

Harnessing creative talent

Nurturing ideas and markets

Africa is a continent rich in cultural expression yet it enjoys less than 1% of global trade in creative goods. **Avril Joffe** looks at how creative industries are making a large contribution to the world economy and what challenges South Africa needs to overcome to fully enter this economy.

Music, film, crafts, books, art, fashion, design, multimedia, advertising, heritage, theatre and dance all belong to the creative industries. These are similar to other industries which follow a value chain from ideas or creation through production and distribution to a final consumer.

They are also vehicles for identity, values and meaning and cannot be considered as mere commodities or consumer goods like any other, as the Unesco Convention on the Diversity of Cultural Expressions insists.

Africa has never been short of talent. The continent boasts rich cultural and creative expression from South African jazz and other music, soapies, and Venda, Zulu and Tswana crafts; Mozambican and Zimbabwean sculptors; Senegalese and Nigerian Nollywood films; Ghanaian talismanic jewellery; Congolese and Malian music; West African masks; Ashanti strip weaving and Kente cloth of Ghana; the Khanga pure cotton cloth of East Africa; the Baule cloth of Ivory Coast; and the bark cloth created by the Mubuti of Congo to name a few. They all create jobs and generate

income for these developing countries.

But despite its rich cultural resources Africa enjoys less than 1% of global trade in creative goods. Africa does not benefit from the rising affluence in developed countries where the demand for entertainment and ever changing technological advances makes the distribution of creative products much easier.

In the last decade, the creative industries have become a powerful economic sector in countries such as the UK, Canada and Australia with their governments willing to support domestic producers. Much work has gone into ensuring that this continues largely through the Unesco convention on the promotion and preservation of cultural expression.

CREATIVE ECONOMY

In recognition of the difference between a creative economy and an industrial economy, many agencies, researchers and governments now talk about the creative economy rather than creative industries.

The creative industries are making

a growing impression on the global economy, accounting for \$424,4 billion in exports and 3.4 % of world trade in 2005. More important is the 8% a year growth in the industry since 2000.

Developing countries were not entirely left out of this growth. Their portion rose from 29% of world creative exports to 41%, reaching US\$136,2 billion in 2005. Much of this was driven by China which is now the world leader in exports of creative goods followed by Italy and the US. Developing countries such as India, Thailand and Mexico are among the world's top 20 exporters.

China's market dominance aside, the developing world has not shared well in the riches of the creative economy.

In many developing countries the creative industries are largely ignored by mainstream economic policy makers. This is a failure on the part of governments to understand the nature of this economy and to develop programmes and policies to implement in its cities and regions.

SOUTH AFRICA'S CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

This is no longer the case in South Africa. Through the efforts of the Department of Arts and Culture (DAC) to bring the creative industries into mainstream trade and industrial policy, the industries now feature in the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa (ASGISA), particularly the craft and film sectors. Government sees the creative industry as a driver of sustainable economic opportunities and livelihoods for local communities whilst it expands business



Cameroonian Anggy Haif's creations – Haif with the Ghana Dance Ensemble (right).

opportunities for small, medium and micro enterprises.

By including creative industries in AsgiSA, the status of the industry has risen in national government. Other spheres of government have begun to develop structured interventions to support the growth of this industry.

Government has completed micro-economic development strategies for craft and film in the Western Cape while in Gauteng a creative mapping, a survey of activity in a particular place, of all sectors was done to enhance the Creative Industry Development Framework adopted in 2006.

The Gauteng Creative Mapping Project is a joint project between provincial government and the British Council. It uses a common methodology and is an important contribution to our knowledge of all ten sectors of the creative industry – audio-visual, craft, cultural tourism and heritage, design, fashion, multimedia, music, performing arts and the visual arts.

Mapping studies are used internationally to assess the contribution of creative industries to the national economy and to inform government policy.

The Gauteng mapping project surveyed over 700 firms, most small and micro enterprises. To record the value and scope, private and public, small and large, commercial and not-for-profit were included in the survey.

Results show that there are over

11 000 creative industry firms and organisations in Gauteng which employ more than 182.239 people and contribute R33.332 to the Gauteng economy. The greatest number of firms exist in the design, craft, music and audio-visual sectors.

CHALLENGES

There have been huge improvements in the status of the creative industries in South Africa as well as in the understanding of its value economically and developmentally. But a number of challenges remain.

Firstly, the workforce is diverse and complex with the presence of skilled, talented and creative personnel. Their needs are complex and range from conventional union concerns to contracts and intellectual property rights management.

The industry offers a mix of low skill jobs and interesting careers with creative workers and creative professionals working side by side. Much of the workforce is freelance, working on contract. These creative workers fall outside the definition of employee in labour relations legislation and as a result are vulnerable and lack protection.

Small and microenterprises dominate and are poorly organised. The mapping project found that over 87% of workplaces did not have union representation.

The launch of one Creative Workers Union of South Africa (CWUSA) is a positive development. But as creative workers often lack

full-time employment, the union faces considerable challenges to service creative workers' diverse needs. These include access to retirement, funeral and medical aid cover as well as improved income.

The small and microenterprises need specialised business support. Unfortunately government has made little progress in providing support or securing financing for these businesses.

The lack of finance inhibits the growth and sustainability of small enterprises such as crafts and fashion. Work in sectors such as audio-visual, music and multimedia is often temporary.

In Gauteng, the agencies providing grant-in-aid, such as the National Arts Council and Gauteng Arts and Culture Council, have now included creative enterprises in their programmes. The government's Gauteng Enterprise Propeller is also committed to providing specialised business support with the help of the provincial department of arts and culture.

It remains to be seen whether creative professionals will use conventional business support services or whether there is a need for a dedicated agency for the creative industry as suggested by an earlier government study, the Cultural Industry Growth Strategy in 1988.

The creative industry must achieve contradictory objectives. On the one hand it must deliver on developmental and social objectives and on the other it must grow

productivity and profitability.

The first objective aims to support the arts for arts sake, to protect and represent creative workers, to enhance self esteem and contribute to nation-building, to ensure education and training for artists, to foster the appreciation of the arts and culture, and to promote and preserve cultural diversity.

The second aim is to enhance the sustainability of enterprises. This means adding value to creative content through efficient production and global distribution channels; increasing incomes and turnover for workers and enterprises; assisting producers to access markets and to secure shelf-space for domestic products; to grow exports; to ensure a supply of business, entrepreneurial and new-media skills as well as digital capacity. All this will add value to regional economies and help to

create world class cities.

Programmes usually have one of these objectives as primary, and the other as secondary. Clarity on this is important to avoid expectations that the outcome of any programme will be social inclusion, nation building, preservation of cultural diversity and traditional knowledge as well as economic viability.

There is a place for both and a place for clarity on departmental roles. The Department of Trade and Industry is concerned with profitability in industries, while DAC is concerned with social cohesion, cultural diversity and artistic development.

The challenge is for the creative sector to hold government departments and agencies accountable for achieving both sets of objectives, and for ensuring a mix of programmes for creative industries.

This requires careful thought amongst the members of organisations and the development of creative sector representative organisations. This does not yet exist. Organisations are weak coupled with duplication and poor cooperation; membership is irregular; administrators work for low salaries and many are volunteers, while funding is erratic.

The digital revolution impacts directly on the creative economy and can provide great opportunities for developing countries as it brings together the artist and consumer. The *Creative Economy Report* (see box below) highlights that new media products have a special potential for the developing countries of Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean as the Internet allows for the delivery of these products with no regard to distance.

Creative Economy Report

The *Creative Economy Report* (2008) is a study of the world's creative economy. It was launched in Accra, Ghana in 2008.

The Report addresses the challenge of moving the creative economy towards informed policy making. It also provides an overview of creative industries, how they are defined and measured and what impact they have on developed and developing countries in terms of trade, markets, development and growth. It is particularly significant for South Africa for its focus on development.

A clear role for government is identified in the Report. The UNCTAD secretary general, said, "if effective policies are in place, the creative economy has the potential to foster economic growth, job creation and export earnings... The creative economy offers to developing countries a feasible option and new opportunities to leapfrog into emerging high growth areas of the world economy."

The boom in creative economy products is the result of increasing world demand for unique, state-of-the-art goods and services "that link cultural heritage, the arts, media, creative services and design to modern business, culture and technology". To participate in this boom, developing countries need to increase the creative capacities of its population and to lower constraints.

The Report highlights constraints to improving the exports of creative goods and services. These include lack of know-how, investment, and business and marketing skills to generate diverse and competitive creative goods and services. Other constraints are the concentration of marketing and distribution networks in a small number of conglomerates in developed countries and the reluctance of regional agencies to offer finance to creative industries.

The Report can be found on the UNCTAD webpage <http://www.unctad.org/creative-economy>

But we are not doing enough to overcome the digital divide and we need to pay attention to the skills needed to use this technology effectively. The low number of people passing maths and science at matriculation level (55 196 at higher grade and 211 298 at standard grade) is worrying.

Finally, specialists may have overstated the similarities between creative industries and industrial sectors and not highlighted the long-term nature of the investment. This is particularly true of providing decent education at all levels of society.

CONCLUSION

Creative economies require a long-

term investment in human resource capacity – from talent and imagination to human capacity for innovation. As Shalini Venturelli, a communications professor argued, “the creative economy is a way of building indigenous power and indigenous talent and indigenous intellectual conceptual resources that can help societies to come out of the poverty trap”.

The *Creative Economy Report* supports this view and argues that creative industries have alleviated poverty in small communities and rural areas and provided jobs and income to marginalised youth in cities.

We are lucky in South Africa to have policy, resources and capacity

in the creative industries but this is not enough.

By addressing each of the challenges, in a shared manner with other developing countries, particularly in Africa, creative industry practitioners, policy makers, academics, unions and organisations will stand a better chance of building a creative future for us all in South Africa. LB

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Creative Africa Festival

The week-long *Creative Africa Festival* in Ghana, Accra this year took place together with an UNCTAD conference to highlight Africa's contemporary art, dance, fashion, film and music. Delegates were enthralled by eye-catching fashion and magnificent dance and music.

The Festival showcased this small sample of Africa's enormous talent and largely untapped creative potential to launch the *Creative Economy Report*.

An important part of the programme was the bringing together of African curators and festival organisers, and creative practitioners from film, radio and TV, live events, music, traditional dance theatre, poetry and literature and fashion designers. It also brought together support activities and organisations such as copyright commissions, trade unions, cultural magazines, archives and cultural funds as well as African creative sector researchers, journalists and members of pan-African cultural organisations.

The aim was to build *Creative Africa* a platform to engage Africa and cultural stakeholders in the delivery of important frameworks and to bring a fresh visibility, exposure, collaboration and market access for African creators and producers.

Questions, which are important to South Africa, were asked at the Festival, such as:

Are we creating an environment that enables the flourishing of cultural diversity and creative industries?

What policies and measures are most effective to do this?

Do we have a bank of good practices and strategies for building cultural capacities and creative industries that we can learn from?

The Accra Group committed itself to giving a voice to civil society efforts, and to ensuring that a broad range of stakeholders including national governments take cultural policy and the creative industries seriously.

The 2005 Nairobi Plan of Action for Cultural Industries in Africa (www.africa-union.org)

The 2005 UNESCO convention on 'The Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions' (www.unesco.org)

The 2006 African Union 'Charter for the Cultural renaissance of Africa' (www.africa-union.org)