Establishing a Contemporary East African Arts Sector: Perspectives from Kenya

The seminar presents a broad overview of ongoing development of contemporary arts & culture within the East African landscape, as experienced through a Kenyan lens and the shaping of Kenya’s own diverse arts’ trajectories. How the development of artists, spaces, programs and audiences is, and has been unfolding will be presented and discussed, against an historical and socio-political context.

Part 1 - Contextualizing Growth of the Arts in Kenya

Part 2 - Anchoring Policy

Part 3 - Sustaining the Arts
Contextualizing Growth of the Arts in Kenya
The Promise of Independence

From culture as ‘the vital and essential force of the nation, the safeguard of our existence and the ultimate resource of our combat’…

to….?

1. Pan African Cultural Manifesto, 1969
Inherited colonial structures and procedures - challenges to begin to adapt these for a new African nation

- Africanization or not?
- Prime Minister or President?
- Federalism or not?
The 70s - Rise of Intelligenstia

- A Decade of tumult-
  - University students and teachers exercise their voice
  - A nervous centre of power asserts itself by clamping down on dissenting views & criticism
  - Detention without trial - Seroney, Shikuku, Oneko, Anyona, Wamwere, WaThiongo
  - Murder of JM Kariuki
  - Succession - death of Kenyatta

- Regionally-
  - EA Community collapses
  - Obote ousted, Terror of Idi Amin

- Social Changes-
  - Rural - urban migration, cities grow
  - Urban families - growing in a ‘cosmopolitan’ environment & emergence of sheng; new histories and identities forming
The 80s - Creative Wastelands?

- Moi tightens grip on power by buying loyalty and dealing a heavy hand on opposition and criticism
  - Charges of sedition rife
  - Coup attempt and consequent declaration of one-party state
  - Student activism ‘contained’ by decentralisation of Nairobi University- 6 separate colleges created.
  - Kitu kidogo thrives
- Internationally-
  - Nation’s international & pan-African engagement widens- Kenya hosts OAU summit, Pope John Paul visits, UN Decade for Women Mtg
- Socio-cultural repercussions
  - Kenyans on ‘tiptoe’
  - Permissions for staging of plays
  - 8-4-4 eliminates teaching of the arts in schools
The 90s- Voices of Youth

• Nation a cauldron coming to the boil
  • Int’l pressure, cancellation of aid, criticism of lack of democratic practices resulting in reinstatement of multi-party politics
  • Incitement of ethnic animosities- tension high

• Social/cultural-
  • Youth represent the largest sector of the population- 70% of the nation under the age of 30
  • Spate of youth violence & rebellion- St Kizito rapes and deaths; Bombolulu arson(?); continual school strikes and closures
  • Tough ‘gangsta-derived’ lifestyle emerges among urban youth- hip-hop craze
  • Escalating poverty and joblessness
The 00s: New Directions

• Politically-
  • Democratic space has widened but still fragile
  • Citizenry steadily becoming more vocal and even pro-active

• Socio-cultural-
  • A ‘contemporary Kenyan’ is emerging
  • Predominantly urban bred/influenced
  • Assimilated modern & western culture
  • Yet desires to assert an African identity that incorporates aspects of western non-African culture

• Ramifications
  • The field of performing arts responds to the new Kenyan: ‘new’ artforms-contemporary dance, fusion styles of music, underground youth sheng expression in poetry and conversation
Models of formation and operation

• Training of individual talent
• Strengthening frameworks and structures that grow the discipline and the community structures which 'complete the picture'- venues, institutions, events (e.g. Festivals)

• Emerging structures and frameworks:
  • The Godown
  • Music Awards (Kisima, Kora)
  • FM Radio
  • Dance Encounters- african contemporary dance platform
  • Regional Festivals: Busara Music Festival (ZNZ); ZIFF
  • Kwani Narrative Nights

• The future needs vision and steadfast action to realize the vision
  • Enabling career development in the performing arts
  • National level policies to secure and ensure the growth of the field
  • Nurture local support- audiences and resources.
The truth is, we have only started to see what we will look like.

Binyanvanga Wainaina, Kenyan writer
Anchoring Policy
Many issues, little mitigation

- Foundational training for creative industries (the education curriculum)
- Business skills for creative entrepreneurs
- Copyright awareness, protection and enforcement
- Leveraging digital technology for the creative industries
- Recognition of and investment in the creative industries
- Documentation and mapping of the creative industries
- Value chain strengthening
- Infrastructure development for the creative industries
- Promotion of local content development
- Lack of policies
Creating spaces for articulating and advancing policy advocacy

east-african
• The Summit was launched on Sunday 5th November with Cocktails and the Opening of East Africa Prints Exhibition at the GoDown Arts Centre. The exhibition ran throughout the Summit. Subsequent events were held at the Silver Springs Hotel, apart from the public Forum with Nobel laureate for Literature, Professor Wole Soyinka, which was held at the Stanley on the 8th of November.

• The event brought together policy makers in both the private and public sector, academics, media owners and staff, theatre, performance and arts practitioners. A dynamic meeting of theory and practice, it marked the Summit’s determination to influence arts and cultural space through the broadening of dialogue and institution of meaningful and much needed change.
Creating spaces for articulating and advancing policy advocacy

pan-african

ARTERIAL NETWORK
Arterial Network Launched in 2007

**Aim:** To build and/or further develop effective, sustainable national regional and continental networks within and across regions to play advocacy and lobbying roles in support of African creative sector

- Establishing a Continental secretariat
  - Continental and regional convenings
  - Building partnerships with African Union, IFACCA, UNESCO, etc
  - Establishment of an Africa Fund for Arts & Culture
  - Developing toolkits for policy advocacy

- Launching National Chapters
  - Websites, policy advocacy and implementation frameworks, arts activities, network-building

- Establishing regional secretariats
  - Conducting regional workshops and leadership training
Some Key Documents

**International**
- 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions
- 2010 Structure & Value Chains in Kenya’s Creative Economy (The GoDown)

**Continental**
- Pan-African Arterial Network conference reports on the Creative Economy

**National**
- 2007 Nyariki D, report Economic Impact of Kenya Copyright-based Industries (WIPO)
- 2012 Roadmap to position Kenya Creative Industries as Catalyst for a Kenyan Knowledge Society (Min of ICT)
- 2012 Unearthing the Gems of Culture – Mapping Kenya’s Creative Industries (ACRI)
- 2015 National Creative Economy Report (CEWG)
- 2015 Scoping Report for East Africa Creative Economy (British Council)

**County Government**
- Nairobi County Cultural
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<td><strong>2005</strong></td>
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<td>Nyariki Report on CE economic contribution</td>
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<td>- UNESCO 2010 Creative Econ Rpt</td>
<td>- GoDown, Natverkstan (SE) , Goldsmith’s college,</td>
<td>- GoDown Creative Entrpnshp 10-wk course, cohort 1</td>
<td>- CEWG Naivasha Rpt ( CE framework and planning for Ntl Ce Conf)</td>
<td>- HIVOS commissioned reseach on CE</td>
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<td>- Aga Khna U Curriculum for Arts &amp; Business</td>
<td>- Creative Industries Task Force (Min ICT)</td>
<td>- GoDown &amp; Technical U discussions on joint CE Course</td>
<td>- CEWG attends Ona African Creative Econ Conf, SA Arterial Netwk</td>
<td>- TUK Centre for Creative &amp; Cultural Industries</td>
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<td>- Draft Film Policy (KFC)</td>
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<td>- Local content percentage</td>
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<td>• British Cncl launch of Creative Econ scoping reports</td>
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<td>Copyright Amendment Act 2019</td>
<td>Draft National Film Policy</td>
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<td>• Ntl Creative Econ Conf (CEWG)</td>
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<td>• GoDown Creative Ent Course Cohort 4 &amp; 5</td>
<td>• Pre-study on Creative Econ (Swed. Embassy)</td>
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<td>• Launch of HEVA funf for Creative entrepreneurs</td>
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<td>• KEPSA board for creative industries</td>
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<td>• EA Creative Industries Bill</td>
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Emerging Collective Advocacy for Creative Sector in Kenya

• The Creative Economy Working Group is a network of practitioners in culture and the creative industries.

• Aims:
  • Partnership building with relevant government ministries & departments
  • Policy advocacy and safeguarding freedom of expression
  • Capacity building and knowledge sharing within the creative economy
  • Data collection – cultural statistics
3
Sustaining the arts
Sustainability as a factor of mission & vision

Cultural Anchor
A centre significant & relevant to the community as cultural real estate, promoting creative industries, and existing symbiotically with other neighborhood/city activities

Anchor institutions are entities having a large stake in a city, usually through a combination of internal missions and landownership... They encompass universities, hospitals, cultural institutions (including museums, libraries, performing arts facilities), churches, military installations and occasionally large corporations... As entities consuming sizable amounts of land, they have an important presence in cities and their neighborhoods.
Sustainability as a relationship between the arts centre & community
Nai Ni Who
Temple Tour
Tuesday 12th September 10am
Meeting Point: The GoDown Arts Centre

#NaiNiWho
Nai Ni Who
Nai Ni Who

Facebook: www.facebook.com/nainiwho
Twitter: @NaiNiWho

josephmbao86@gmail.com
Sustainability as a relationship between the arts centre & city
inclusive stakeholder workshops
The GoDown’s Practice: Dynamic & Intersectional

- Arts & Creativity
- Community
- Identity & Self-determination
- Knowledge generation
Sustainable Practice
Particularities of The South

Commonalities of Practice: Morocco, Nairobi, Dar-es-salaam, Addis, Accra, Joburg, CapeTown

- Horizontality – the quality of finding alternative and other solutions
- Second chance, Re-use – in creative practice and use of space
- Performativity – intentional practice affecting action, change
- Elasticity – responsiveness at many levels
- Convergence – tying yesterday, today and tomorrow