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# **The most important issue facing cultural and creative industries in Africa Today**

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## **ABSTRACT**

**Some countries in Afrika are beginning to identify cultural and creative industries (CCIs) as part of its government development agenda. But, they are yet to begin realizing a strategic way to creating a funnel for possible billions of turnovers into their respective economies in comparison to their UK counterpart, among other developed countries. In the past decade, many issues and challenges remain on top of the conversation among key actors within Afrika's CCIs. The objective of this study is to identify the real issue facing cultural and creative industries (CCIs) in Afrika today and why that is the case. Thus, this research is concerned with one research question, "What is the most important issue facing cultural and creative industries (CCIs) in Afrika today, and why?"**

**The study explores different culturally intelligent ideas/call-to-actions (CTAs) that address the need for a culturally competent and creative leadership within Afrika's CCIs sector. The author establishes that it is important to bring on board Afrika's culturally intelligent luminary creatives who, evidently, will be able to imagine, influence and initiate tourism and heritage projects that underpins Afrika's rich and heterogenous cultures and honours Afrika's creativity and civilization. The study also identifies some culturally intelligent and competent luminary creatives like Sir David Adjaye, Dr. Esther Mahlangu, Prof. Kwame H. Addo, Victor Ekpuk, among**

others who should be leading Afrika's CCIs. And not just anyone at with the title "cultural heritage expert" or all the titles one can think of.

**KEYWORDS:** *cultural and creative industries, leadership, cultural competence, cultural intelligence, culturally intelligent, Afrikan governments, creativity, tourism and heritage projects, heterogenous cultures, Afrika's economy.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Most arguments and conversations, for the past decade, on issues within the cultural and creative industries (CCIs) had and continue to be centred on the mid-century conversations: government development agenda, national policy, cultural policy, international trade, foreign exchange earnings, diversity and inclusion, decolonising design/creative education, among related topics. As much as these values mean a lot to me as a culturally intelligent thought leader in design and an anthologist on indigenous Afrikan design systems and Afrikan symbology, I am getting practically impatient with these conversations that are leading to no tangible actions from us as leaders--design educators, cultural entrepreneurs, policy-makers, and creatives influencers, stakeholders, among other key actors--within the CCIs system. In South Afrika, "Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) sector have high recognition on the South Afrikan government's development agenda. Yet, the contribution of the sector to the economy appears to be extremely low in comparison to its counterparts in the developed world"(Shafi, Sirayi & Abisuga-Oyekunle, 2020)<sup>1</sup>. So what

**then is the most important issue facing cultural and creative industries in Afrika today...and why?**

## **Leadership**

**The most important issue is one of leadership; but not just the lack of it. Rather, it is a leadership without a cultural competence. Why? Culturally competent leadership is about embracing all cultures and influencing a culture of creators within the CCIs. Culture drives leadership. And culturally driven leadership instinct leads to culturally competent and empathetic skills to lead, especially in a space like Afrika's CCIs. This is a quintessential skill every key actor within any cultural and creative industries should have and continue developing. The need to nurture culturally intelligent creators/creatives within Afrika's CCIs is key to creating a funnel for possible billions of turnovers into Afrika's economy.**

**In his *Six Strings and a Note* memoir, a compelling and relevant portrait of the artistic life of Daniel Kwabena Boa Amponsah, known around the world by his stage name, Agya Koo Nimo, he reveals that "the curiosity to create is often born in people from a myriad of experiences"(Obeng-Amoako,2016)<sup>2</sup>. This is one of the culturally intelligent (CQ) creative personalities my upcoming book--Being Culturally Intelligent--is featuring. He has a deep appreciation and understanding of his culture (the Akan and Ghana culture). One could also think of Dr. Esther Mahlangu, of South Afrika, for her love for the Ndebele culture; Sir David Adjaye, a British Ghanaian architect, for his cultural restoration and heritage projects; Victor Ekpuk, of Nigeria, for his reinterpretation of the Nsibidi symbols**

through his abstract art forms. These are the kind of CQ leaders that should be part of Afrika's CCIs leadership. Not just anyone at all with the title "cultural heritage expert," or any leadership title within the Afrika's CCIs.

In order to see ourselves achieving this culturally competent leadership goal, there should be the need to begin acting upon culturally intelligent (CQ) call-to-actions (CTAs) that are strategically aimed at investing in (i) Afrika's cultural ideas, values, and creations, including its tangible and intangible cultures, and natural heritage (which includes culturally significant landscapes, and biodiversity); (ii) tourism and heritage projects that honour the magnitude of creativity and civilization in Afrika; and (iii) creating support systems that focus on nurturing potential culturally intelligent and visionary leaders in creative network of cross-cultural and interdisciplinary communities. Evidently, achieving these CQ CTAs will require a culturally competence leadership, within the Afrika's CCIs sector, able to imagine and initiate tourism and heritage projects that underpin the rich and heterogeneous cultures within each Afrikan country.

"The real crisis is rather one of [culturally intelligent (visionary and creative)] leadership... Our mission is for Dubai to become an international, pioneering hub of excellence and creativity, and we are already striving to make it the world's premier trade, tourism and services destination in the twenty-first century. We are confident we can reach this ambitious goal thanks to our dedicated leadership and by providing the necessary infrastructure and environment" (Al Maktoum, 2012)<sup>3</sup>.

**My initial research revealed that the UK boasts a vibrant Creative and Cultural Industry, with a 2018 turnover of about £111.7 billion to the UK economy for identifying the CCIs sector as part of its Government's annual strategy(GOV.UK, 2020)<sup>4</sup>. Again, it is about leadership; one that appreciates and values their culture and its unique cultural ideas, values and creations as tangible and intangible contributions to a country's economic development goals.**

**In my home country, we are about seeing new visionary and creative leadership, but more importantly, one that seeks to honour Afrika's culture. A typical example, as a point in case, is when I had the rarest opportunity to begin playing a key role in the ongoing Asanteman Goldtown Resource Park;a "Legacy Project" in Asanteman, conceived and designed by Prof. Kwame Addo, a Ghanaian-international development architect, in collaboration with Manhyia Palace.This project is a transformational mixed use 'destination' development initiated by Otumfuo Osei Tutu II, King of Asante from the heartland of Asanteman, enabling an integrated platform of commerce, culture and industry.**

**This leadership promptness also follows a question that members of DesignGhana--designghana.net; a chapter of the Pan Afrikan Design Institute (PADI; thepadi.org)--have been trying to answer: "How do creatives get to influence Government's economic strategy?" Professor Kwame Addo's comprehensive visualised maps project is a coherent strategy towards encouraging a collaboration between the Government of Ghana and the key actors within its CCIs sector. And the same sentiment was shared by members of PADI that, Uganda's**

**"Nyege Nyege Festival" is typical proof that CCIs are major drivers of economies but the initial government reaction clearly explains why Afrika is at the bottom of the heap on the list of global revenues from CCIs and also has the least number of people employed by same"(Mafundikwa, 2019).<sup>5</sup>**

**Three examples of true visionary and culturally intelligent leadership could be gleaned from Ghana's first prime minister, Osagyefo Dr. Kwame Nkrumah's economic legacies(Annor, 2009)<sup>6</sup>; Sheikh Zayed, former member of the Federal Supreme Council of United Arab Emirates, drilling artesian wells (underground water reservoirs) in the desert and using the water for farming and other benefits later discovered in present day, despite many critics from the United Arab Emirates and overseas; Sheikh Rashid, father of HHS Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates and Ruler of the Emirate of Dubai, choosing one of the world's harshest deserts--and one of Dubai's remotest and most isolated areas--to invest hundreds of millions of US dollars in building the world's largest man-made port and the Gulf's largest free trade and industrial zones, despite many critics from all around the world (Al Maktoum, 2012)<sup>3</sup>.**

**Again, the real issue facing Afrika's Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) is culturally intelligent leadership that understands that creativity can be nurtured. Because creativity is intrinsic in all cultures. Thus, creativity as a central idea in design – or any creative field, is a culturally inclusive concept. Culturally competent leaders and/or key actors within Afrikan CCIs can all learn from the reliable advice on nurturing creativity and culturally intelligent creative**

leadership from HHS Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, as he examines aspects of the UAE's unique development experience: "The only thing that could ever guarantee success is to have the largest number of excellent achievers on board, because the race for excellence calls for exceptional participants. The tools for creativity are available in the market and we can buy them whenever we want to, whether from the United States, Japan, Europe or elsewhere. But creativity itself is not a product we can buy and nor is enthusiasm. We have to look for those who have these characteristics and nurture their talents." (Al Maktoum, 2012)<sup>3</sup>.

In the Singapore story (1965–2000), "From Third World to First," founding father Lee Kuan Yew shares how Singapore's economic transformation was achieved partly through nurturing and attracting talent: "It had taken me some time to see the obvious, that talent is a country's most precious asset. For a small resource-poor country like Singapore, with 2 million people at independence in 1965, it is the defining factor... After several years in government I realized that the more talented people I had as ministers, administrators, and professionals, the more effective my policies were, and the better the results." (Yew, 2000)<sup>7</sup>

## **Conclusion**

In order to achieve all the aforementioned, Afrika's governments, cultural entrepreneurs, and key actors within the cultural and creative industries (CCIs) should begin seeing the investment in the CCIs as part of their respective national development goals. This way, we can begin to influence and initiate high-value tourism and heritage projects. This way, we can fully harness culturally intelligent

**ideas, values, and creations from Afrika's heterogenous cultures and see CCIs as a major driver in Afrika's economic development.**

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