in strategy, reporting and operations. Alongside this she is the Strategic Manager of the Presidential Employment Stimulus Programme which has been positioned by the Presidency as an effort to get the arts and culture sector back on the road to recovery in this COVID-19 era.*

*Until August 2019, Labuscagne was the CEO in charge of operations at Artlogic, a small arts organisation that conceptualised large-scale annual trade events focussing on subjects of art, design and lifestyle. In this capacity she worked to establish the first art fair focussing on African contemporary art and grew the FNB JoburgArtFair into a cultural landmark event in Johannesburg for both local and international visitors.*

*While being intimately involved in Artlogic as a cultural entrepreneurial business, Labuscagne held her academic interests alive by serving as a Research Associate at GIBS (Gordon Institute of Business Science) since 2016. She completed a PhD in sociology as a fellow at the Wits Institute of Social and Economic Research in 2010 and has published in academic journals on topics of African contemporary art as well as business management in the creative industries. She recently completed a Masters in Science at the Roehampton University London in Information Systems Management and Business Administration.*

*A highlight of her professional life was to see her children's book 'Explore! Awesome South African Artists' published by Jacana Media in 2019. The book tells the stories of the lives of 44 South African contemporary artists.*

*The National Arts Council (NAC) was established in April, 1997 through an act of parliament (Act no.56 of 1997). The vision of the NAC is to promote, through the arts, the free expression of South Africa's cultures. The NAC is an entity of the Department of Sports Arts and Culture and a disburses various kinds of grant funding annually.*

*Their vision is - a vibrant, sustainable arts community that enriches lives through the free and creative expression of South Africa's cultures / through strengthening artistic and cultural creation.*

*Their mission is to leverage energy, partnerships and resources to develop, support, promote and advance the arts.*

# Funding Cultural Entrepreneurs in Crisis during COVID-19: The case of the Presidential Employment Stimulus Programme managed by the National Arts Council of South Africa

*Cobi Labuscagne*


## Abstract:

During 2020 the cultural industry faced a crisis unlike any in known history due to restrictions placed by governments to curb the spread of the Coronavirus. In South Africa the industry had to shut down its normal operations for most of the year. Many governments devised relief packages and these took different forms. The Department of Sports, Arts and Culture in South Africa disbursed various kinds of financial relief to practitioners in attempts to respond to what was a completely novel situation. During 2020, the largest funding response to the pandemic came in the form of an economic stimulus devised for national roll-out by a project management team in the office of the Presidency[1]. This paper presents the case of the Presidential Economic Stimulus Programme as it was initially positioned for the arts and culture sector and with the benefit of short-term hindsight considers the implications of the way the programme was conceived of.



## Keywords

COVID-19 relief funding; Arts and culture sector relief; cultural entrepreneurialism; CCI; Public funding of the arts.


## Introduction

During 2020 the cultural industry faced a crisis unlike any in known history due to risk adjusted restrictions put in place by governments to curb the spread of the Coronavirus. In South Africa, in late March 2020 places of work had to move to remote working, virtual platforms. Many sectors of the economy could adapt themselves to virtual operations as South Africa faced what was referred to as Lockdown Level 5. The arts and culture sector was dramatically affected by these risk adjusted regulations because much of its activities resisted an easy migration to the digital realm. Governments the world over responded with relief packages to the arts sector.

In South Africa, the largest financial response to assisting various sectors revive themselves through the pandemic was a nation-wide economically focussed stimulus package called the Presidential Employment Stimulus Programme (PESP). This paper looks at the initial phases and presentation of this programme in the arts and culture through the National Arts Council of South Africa (NAC). In the following sections of this paper attention is turned to the creative entrepreneurial landscape in South Africa, thereafter to research that was done early on in the national lockdown on the effects of the restrictions on the cultural and creative industry by the Department of Sports Arts and Culture (DSAC), before describing and considering the case of the PESP.

## Cultural Entrepreneurialism in South Africa

The last two decades have seen terms such as 'job creation', 'entrepreneurialism' and 'sustainability' enter policy and academic discussion around the arts and culture sphere (Pratt, 2015). During this time, the sector became broadly referred to as the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI) (Flew and Cunningham, 2010; Oyekunle, 2017; Pratt, 2015). The Department of Arts and Culture did a mapping study of the CCIs in South Africa (South African Cultural Observatory, 2017) and found that in the year of the research "cultural occupations in South Africa – which includes people working in sectors traditionally classed as cultural or creative (such as fine art, performing art, film, museum, libraries, music, craft, and so forth), as well as more commercial sectors (including designers, architects, advertising and computer programming) amounted to around 2.5% of all jobs in the country." The report states: "This equates to 396 673 jobs, slightly less than mining". Furthermore, according to Drummond and Snowball (2019): "CCIs contributed R90.5 billion to GDP, which was 2.9% of total GDP" and the authors conclude: "The CCIs have thus become an important sector to the South African economy and, as such, need to be the subject of further research" (108).

*1 The author was contracted by the National Arts Council during this period. When the ISS approached the NAC to present the case of the PESP to the panel, the CEO nominated the author and gave permission for the case to be presented in this academic format.*

It is clear from this research that not only do many rely on incomes derived from this sector of the economy, but also that there is much potential for creating livelihoods in the arts and culture sphere. Some local academics have argued that much more structural work could be done by the government to make conditions conducive for the creative industries to achieve the growth and employment for which it has the potential (Joffe and Newton, 2008; Oyekunle and Sirayi, 2018). Similarly, many have lamented the lack of transformation of the cultural policy landscape (Snowball, Collins, and Tarentaal, 2017; Creativecitysouth, 2018; Joffe and Newton, 2009; Booyens, 2012). When thinking about the CCIs in relation to policy, scholars have also emphasised the importance of contextual factors and locality (De Beukelaer, 2014). There is research that shows that the economic activity that is spurned by the CCIs takes place not only in the big metros and cities of Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban, but throughout the country. A good example of an economically structured study in South Africa is that by Drummond and Snowball (2019) in the Saartjie Baartman District. These authors argue that CCIs could provide answers to some of the unemployment and social difficulties facing small and remote locations.

## COVID-19 and the arts and culture sector in South Africa

The first presentation of the PESP by the Department of Sports Ars and Culture (DSAC) to the sector included research from early in 2020 on the effects of the National Lockdown on the sector. The department presented findings that COVID-19, together with a recent economic downgrade, had exacerbated the recession the country was facing. The report showed that the sport, arts and culture sector had been particularly badly affected due to the following factors:

- The majority of DSAC programmes involve active participation and mass-based contact events - COVID discourages this both at the level of participants and spectators/live consumers of the sport, arts and/or culture products.
- Many DSAC beneficiaries, such as artists and athletes, derive their sole source of income from engaging in DSAC supported programmes.
- The consequences of COVID-19 and the subsequent lockdown have had unintended consequences such as the cancellation, postponement or stagnation of numerous DSAC supported programmes.

Further to this, the department presented that these early impact assessments of the COVID-19 shutdown on the sport, arts and culture sector revealed the following:

- 95% of respondents report that they have experienced cancellation or indefinite postponement of work that would have taken place this year.
- About 11% of businesses and freelancers said that they could probably continue with 60% or more of their normal business activities, and 45% said that they couldn't continue at all.
- Of those who are employers, 38% said that they were ending the employment of short-term contract or informal employees as a way of coping with the crisis.
- 83.7% of respondents believed they will only be able to survive for 6 months or less in the current lockdown environment.
- 42.9% of respondents indicated that relief funding is their key priority in terms of more support from government.
- 34.7% of respondents indicated that an early return to play/practice is their key priority in terms of more support from government[2].

2 *Department of Sports, Arts and Culture document circulated and presented to the sector by way of introducing the Presidential Employment Stimulus Programme.*

## Understanding the Presidential Employment Stimulus Programme

On 21 April 2020, the President announced an economic recovery stimulus package of R500 billion. Within that was an allocation for job creation and retention of R100 billion. The Special Adjustment Budget recommitted to the R100 billion stimulus over the coming period, with R19.6 billion made available for the 2020/21 financial year. For 2020/21, the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture had been allocated a provisional budget of R1.2 billion[3].

The project management team in the presidency called upon departments to act fast, amend their Annual Performance Plans and create capacity to be part of this emergency allocation. The first presentation on the PESP stated that the "dimensions of employment stimulus" included: "to enable private sector recovery and new dynamism; to invest in public goods and services and to create social employment ... and (it was) built on a foundation of social protection – investing in people, and an economic stimulus too". The programme was to be nation-wide with the first phase driven by 15 national departments, all provinces and all metros, creating 800 000 job opportunities with a R14 billion allocation across government departments.

The PESP was positioned by the Presidency as a "Public investment in a mass employment strategy to build a new economy". The official document from the Presidency stated that the allocation for the arts and culture sector was geared towards getting the sector back on the road to recovery. The initial R1.2 billion that was allocated to DSAC was revised in October 2020 to be R665 million towards the DSAC for the financial year ending March 2021.

Within this allocation a portion was dictated by National Treasury to be disbursed via DSAC as an open call to be managed by the NAC and the National Film and Video Foundation (NFVF) – both of which exist as development agencies of the DSAC. The NAC was approached by the Department of Sports Arts and Culture in July 2020 to plan towards managing the disbursement of a portion of the PESP. Planning commenced and after many meetings with DSAC a suitable structure was arrived at. The NAC was tasked to disburse funding in two streams: one for wage subsidies and one for projects. Both of these streams would run as an open call with no threshold to the amount a beneficiary could apply for. It was often stressed by the NAC, internally, in meetings and submissions to the Council, that this was entirely new terrain for the NAC and that it would require tremendous effort to accomplish the objectives set by the Presidency, National Treasury and the DSAC. However the NAC was resolute that it would attempt to assist the sector by taking this project on whilst still running its normal course of business.

The presentations to DSAC by the NAC were altered many times as information changed. Final clarity on the numbers of opportunities to be created through the funding as well as allocated funding to the NAC was received during the course of October 2020. The total allocation for NAC was R300 million, of which 5% was set aside for an administrative management fee. After some delays in receiving the final agreement from DSAC, the call was opened on 30 October 2020 for both Streams. Stream 1 closed on 21 November. Stream 2 had a soft close on 14 November to allow for review and adjudication to commence, with the call finally closing on 27 November 2020.

A significant prescript was that the project had to be fully concluded by the end of the fiscal year 31 March 2021, which meant that all the funds had to be disbursed by that date. A second critical parameter was that the success of the programme would be measured by the amount of job opportunities created within this period. A 'job opportunity' was a concept that was initially explained as differing from a salaried

3 *Presentation circulated by the Office of the Presidency by way of introducing the nation-wide objectives of the Presidential Employment Stimulus Programme in August 2020.*

employment. However, in practical terms it seemed to refer to the same thing and was measured as such. These prescripts were apparently programme-wide and would govern all the departments that participated in the PESP.

### Objectives of the PESP:

What was apparent from early on in the planning process was that the type of funding the PESP aimed to be for the sector was unprecedented. This can be said to be the case both in how it viewed the sector – as an economic enabler, and in its sheer scale. When considering annual funding rounds by the NAC and the DSAC, as well as other funding within the NGO sector, it is customary for administration and 'overhead' fees not to exceed 15% of the overall project budget that one can apply for and this often leaves organisations out of pocket on some of its key resource requirements – it's people. The PESP was envisioned from the opposite end where the people were the starting point. The project team within the NAC had to argue for the inclusion of other costs that entrepreneurs might need assistance with in realising projects. The department had run several relief funding cycles during 2020 focussed on income supplementation. Here the PESP differed fundamentally in that the objective looked beyond relief and attempted to tap into the very stuff of the sector, that of creation.

In the many briefing meetings with DSAC, the PESP was positioned not only as an ambitious attempt at getting the creative sector on the road to recovery, but also to get a view of what projects the sector might be envisioning at this moment. As such, very few additional prescripts were imposed by the NAC and the NAC guidelines governing annual funding were deemed inappropriate. These guidelines included the funding threshold of R500 000 and the programmatic approach currently used by the NAC to make funding decisions.

It was mentioned in meetings with DSAC that the point of the PESP was to fund projects that could demonstrate ambition in being able to achieve scale and innovation for the sector. The adjudication criteria was written to mirror these core objectives. A critical element of the PESP was thus that it did not measure its success by the amount of projects being funded, but the ability of projects to re-ignite the economy through job opportunity creation. The official guidelines in the call for applications read:

> The Presidency has made a special employment stimulus programme available to the sector to disburse via the National Arts Council and the National Film and Video Foundation. The Presidential Employment Stimulus Programme (PESP) is geared towards employment creation and retention initiatives for artists, creatives, heritage sector workers and cultural workers. This includes (but is not limited to) support to innovation in digitisation efforts for content creation and the dissemination and development of e-commerce systems.
>
> The NAC encourages the sector to respond with agility to new ways of developing, promoting, selling and creating arts, culture and heritage programmes, projects and products. This includes reimagining audience interaction with the arts, culture and heritage, the creation of new paradigms for viewing and understanding the place of the arts, culture and heritage during this time of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Presidential Employment Stimulus Programme is a three-month injection and projects have to conclude by 31 March 2021.

The official call listed the following as examples of possible projects, or project spheres:

- Market access opportunities, exhibitions, performances, shows, events, festivals that are Covid-19 restrictions compliant

- Community outreach and arts activation projects

- Technical arts and culture training at all levels

- Creation of new works/ products across all disciplines including writing, design, fashion, photography, visual art, composition, theatre, music and entertainment etc.

- Heritage projects that include women, youth, education, indigenous knowledge, research etc.

- And other activities that can demonstrate the creation of work opportunities and economic stimulus

During the planning phase, there was a debate internally, especially with those who were the custodians of risk, as to whether the entity should take this project on. To the extent that the entity might have had a say in the matter, the feeling was that it should rush to the aid of the sector. Mirroring this, one of the leaders in the project manager office of the Presidency, Kate Philip, in an interview with News 24, said that a real threat to this kind of programme is fear of failure, or fear of public criticism which then stands in the way of "people of goodwill' trying to make a difference (News 24, 2021).

## Disbursing the PESP

The NAC was chosen to disburse a large portion of the PESP because of its comprehensive mandate in the sector and the systems for grant disbursement that were already in place. The PESP was to be disbursed using the models for disbursing funds already captured in the NAC mandate. The NAC was established by an act of Parliament in 1997. As such, it derives its mandate from the National Arts Council Act (No. 56 of 1997, as amended).

The NAC uses the structure of external panel members to adjudicate funding applications, the recommendations of which are then approved by the council. The concept of arm's length funding has a long history in government funding of the arts and is mirrored in many government arts and culture policies globally. It rests on the principle of creating distance between political motives and arts expression in public funding. The arms-length concept further relies on peer reviewing of grant applications which brings in specialisation and, ideally, impartiality. The NAC governance structure follows this model and relies on industry-experts as well as provincial representation to ensure that quality applications are funded; that funding is happening across the spread of the country; and that applications are not awarded on the basis of political or other affiliations - thereby aiming for free artistic expression.

As part of the review and adjudication process, an assessment criteria and scoring was used to determine the weighting of each application. This assessment and scoring provided panels with a systematic approach which could better qualify and compare the reviews of each application. This approach was further guided by the panel's consensus in order to determine their final recommendation. In Stream 2 the final recommendation considered artistic merit, the number of opportunities created, timelines of the project and capacity of the applicant to successfully implement the project within the stipulated time frame. In both streams geographical spread and projects lead by women, youth and people living with disabilities was a key consideration.

Adjudication continued throughout the festive period with a sum total of 31 panel meetings held up until 25 January 2021. The majority of applications were adjudicated and approved by the council whose tenure ended on 30 December 2020. A new council was appointed in January 2021 and work had to continue on the PESP. The new council was at pains to come to grips with the methodology used to approve applicants up to this point. Dissatisfied with the methodology used to determine successful beneficiaries, the new council requested that all work on the PESP be halted for a period of several weeks. The new council rescripted the prescripts of the programme and the process commenced towards the end of February 2021. Although attempts by the project team in the NAC to change the completion deadline with the DSAC to make the process more manageable was denied, the new council managed to change the initial hard deadline of 31 March 2021 so that projects could be finalised by a later date. The new council insisted on an investigation into the management of the programme which resulted in a prolonged forensic audit.

## Discussion

While much of the PESP was unprecedented in its objectives, it created enormous amounts of frustration within the sector almost from the moment it went live. These frustrations are captured in the social media pages of the NAC and the many virtual contact sessions held with the industry during the course of the programme management. There has also been much writing in the popular press expressing the extreme frustration the sector felt towards the NAC as a result of the PESP process. During March and April 2021 members of the cultural sphere staged a 'sit-in' in the offices of the NAC which drew sustained press attention. While it is understandable that there would be a steep learning curve to deliver relief under these novel conditions, and that the NAC was caught off guard and ill prepared, the nature of the criticism went beyond the management of the fund. The following section looks at ways in which the PESP was perhaps not ideally conceived of for the nature of the CCI.

Soon after the review process started, it was evident that several applicants had not met compliance requirements, and several could not understand the guiding cost allocation for each stream, which was R16 600 per job retained in Stream 1, and R25 000 per job and project opportunity created in Stream 2. Stream 2 allowed for up to 50% of the opportunity cost to be spent on project costs. It was evident in the manner that they requested funding and allocated budgets, that this concept was not always clearly understood. The concepts of a 'job opportunity' and a 'guiding figure' were novel for the sector and there was insufficient time prior to the opening of the call and its close to explain these concepts. As stated previously, the very notion of focussing on the amount of individuals employed by a project, as opposed to other project costs, is something that needed far more explanation than the time allowed for. As a result of these fundamental misunderstandings, the process of adjudication was almost immediately frustrated.

A further major challenge that kept coming up was that of the uncertainty around the COVID-19 spread, restrictions and regulations as projects were being planned, proposed, adjudicated and then funded. Panels were expected to approve or reject applications on an ongoing basis, while the country was steadily moving towards a second wave of COVID-19 infections. The regulations guiding projects when the call opened were fundamentally different from those by the time the projects were meant to be funded and rolled-out.

Furthermore, while the PESP was ambitious, timely and unprecedented in the way it approached the sector as some of the above has outlined, with the benefit of short-term hindsight it seems that the PESP was at odds with the nature of the sector in at least two ways:

The first is the fact that work in the creative industries takes place on an incredibly broad spectrum and takes many different forms, much of which does not sit neatly into a public works programme;

and the second was the timelines which seem to point to a fundamental flaw in the initial parameters of the programme.

The PESP came off the back of two waves of relief funding that the DSAC was administering to the sector. One of the main complaints from the sector on these relief efforts was that the compliance regulations were out of synch with the way the sector functioned. Much academic writing has contributed to the understanding of the cultural economy in Africa and in South Africa as not entirely 'formalised' (South African Cultural Observatory, 2020). Mbaye and Dinardi (2019) looked at the music industry in Dakar and Rio de Janeiro to explain the interfaces between the formal economy, the informal economy and the often lagging effects of policy, to understand this aspect of the creative entrepreneurial life. These scholars emphasise that there is not a clear binary between the formal and the informal in the way economic lives are lived. This makes creating policy, legislation, or in this case, grant regulation frameworks all the more tricky.

As such, a key frustration to the adjudication process, repeatedly mentioned by the NAC and its surrounding structural bodies such as panels and the council, was the question of compliance. Compliance refers to the documents that accompany an application used to verify the identity, background, experience and tax compliance status of the applicant. In previous NAC funding rounds, for example, a tax certificate issued by the South African Revenue Service (SARS) which was valid for three months would be required to prove tax compliance. This document was phased out by SARS shortly before the PESP opened for application. Given that SARS had phased out the tax certificate, applicants were appending PIN documents to the applications. The PIN gives access to an 'outsider' to an e-filing account in order to check compliance, but as tax status and demands change, tax compliance status varies even while the PIN itself remains valid for a set period. As such, the applicant has to constantly check their own status in order to ensure that they are compliant as and when the NAC logs in to check their status. This is more relevant to organisations than individuals given that individuals only pay tax up to twice annually in their individual capacities, but organisations pay periodic Pay As You Earn (PAYE), Value Added Tax (VAT), Income Tax (IT), Provisional Tax and Dividend Tax. The process of compiling lists of PINs for the NAC team to check via the NAC e-filing profile proved cripplingly time-consuming.

The insistence on tax compliance documents made entry into the fully compliant list of applicants hard and sometimes impossible for many. It is important to note that this struggle with compliance was not always as a result of the sector not being tax payers, but rather due to technicalities around how and when tax compliance statuses were checked and changed during the course of an application being reviewed.

Given that the PESP was part of a nation-wide roll out, the timeframes were originally based on the prescripts of all government departments. It might well be possible to roll out a public works programme in such a short space of time, but the reality of the arts and culture sector is that projects take a long time to conceptualise, design and execute. Rushing these processes was bound to create forms of chaos, not only internally within the NAC considering that the amount to be disbursed was roughly ten times what they would ordinarily disburse during a financial cycle, but also within the projects themselves. The grant funding life cycle has a number of steps that could not be simplified beyond a certain point. Many of these steps fell over the December holiday period. But over and above the internal difficulties of managing the timelines, and more importantly, there was the complex process that the industry would ordinarily run to execute a project – especially ones that involve many job opportunities. These processes include auditions, subcontracting, contracting and training in many cases. It seems that the prescripts imposed by the PESP betray a lack of understanding of and engagement with the realities of how the sector functions.

Many relief efforts have become the learning ground for how one might approach such a situation better in the future. This paper looked closely at one case of relief disbursement in the arts and culture sector in South Africa with the privileged access to the National Arts Council of South Africa. Apart from the structural adjustments that one might want to consider when offering different kinds of assistance in the form of grant funding, the case of the PESP demonstrates ways in which ambitious and far-reaching attempts to rush to the aid of the economy might miss the mark in economic sectors as idiosyncratic as the CCI. The effects of this case and it's roll-out within the sector require more longitudinal study and analysis for broader conclusions to be reached around the suitability of this kind of relief for the sector. For example, while many governments have started adopting policies and language that speak about entrepreneurialism in the CCIs and the need to develop these aspects of this sector (O'Conner, 2016; De Klerk, 2015), one could argue the arts and culture perform a role

beyond that of the purely economic, especially so in times of crisis such as a global pandemic (Snowball, 2016; Hausmann and Heinze, 2016; Kim, 2017; Holden, 2009). However, the act of considering the CCI's in these economic terms could offer a view on cultural projects as consisting of many 'job opportunities' – a thick network of people - rather than of end-products, events and performances.

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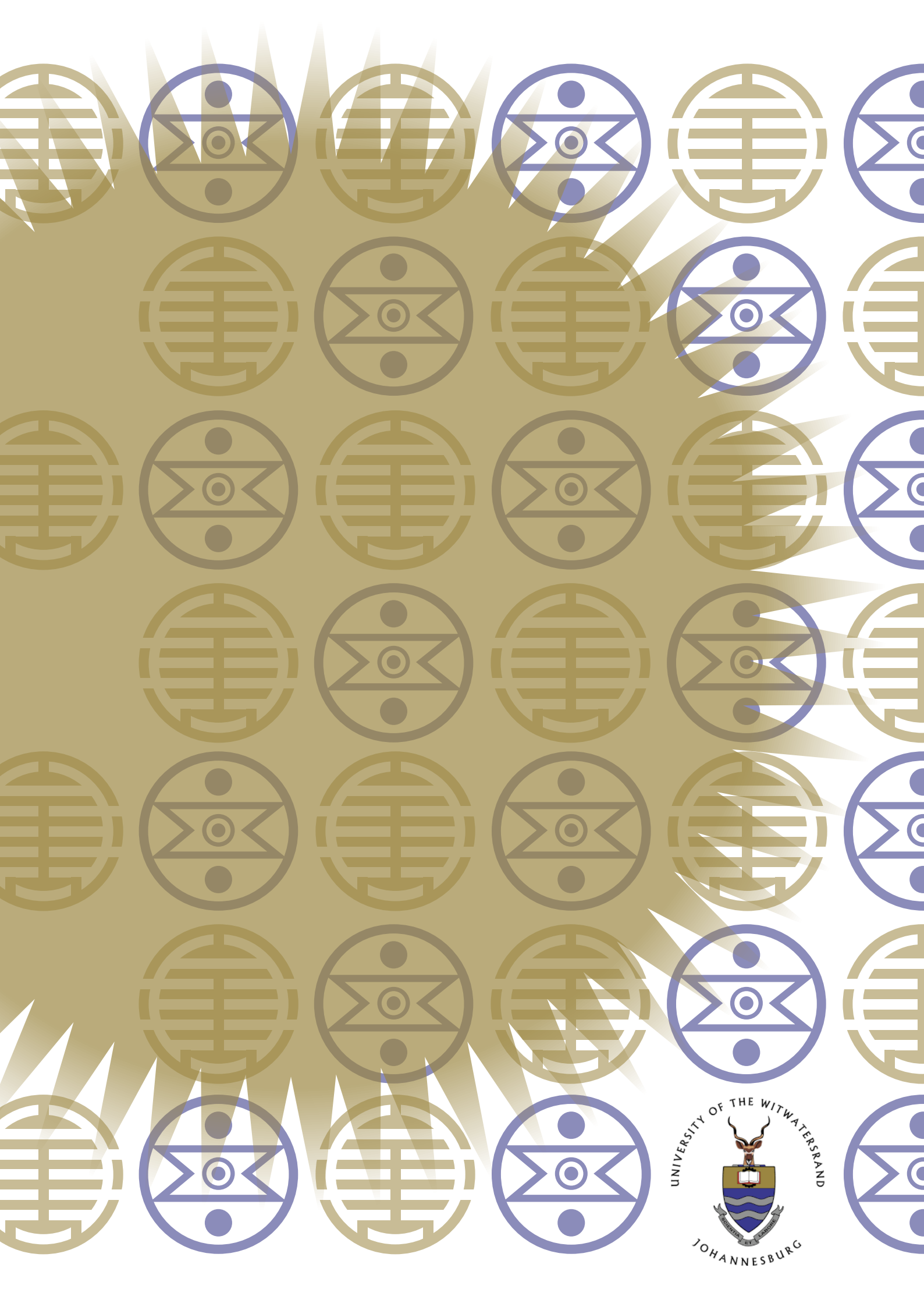
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