

Emerging Opportunities in the Creative and Cultural Economy in the EAC for Exploitation

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ABSTRACT

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This paper explores the state and nature of the arts in Uganda other East African states today, the challenges they face, the opportunities for socio-economic development that are derived from vibrant cultural and arts industries. Cultural and artistic products of all categories are a great mirror of the cultural landscape of any society. Culture is part and parcel of humanity; any people without cultural identity/identities live in abyss and can easily be absorbed by the nearby superior cultures.

East Africa's basket of arts can be categorized into the mainstream and the minority arts. These arts, are but not limited to: films, television programs, software and video games, theatre, literature, fashion, handcrafts/artwork, cookery, brewery/juice, etc. Consequently, the creative arts are the backbone of creative industries like folk art, festivals, music, theatre, books, paintings, performing arts, cuisine, fashion, crafts, traditional medicine, film, and television, animation, video games, architectural and design, advertising, broadcasting, etc.

All is not rosy for the creative industries. Challenges ranging from unimplemented protective laws and policies, limited market, limited finances for the finance intense arts like film, poor attitude from the consumers, limited government interest among others have stagnated most creative industries in East Africa. However, amidst the hiccups, the passion to create and express oneself has kept the artists motivated. Also, in the most recent years and especially with the establishment of the EAC, there has been noticeable governments' interest in the creative industry.

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To date, however, there is a general enthusiasm among the East Africans performing artists and audiences. When this interest is harnessed by the stakeholders, the creative industries is one sure way to create jobs, generate income for participants and increase revenue base for the stakeholders. All EAC states have the children and youths population at over 50% with Uganda scoring highest at 70%. This human resource is very critical for a sustainable Creative Economy; it does necessitate urgency in planning so that they can be absorbed in the job industry, lest they become a time bomb, if the current unemployment figures remain un-tackled. In addition, arts can promote social inclusion, cultural diversity, help the people to capture and rewrite their history. At the EAC level, generally, jobs will still be created, regional integration and cultural exchange will be fostered, edutainment of the people by their own stories, stories that usually conscientize the masses for positive change.

In Africa, art should be the spear for multifaceted development. We have to take advantage of the massive impact of the audio-visual arts: films, animation, music videos, the music and the resultant performances, literature, the healing power and confidence building of hand craft(s), fashion, food, and the larger satisfaction that the artists get from capturing moments and creating novelty. Arts contributes to culture and in tandem making the peoples' history. The uniqueness of our diversity as East Africans can turn into a gold mine if the ethnic minority and the disappearing art forms are brought to speed with the rest of the arts.

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Introduction

Culture, If we agree to take it as the sum total of the ways in which a society preserves, identifies, organizes, sustains and expresses itself, and is concerned with socially transmitted behavior patterns, arts, beliefs, institutions and all other products of human work and thought, all the tangible and intangible heritage, that are complex and in constant evolution, then culture is simply the folklore. Artistic products of all categories are a great mirror of the cultural landscape of any society. Culture is part and parcel of humanity; any people without cultural identity/identities live in abyss, and can easily be absorbed by the nearby superior cultures. Folklore is everything about a people, and it has financial potential if it can be well tapped into, for purposes of continuity and exploitation.

Uganda's tourism slogan 'Gifted by Nature' does intimate to a myriad of gifts in other socio-economic fields in Uganda and East Africa at large. For example, Uganda, like Kenya and Tanzania is endowed with a rich and diverse cultural heritage, which includes sixty-five indigenous communities with unique characteristics.ⁱ Tanzania mainland has - African 99% (of which 95% are Bantus consisting of more than 130 tribes [and Nilotics - Luos]), other 1% (consisting of Asian, European, and Arab); Zanzibar - Arab, African and mixed Arab (Index Mundi). Kenya has over 42 documented and about 30 undocumented ethnic groups.ⁱⁱ

Rwanda and Burundi have Hutu (Bantu) 84%, Tutsi (Hamitic) 15%, Twa (Pygmy) 1% and Hutu (Bantu) 85%, Tutsi (Hamitic) 14%, Twa (Pygmy) 1%, Europeans 3,000, South Asians 2,000, respectively (Index Mundi).ⁱⁱⁱ

In addition to the creative industry, EAC states have the tourism industry to reckon with. Most of the tourism attractions developed and yet to be developed, are historical and natural heritage. Currently, the tourism

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industry is said to be one major foreign exchange earners in all the EAC states, yet local tourism is not yet fully tapped. Kenya is doing far better than the rest of EAC states in promoting this sector and other states can borrow a leaf.

Carolina Quintana, from the creative economy programme at United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), augments the importance of creative economies when she says, “Africa has a tremendous cultural heritage and high levels of creativity, as we have seen in different disciplines such as in film, music, art, crafts, design and audio visuals”.^{iv} There is indeed untapped potential from developing the cultural and creative industry in the region. This creativity will groom talents- stars and icons of Africa, generate jobs and income, and foster general development.

The immense transformational drive of the creative industries is also emphasized by Bernard Bakaye, head of culture and sports department of the East African Community, he asserts:

There is potential of these creative industries to create jobs [and] incomes if well harnessed. Partly that’s why we, the East African Community, are working hard to ensure that we invest in these industries to develop them into economic sectors which can contribute to economic growth in our region.

Therefore, the socio-development potential of the creative industries cannot be underestimated, or debated further, the supporting structures have to be put in place. The detailed Uganda’s case analysis is summarized in the *Draft National Action Plan on the Creative Industries of Uganda*:

In the year 2004-2008, Uganda’s exports of Cultural goods and services were valued at US\$239 million (approximately Ug.shs.427 billion). The sector of creative industries contributed

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approximately US \$ 6.7 Million (approximately Ug.shs12.6 billion).

The 2013 Mapping Study of Culture and Creative Industries in Uganda and the 2009 Mapping Study of the same, provide empirical evidence that the creative industries are among the most dynamic emerging sectors in world trade, Uganda inclusive.

The 2013 Mapping Study reveals that there are a significant number of people involved in the Cultural and Creative Industries across the country but organized and formal groups are relatively few. Further still, the few organized groups are micro and small enterprises with few employees. The Mapping Study reports indicate that the contribution of Creative Industries to direct employment is a meager 4.5% of employment. This could be explained by the reality that many operators are unregistered enterprises operating at an informal level (45% of the enterprises) (13).

This state of affairs does hint at what is happening in other East African countries. The creative industries are wobbling, struggling on their own. The Uganda Government has realized that it has not provided an enabling environment for the sector to flourish. This is summed up appropriately by the *Draft National Action Plan on the Creative Industries of Uganda 2015/16 - 2019/20*:

There is a general inadequacy of infrastructural support including legal and regulatory factors and this has impeded the growth of the sector. There are a number of obsolete laws, while enforcement of regulations is still lacking. Furthermore, access and cost of finance is not favorable for the domestic investors and neither are there any incentives for those willing or have already invested in the sector (15).

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These factors and others that may be affecting the other EAC states will continue to lead to remarkable revenue loss by both Government and the private sector, as well as a loss of jobs for the youth and women who are a major resource for the sector.

The apparent success of the Nigerian and Tanzanian film industries should be a stimulus to the stakeholders. According to Nairaland.com, Nollywood that is less than three decades old is worth [Nigerian Naira] NG#853.9 billion (US\$5.1 billion) as at 2014 and produces hundreds of home videos and films per annum. Nigerian cinema is Africa's largest movie industry in terms of value [income earned] and the number of movies produced per year and the world's number two in terms of quantity of productions, it is behind Bollywood.^v

State of the Cultural and Creative Industries Today.

To date, there is a general enthusiasm among the East Africans performing artists and audience. East Africa's basket of arts can be categorized into the mainstream and the minority arts. These arts, are but not limited to: films, television programs, software and video games, theatre, literature, fashion, visual arts and crafts, cuisine, brewery, etc. Consequently, the creative arts are the backbone of a creative industries like folk art, festivals/carnivores, music, dance, theatre, books, paintings, performing arts, cuisine, fashion, crafts, film, and television, animation, video games, architectural and design, advertising, broadcasting, etc.

The creative industries have numerous challenges. In Uganda, the hardships include, unimplemented protective laws and policies, limited market, limited finances for the finance intense arts like film, poor attitude from the consumers, limited government interest among others have stagnated most creative industries in Uganda. However, amidst the hiccups, the passion to create and express oneself has kept the artists motivated. Also, in the most recent years and especially with the establishment of the EAC, there has

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been noticeable governments' interest in the creative industry. In the case of Uganda, the *Draft National Action Plan on the Creative Industries of Uganda 2015/16 - 2019/20* has been drawn in response to a directive made by His Excellency the President to establish and raise awareness of the economic value of Creative Industries in the Country.

The artist hope that this conviction that the Creative Industries of Uganda are a pillar in the Countries socio-economic development gets implemented. It would be excellent if the various EAC states do harmonise their cultural and creative industries work plan for a unanimous takeoff.

Creative Arts in East Africa

Like I earlier pointed out, I have categorized creative arts into the mainstream and the minority arts. The mainstream arts are those that are popular and have high chances of evolution and progress, while the minority arts may be lost and forgotten as societies embrace modernity and post modernism. Mainstream arts include audio-visuals like film and television, animations, Television adverts, talking books and video games, visual arts and craft, music, literature, theatre etc. The minority arts include traditional beer brewing (*tonto*) in most Bantu communities in Uganda, traditional mats and basket weaving, rock art, masks and costumes that are specific to particular ritual functions like the taking oaths and initiation, body art, incisions with ritualistic meaning etc.

Emerging Opportunities

East Africa is endowed with a rich and diverse cultural heritage of over 270 indigenous communities. This is a huge creative resource with the potential to generate unique creative goods and services. Also, some of the communities are organized under traditional leadership (Kings and Chiefs) making human resource mobilization and dissemination of cultural artistic products much easier.

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The Youths form the bulk of the EAC. According to Index Mundi, 2015 demographics of EAC countries, the youth were over 50% of each country. Uganda has the highest number of youths and children population at about 70%, this human resource is very critical for a sustainable Creative Economy; it does necessitate urgency in planning so that they can be absorbed in the job industry, lest they become a time bomb if the current unemployment figures remain un-tackled. These children are dependent on their youthful parents between 25-40 years who are the major victims of unemployment. We thus have to curb the status quo by investing in industries that can bring about socio-economic change.

The Table Showing the Population of Youths and Children in EAC States

Country	Age Groups	Population by gender	% per age group	Total Population of the country	% of youth and children
Uganda	0-14 years	Male 8,714,354	48.7%	35,918,915	69.9 %
		Female 10,962,186			
	15-24 years	Male 3,775,679	21.2%		
		Female 3,833,574			
Tanzania	0-14 years	Male 11,173,655	44.6%	49,639,138	64.1%
		Female 10,962,186			
	15-24 years	Male 4,838,216	19.5%		
		Female 4,841,338			
Kenya	0-14 years	Male 9,494,983	42.1%	45,010,056	60.8
		Female 9,435,795			
	15-24 years	Male 4,197,382	18.7%		
		Female 4,202,399			
Rwanda	0-14 years	Male 2,617,472	42.1%	12,337,138	61
		Female 2,575,429			
	15-24 years	Male 1,166,258	18.9%		
		Female 1,167,934			
	0-	Male 2,385,571		10,395,931	65

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Burundi	14years	Female 2,361,367	45.7%		
	15-24 years	Male 1,001,486	19.3%		
		Female 1,005,617			

Data by IndexMundi 2014

According to IndexMundi (2014) the EAC has 153,301,178 million people. This is still below Africa’s giant Nigeria at 177,155,754 million. But, the collective population of EAC and the current growth rates per annum show that we have to take advantage of the population boom by investing in creative industries that will provide employment for the youth majority and women, and earn the region foreign exchange.

In addition, arts can promote social inclusion, here learn about the ethnic minorities when their stories are told in arts and craft. They are able to feel part of the nation.

Creative arts promote cultural diversity by showcasing other ethnic groups we are able to learn about and appreciate our cultural heritage and difference.

Literature, film, photography, art (murals, sculpture, other painting) and craft help the people to capture and write their history. East African as once colonized people need to use these media to specifically rewrite their history that has been distorted by the recent history of European Imperialism and neocolonialism.

Music, film, dance and drama, photography, literature (oral and written) tourism among others are a form of entertainment. There is need to create our own entertainment to counter foreign (especially South and North American) influence of music, film and television that is controlling much of our waves on both television and radio. Their resultant impact is felt by the cultural degradation in manners, and dress code.

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Through an active creative industry in the EAC, regional integration and cultural exchange will be fostered. The performing arts will provide the edutainment of the people by their own stories, stories that usually conscientize the masses for positive change. For example, through the Masai Shuka I bought from Nairobi years ago, it keeps Kenya, the Masai close to me. I would be more inclined to try Masai cuisine and to visit the Masai Mara because of the artefact about them that I have. I would easily tune to a Kenyan Television rather than a Burundian because I could relate to the Kenyans through the artefact.

A Film and Television Industries

These include films/movies, television programs and adverts, documentary film, reality Shows and all forms of animation. Digital technology has put filmmaking in the hands of anyone who wants to, unlike the analogue days where only the financially able studios made films. In the late 1990s and the early 2000s there was general enthusiasm in this industry. Every EAC state has film related activities going on and Tanzania is presently the second after Nigeria in African Movie business.^{vi} The Tanzanians have an entire Chanel Swahili Chanel on Digital Satellite Television (DSTV) and they supply it with material while the Maisha Magic is under threat of closure for lack of enough content from the rest of EAC countries. We can borrow a leaf from the film structures that have made Tanzania a success.

Film is an art that incorporates all other art forms—it implies that all sorts of human resources are involved in a single film production project. For example, expertise in sculpture/set design, architecture, music, photography, couture, drama, literature to mention but a few is needed in any film production. Thus, with an active film industry, we shall solve more than half of our unemployment problems.

The 'data children and youth' that spend most of their time on internet and social media, are in dire need of role models and stars to emulate. The

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American Hip-hop culture as spread by American film and music has had dire effects of the dress code of our youths. The Nigerian film stars have become household names all-over Africa; it also very common to find people speaking Nigerian English accent. Micky Mouse, Princess Sophia, Poor Bear, Sponge Bob are the cartoon names our children feed on and in turn we have supported the line businesses that are derived from the popularity of the Hollywood children programs. Why don't we make our own?

Music - this ranges from traditional to the contemporary: genge, lugha flow, kadongokamu, jazz, kapungala and, bongo flava are some of the genres of East African music. Music is truly the heart of Africa and we don't need any genre limitation as to what much music to create. We need to create music stars at all levels. Since music transcends borders, it should be used to create stars, heal wounds, and spread messages of socio-development. We need to promote our regional stars. So far, the musicians have done well amidst the general challenges that performing arts face. We have regional stars to boast of as East Africans. The Musicians need to even play more educative roles than the 'beefing' that is copied from the American Hip-hop culture. We need role models from the Sauti Soul Group, Namesless, Kidums, Julianas, Ray Cs Diamond Platinums, Ogopa DJ s, Eddy Kenzos, and Jose Chameleons etc. The musicians are potential high tax payers; the music industry is a source of employment for many people of all ages. Musicians and music producers don't retire.

Dance - both traditional and popular dance groups like the Ndere troupe of Uganda, the Royal Drummers and Dancers of *Burundi* and the popular Sakata phenomena in Kenya are one good way of keeping the youths engaged in positive activities. The dance groups entertain at social gathering, they spent time to create their costumes, they rehearse and they are becoming role models to other youths that would have been engaged in destructive activities. In most cases, the dancers teach dancing in schools

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and participate in community arts programs like theatre for development. There is need to create stars in all our cultures' appropriate forms. The dancing groups, like musicians should have formal systems of operations.

Visual arts like photography and fine art- These are potential as far as archiving our history is concerned. We need to have museums for each ethnic group. These museums will encourage the behavior of cultural tourism.

Theatre & and Other Performance like storytelling, stand-up comedy etc

There is need to revive the theatre going culture among people. Uganda's realist Drama artist Alex Mukulu of *Thirty Years of Bananas* fame has had to leave theatre because the Ugandan audience does not support his plays. The Ugandan and Kenyan middle class like comedy compared to other stage plays. . This phenomena needs to be studied so as all opportunities are exploited and intriguingly psychoanalysis may help us study whether this is a sign of escapism purpose -- a way of running from the day today socio-political problems.

The Kenyan and Uganda comedians like Pablo and Salvador and Eric Omondi, Churchill, Anne Kansiime have done well in marketing our countries beyond East Africa. We need to speed up the process of integration and the common language question to yield regional markets in performing arts.

The Book Industry

We shall support this industry by supporting writers for all age groups. As a young adult, I read the African pace and trend setters' series. All of the titles read were written by West Africans. These books were very helpful to me and I would real love our children to read them. Today, the stock of these books in Ugandan schools in limited. Most academic literature

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syllabuses have a lot of the British and European Literatures. William Shakespeare, Albert Camus, Nikolai Gogol, George Orwell are more famous than Ngugi wa Thiongo, Meja Mwangi , Okot p' Bitek Ousmane Sembene and Chinua! We need to invest in children's book industry and children's films as a matter of urgency. These children may grow up, less 'westernized' than most of us". This does not mean a total isolation of ourselves, but a policy to use art to rouse African civilization and conscientisation. The best module for development is the *Sankofa*^{vii} one.

Fashion Industry

African prints seem to sell more on local market. The Chinese have gotten the African designs that they are using to produce low quality textile, including ready- made dresses, skirts and shirts. Kampala shops are fully stocked with these cloths but the money is being taken outside. We need to harness our heritage and make our cloths. At an international couture festival, African fashion designers have an edge when they present something specific to Africa. African art is seen as novel, original. Couture industry like other industries is being threatened by our free economy policies. It has become expensive for a local investor to produce cloths. We could borrow a leaf from Ethiopians on how to maintain and evolve our cultural attires to fit in current trends.

Art and Craft Industry, the Masai markets survive on this industry. An assortment of products are made. Jewelry, sculptures etc.

Minority Creative Arts and Ethnic minorities

The minority arts: beer brewing, traditional mats and basket weaving, rock art, masks and costumes that are specific to particular ritual functions like the taking oaths and initiation, body art, incisions with ritualistic meaning are facing a challenge of extinction. Modernity has brought new brewing, new tattooing methods. The instruments and equipment used in these and other dying creative practice and customs have long been forgotten. There is need

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or proper documentation and archiving of these customs, and/or evolution into modern one with the same design. This is how we shall maintain a rich heritage. This is how we shall learn from our past, by applying the Sankofa theory—return to source to get wisdom to solve our current challenges.

The Ethnic minorities need to have their cultures documented, their orthographies developed, and to sell their culture to the world.

Challenges of the Creative Industry in EAC

- Taking the case of Uganda that I am very familiar with, we have challenges that range from poor or no market structures and piracy.
- Lack of funding and poor attitude from the consumers. The majority of Ugandans prefer to buy a foreign product and get a local one for free.
- Lack of a Creative Economy Policy and inadequate implementation of the Culture Policy
- Lack of a Creative Economy Policy is a big hindrance to consolidating activities of practitioners and the development of appropriate laws to regulate creative industries. Also, inadequate implementation of the Culture Policy has given way to an unregulated sector, particularly with regard to key stakeholders' conduct, rights and obligations.

- **Fragility of Practitioner-Based Organizations**

This is rampant due to mistrust by potential members. For example, currently the Artists SACCO has a membership of only 250 compared to approximately 250,000 people employed in the sector. Furthermore, some practitioners are introverts and hardly share knowledge and experiences with others.

- **The absence of Key Institutions**

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The absence of the National Arts Council and the non-operationalization of the Culture Forum by Government have denied practitioners a common voice on issues ranging from labour, economic and social protection.

There is no film commission

- **Laws are not harmonized:** Currently, laws governing creative industries are not harmonized and are housed in various Ministries. For instance, while the Uganda National Cultural Centre Act is under the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, the Ministry is not explicitly stated in the Stage Plays and Public Entertainment Act. Also there are clashes in the roles of Institutions arising from the UCC Act and the Media Council Act and this has created confusion among Government Departments and practitioners to the detriment of the Creative Economy.^{viii}
- **Inadequate funding to the Sector**

Government funding to the sector is inadequate. This constrains practitioners from expanding, innovating and standardizing their goods and services.

Recommendations to EAC

- Today's modern youths and children who are tomorrow's clients of the arts industry need to be tapped by taking arts to their favourite Media: Television and Social networking Media. We need to use Facebook, Twitter, Blogs, LinkedIn, YouTube, etc.
- Collaborations in film productions, music, Drama etc
- Rotational arts markets organised by the EAC. This can take place either every two months.
- Upholding the minority ethnic groups, by developing their orthographies.

Conclusion

The uniqueness of our diversity as East Africans can turn into a gold mine if the ethnic minority and the disappearing arts forms are brought to speed

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with the rest of the arts and we march in unison to economic prosperity and social development.

NOTES

i See The Uganda National Culture Policy (2, 36)

ii See sourcewatch.org/index.php/Ethnic_Groups_of_Kenya. Accessed on 25 May 2015

iii For references to index mundi, see *indexmundi.com*, The demographics of the respective countries as of 2014

iv See cnbcafrica.com. Accessed on 3rd Aug. 2015

v See detailed quote from naira.com, the growth facts of Nollywood are expounded: "Nollywood grew quickly in the 1990s and 2000s and became the second largest film industry in the world in number of annual film productions, placing it ahead of the United States and behind only India. In 2013, it was rated as the third most valuable film industry in the world after generating a total revenue of NG₦1.72 trillion (US\$10 billion) in 2013 alone, placing it behind India and the United States. The Nigerian film industry is worth [Nigerian Naira] NG₦853.9 billion (US\$5.1 billion) as at 2014 and produces hundreds of home videos and films per annum. Nigerian cinema is Africa's largest movie industry in terms of value [income earned] and the number of movies produced per year (no. page)."

vi See artintanzania.org. In East Africa Tanzania is one country that has a semblance of a film industry.

vii Sankofa is often used to mean "return to source". The symbol was gotten from the film *Sankofa* by the Ethiopian film-maker- Haile Gerima. He presents a symbol of a bird sculpture which is looking backwards with an egg in its beak, symbolising the future. Sankofa as an Akan language of Ghana, translates in English to "go back and take" (Sanko- go back, fa- take) and the Asante Adinkra symbols of a bird with its head turned backwards taking an egg off its back is often associated with the proverb, "Se wo were fi na wosankofa a yenkyi," which translates "It is not wrong to go back for that which you have forgotten"

viii See, *Draft National Action Plan on the Creative Industries of Uganda 2015/16 - 2019/20* **References**

1. *Draft National Action Plan on the Creative Industries of Uganda 2015/16 - 2019/20*. Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development. April 2015.
2. *The Uganda National Culture Policy* December 2006