

Work as Art: Links between Creative Work and Human Development

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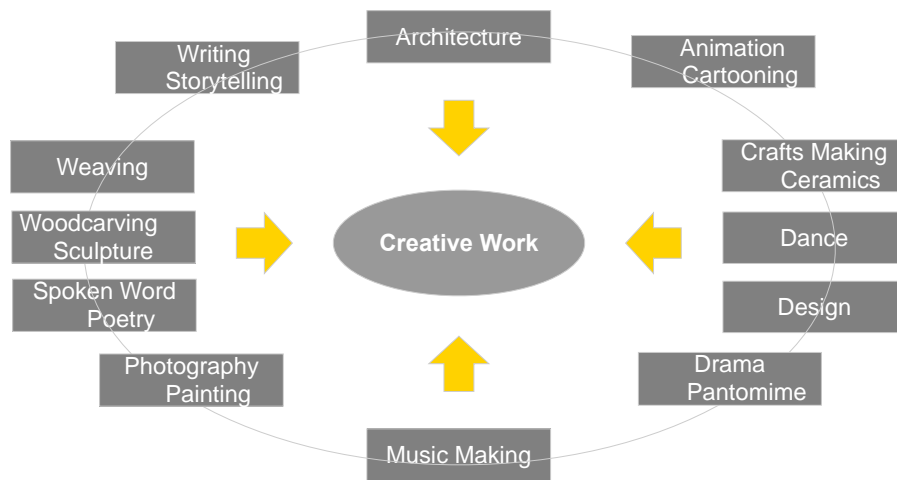
ABSTRACT

Creative work has enhanced human development since early times; similarly, the latter can expand the former. But the links are not automatic. Creative work can be rife with exploitation and gender bias. Writers can advance human welfare, yet illiterate people may not benefit. To expand the contribution of creative work to human development, this paper suggests cultivating more respect for local creative output, fighting exploitation and gender bias, promoting intellectual property, and collecting data and building infrastructure.

Introduction: What constitutes creative work and its various dimensions?

Creative work is among the earliest forms of tangible and intangible activities that unleash people’s capabilities and enhance human development. How so? Work is as old as humanity itself. As the concept note for the 2015 global *Human Development Report* points out, it “is a means of unleashing human potential, creativity, and innovation and spirits. It enables people to earn a living, gives them a means to participate, provides them with security and gives them a sense of dignity.”¹ Therefore, work enriches human lives beyond monetary gain, and contrary to common belief, it is not the same thing as a job or employment, although there can be some relationship.² Creative work is considered here in this framework (see Figure 1). Although creative work can increase human development, and the opportunities and choices enhanced by the latter can expand the former, the links are not automatic.

Figure 1: Examples of creative work



¹ Jahan 2014, p. 1.

² As Diane Coyle notes, “The boundary between paid work in the market and unpaid work has become fuzzier the more people contribute to voluntary value-creation (Wikipedia and Linux being canonical examples), or draw on their ‘leisure’ activities for their paid work (having a brilliant idea while out with friends), or mingle the two (a landscape gardener practicing new designs on family members before selling them to clients)” (Coyle 2014, p. 145).

HOW THIS DISCUSSION IS ORGANIZED

After defining creative work, this analysis goes on to clarify the differences between creativity and innovation, reflects on the definition of art and considers gender gaps in creative work. It then highlights the economic and social contributions of creative work, and discusses creative work as a public good, while reiterating that work and employment can provide well-being but not automatically. A case study on the Danish Centre for Culture and Development shows policies that can fuel creative work. A negative bias towards local arts and globalization are discussed before a series of policy recommendations, followed by concluding remarks on the need for data and infrastructure to advance creative work.

DEFINITION

Creative work is an imaginative process manifested in the tradition and practice of artistry. Seen as labour, it is work related to creativity. Seen as leisure, it lets people unwind, unleash and even fuel their creative spirits. And seen as a ritual, it is a celebration of cultural tradition. These lines are often blurred. Many ‘creative workers’ enjoy their profession precisely because it affords them the opportunity to be creative while also striving to earn a living—hence the emergence of such statements as, “Creative work is a labor of love.”³ Anyone can engage in creative work for personal fulfilment. In general, however, while it can be arbitrary, improvisational, and derivative, creative work involves a level of originality and uniqueness. It is customary across cultures, even as the modern world increasingly blurs the terms creativity and innovation.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION

In recent years, the terms ‘creativity’ and ‘innovation’ have become buzzwords in the business world. In this setting, they are used to imply dynamic ways under which organizations develop products and services, and even leadership styles. With the advent of digital technology, moreover, innovation and creativity are now heavily assigned to the tech world—this association is often implied even though ‘innovation’ and ‘creativity’ are not the same thing.⁴ See Table 1 for the differences between these two terms.

³ Belsky.

⁴ UNDP and UNCTAD 2010.

Table 1: Creativity vs. innovation

| | |
|--|--|
| “Creativity is the capability or act of conceiving something original or unusual.” | “‘Innovative’ is an ‘external’ word. It can be measured. It generally talks about things that have been tested properly and found to have worked in the real world.” |
| “Innovation is the implementation of something new.” | “‘Creative’, however, is more of an ‘internal’ word. It’s subjective, it’s murkier. It’s far harder to measure, it’s far harder to define. It’s an inward journey, not outward.” |
| Source: Paul Sloane as cited in Hunter 2013, p. 9. | Source: Hugh MacLeod as cited in McGuinness. |

Today’s technological advancement has accelerated many aspects of creative work. And many creative activities themselves have evolved. For example, drawings rendered by a computer are different from hand-drawn objects, and items sewn by hand are different from those by sewing machines. Since these activities are still ingrained in artistic imagination, we proceed to consider the definition of art.

WHAT IS ART?

While there is no exact definition of art, most definitions call it aesthetics,⁵ a term concerned with beauty and ‘artistic taste’. As for its origin—to take a rather technical view—a body of literature suggests that art, an activity customary across humanity, ‘originated’ in Africa thousands of years ago, before the so-called great migration. Artistic expression is regarded as a defining characteristic of the human species.⁶

“The earliest known evidence of ‘artistic behavior’ is of human body decoration, including skin colouring with ochre and the use of beads, although both may have had functional origins,” according to Gillian M. Morriss-Kay in *The Evolution of Human Artistic Creativity*. “Zig-zag and criss-cross patterns, nested curves and parallel lines are the earliest known patterns to have been created separately from the body; their similarity to entopic phenomena (involuntary products of the visual system) suggests a physiological origin.”⁷

⁵ Morriss-Kay 2009, pp. 158-176.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid., p.158.

There is debate on whether artistic works were created for aesthetic pleasure or for functional purposes. All the same, it is likely that even aesthetic objects may have been used for rituals or as marks for territory, identity and so forth.⁸ This duality is worth noting. If we take the view that creative work is a form of artistry, then creative activities have stimulated human development since ancient times, with a major contribution from women. Nevertheless, creative work has its share of issues, including gender inequities.

CREATIVE WORK AND THE GENDER GAP

Creative work is not immune from the demarcation and gender bias found elsewhere. In many Western orchestras, for example, it was not until the introduction of ‘blind auditions’—where candidates for musical roles audition behind ‘blind screens’ that allow them to be heard but not seen—that women’s chances of winning improved. In the United States, ‘blind auditions’ increased the number of women players in the top five orchestras from 5 percent in 1970 to 25 percent in the mid-1990s.⁹ In “Orchestrating Impartiality: The Impact of ‘Blind’ Auditions on Female Musicians,” Claudia Goldin and Cecilia Rouse explain their findings:

Using data from actual auditions in an individual fixed-effects framework, we find that the screen increases by 50 percent the probability a woman will be advanced out of certain preliminary rounds. The screen also enhances, by several fold, the likelihood a female contestant will be the winner in the final round. Using data on orchestra personnel, the switch to ‘blind’ auditions can explain between 30 percent and 55 percent of the increase in the proportion female among new hires and between 25 percent and 46 percent of the increase in the percentage female in the orchestras since 1970.¹⁰

That said, women musicians still face hurdles even in more equitable societies—this follows a global trend of job segregation by gender. In orchestras, for instance, a conductor is perceived to be a man. “Discouraged by ingrained prejudice and arguments that they don’t possess what it takes to command an orchestra,” as Michael White writes, “successful female conductors still have the rarity of a protected species.”¹¹ In 2012-2013, conductors in all United States orchestras (about 800) were 80 percent male and 20 percent female.¹² Even worse, when Elim Chan won the Donatella Flick Conducting Competition in 2014, she was one of only 5 women among 225 entrants.¹³

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Goldin and Rouse 1997.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ White 2014.

¹² Levintova 2013.

¹³ White 2014.

In the developing world, women are often instrumental in making creative products. In African countries such as Rwanda and Uganda, for example, women sustain the practice and culture of making baskets, mats and other creative products. In Turkey, a place known for its carpet weaving, women have played a critical role in this ancient craft.¹⁴ And in Bangladesh, women have contributed to the artisanal sector for millennia. Since most of this creative work is informal, however, it is usually not recognized in official statistical analyses and can leave women vulnerable to exploitation.

CERAMICS AND THE ROLE OF WOMEN

Among the earliest creative objects in human history are ceramics. “As early as 24,000 BC, animal and human figurines were made from clay and other materials, then fired in kilns partially dug into the ground,” writes Eileen De Guire. “Almost 10,000 years later, as settled communities were established, tiles were manufactured in Mesopotamia and India.”¹⁵ The surprisingly little known fact is this: Women have made an immense contribution to the art of ceramic making.¹⁶ For ages, they have laboured in the mix of water, clay, smoke and fire in remarkable ways. And their effort to sustain this practice cannot be underestimated.

Women’s creative agency in ceramic work has helped unleash “human potential, human creativity, and human spirit”¹⁷ in its own style: “Figurines are the earliest form of fired clay found in many cultures, functioning as fetish and fertility symbol, as toy or trinket. Ceramic containers are among the most familiar human artifacts, supporting the basics of human life, from carrying water to food preparation. Functional vessels also play symbolic roles linked to rites of passage.”¹⁸

That noted, some claim that women’s creative work in areas such as ceramics or crafts keeps them behind. They contend that women should move into work as lawyers, professors, doctors, engineers and so forth, areas dominated by men. This argument has some merit to it. But it also misses the point. With respect to people’s choices, although individuals may want to join such fields as law, others may choose to stay in creative work. What begs attention then is to enact policies that fully compensate ‘creative workers’, mobilize resources to develop this sector, build local and international markets, and even align creative work with sectors such as architecture and apparel design—ideas elaborated in the policy recommendation section of this paper.

¹⁴ Turkish Cultural Foundation 2015.

¹⁵ De Guire 2014.

¹⁶ Vincentelli.

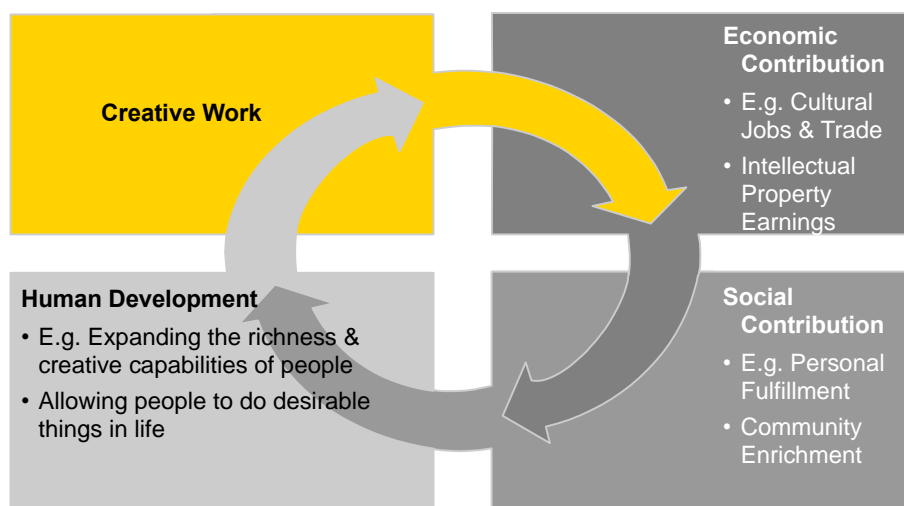
¹⁷ UNDP 2015, p. 2; see also p. 1 and p. 29.

¹⁸ Vincentelli.

How does creative work expand capabilities and opportunities and enlarge human choices?

The contribution of creative work to enlarging human choices by expanding people’s capabilities and enhancing their opportunities can be summed up in two ways, as widely cited. There is the instrumental part, which is concerned with direct and indirect economic gain, and the non-instrumental part, which includes expanding social aspects. These contributions are not static. They interact with each other. And while the latter plays an indirect role, it contributes to people’s choices, which in turn power creative work (see Figure 2). This section starts by looking at instrumental benefits.

Figure 2: Economic and social aspects interact in a dynamic fashion



INSTRUMENTAL/MONETARY UTILITY

The contribution of creative work to the economy is dynamic and diverse. This is so despite such challenges as negative bias, trade policy constraints and intellectual protection, which limit revenues especially in developing countries. These obstacles are prevalent in many areas of the so-called cultural economy, but instrumental outcomes are not entirely invisible. Artisan handcrafts alone represent “an estimated US\$30 billion market world wide. In addition, handicraft production and sales represent a substantial percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) for some countries.”¹⁹ Consider Figure 3, which compares creative goods (and services) exports for 2002 and 2011, and

¹⁹ Fowler 2004, p. 114.

some instrumental examples of the practice of craft production provided by a 2009 world report by UNESCO:

- In Colombia, craft production represents an annual income of roughly US\$400 million, including some US\$40 million in exports, providing workers in the sector with an annual income ranging from US\$140 to US\$510.
- Tunisia's 300,000 craftworkers (two-thirds of whom work part-time) produce 3.8 percent of the country's annual GDP, or an annual income per family of US\$2,400.
- In Morocco, crafts production represents 19 percent of its GDP, including exports estimated at US\$63 million.
- In Thailand, the number of craftworkers is estimated at 2 million (out of the 20 million workers in the informal sector), almost half of whom can be regarded as full-time workers.²⁰

Figure 3: Creative goods: Exports, by economic group, 2002 and 2011 (\$US in millions)

| | World | | Developing | | Developed | | Transition | |
|--------------------|---------|---------|------------|---------|-----------|---------|------------|-------|
| | 2002 | 2011 | 2002 | 2011 | 2002 | 2011 | 2002 | 2011 |
| All Creative Goods | 198,240 | 454,019 | 73,890 | 227,867 | 123,169 | 222,597 | 1,181 | 3,555 |
| Art Crafts | 17,503 | 34,209 | 9,201 | 23,383 | 8,256 | 10,653 | 45 | 172 |
| Audio-visuals | 455 | 492 | 35 | 90 | 417 | 400 | 3 | 2 |
| Design | 114,694 | 301,262 | 53,362 | 172,223 | 60,970 | 127,239 | 362 | 1,800 |
| New Media | 17,506 | 43,744 | 4,412 | 14,607 | 13,071 | 28,918 | 23 | 219 |
| Performing Arts | 2,754 | - | 250 | - | 2,478 | - | 26 | - |
| Publishing | 29,908 | 43,077 | 3,157 | 8,106 | 26,061 | 33,650 | 690 | 1,321 |
| Visual Arts | 15,421 | 31,127 | 3,474 | 9,456 | 11,916 | 21,631 | 31 | 40 |

Source: UNDP and UNESCO 2013, p. 162.

In a typical cultural economy, these activities extend to such areas as tourism, equipment and supporting materials—areas that may not be necessarily 'creative' but are augmented by vibrant cultural activities and vice versa. The result is what many cultural experts note: The interdependence

²⁰ UNESCO 2009b, p. 167.

of direct and indirect activities around a cultural economy fuelled by creative work. Again, it is important to underscore that these crosscutting domains have spillover effects that promote social benefits. They help bring people together, build solidary, aid mental health, stimulate happiness, and so on,²¹ coming under the umbrella of social utility.

CREATIVE WORK AND SOCIAL UTILITY

Creative experiences have the ability to bring communities together through fostering social bonds, cultivating relationships (or building what is often noted as ‘social capital’). Besides fostering cross-cultural experiences, these practices can engender intergenerational dialogue.

“Shared creative experiences can facilitate insight and empathy,” as Ping Ho notes. Such experiences “enable changing perceptions of self and others, social connection, and individual and collective empowerment.”²²

In Afghanistan, “the rich heritage of beautiful, hand-woven rugs is a source of pride and a meaningful link to centuries of cultural achievement as well as an investment in the country’s future.”²³ Such cultural pride can translate into dignity and personal fulfilment worth noting regardless of the income these carpets may generate.

THE ROLE OF WRITERS IN EXPANDING PEOPLE’S CHOICES

Chinua Achebe notes that “the role of a writer is not a rigid position and depends to some extent on the state of health of his or her society.” In his memoir, *There Was a Country*, Achebe “never proposed that every artist become an activist in the way we have always understood political activity.” Nonetheless, he recognizes that some will take this position. On the freedom to speak up, “If a society is ill,” Achebe writes, “the writer has responsibility to point it out. If the society is healthier the writer’s job is different.”²⁴ With a pen, as Achebe concludes, a writer can use his or her creative work to advance human well-being.

That said, although the new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development reflects humans rights in explicit terms,²⁵ there has been an argument that political and democratic rights are secondary to economic growth. While this view has weak empirical support, as Amartya Sen and others note, a

²¹ Kabanda 2014.

²² Ho 2012.

²³ GoodWeave.

²⁴ Achebe 2012, pp. 57-58.

²⁵ OHCHR.

number of people have argued that rights are a luxury the poor cannot afford. But as Sen explains, “We have reason to value liberty and freedom of expression and action in our lives, and it is not unreasonable for human beings—the social creatures that we are—to value unrestrained participation in political and societal activities.”²⁶ By questioning authority or by simply enlightening citizens, writers and others in the domain of creative work can expand people’s opportunities.

These opportunities need not relate to direct income to be valuable. And again, they could be along the lines of advocating for the right to get information, naming and shaming those who abuse public office, demanding accountability and the right to the rule of law, or simply neutralizing tense moments around community problems. In other words, writers can generate public discourse, and fuel engagement and action in political and social affairs, actions that in turn accelerate human development. Although we focus on writers here, obviously many other artists are torchbearers of people’s rights.

Consider 19th century French artist Phillippe-Auguste Jeanron. In addition to writing, Jeanron was a painter, curator, designer (etcher), and lithographer. His “paintings advocated social change through their ‘sympathetic mirroring of the life and hardships of the common people’ in France at the time of the French Revolution. In contrast to the tradition of art mirroring the life of the monarchy and high officials of the royal court, his paintings celebrated such themes as ‘Young Child’, ‘Poor Family’, and ‘Hunger’, all shown in the 1836 Salon.”²⁷ Throughout history, there are vivid examples of artist who have stood at the forefront of calling social change.²⁸ The right to freedom of expression championed by such artists, from demanding political accountability to climate action, puts people at the centre of development that enriches their lives.

HOW HUMAN DEVELOPMENT CAN EXPAND CREATIVE WORK THROUGH LITERACY

Education improves people’s lives and is key to advancing human development. People who cannot read and write may be unable to benefit from the medium of writing. And people who cannot express themselves through writing (in whatever language) are unlikely to express their opinions through this medium. Policies that promote literacy in reading and writing are likely to turn out better (or informed) readers and writers—audiences that appreciate written works. This in turn cultivates a culture that appreciates literature to the extent of even feeling proud to spend on it. Societies that

²⁶ Sen 2000, p. 152.

²⁷ Carter 2009, p. 23.

²⁸ For more examples, see Carter 2009.

value and promote human development are also likely to inspire people to pursue work in creative endeavours.²⁹

This premise, however, is too often comprised by a culture that celebrates material gain over human well-being—a tendency further entrenched in public policies that focus on growth and markets at the expense of public expenditure on the arts, education and other social services. So people who are likely to develop careers in creative work may take on other choices, which may not provide personal fulfilment, ‘but can pay the bills’.³⁰ Such thinking is also why many people in the creative sector are not compensated as they should be. Yet as we have argued, the creative sector can contribute to the economy even in direct terms. If the right provisions, such as those related to intellectual property, infrastructure, tax incentives, marketing and even positive attitudes towards local creative products, are in place, then more people may turn to creative work as a form of ‘formal’ employment.

How do human well-being and happiness expand capabilities and opportunities?

Work, jobs and employment can add to people’s well-being and happiness, and expand capabilities and opportunities. These opportunities might involve, for instance, a chance to delay marriage, buy food, pay school fees and enjoy the dignity of work. As UNDP Administrator Helen Clark notes, “The value of employment extends far beyond the income it generates.”³¹ This observation is pertinent to work in both formal and informal sectors.

But these positive benefits are not guaranteed in any sector. People in a number of creative fields are not immune from risks. In modelling, music, film and other creative endeavours, women, children and even men often risk meagre compensation, sexual exploitation, and other physical and physiological abuses. Here the link between work and human welfare is broken.

Across sectors, while people may be involved in work, jobs or employment, given other choices, this ‘choice’ would perhaps not be their first priority. Recall these basic points: A parent may prefer to spend time with his or her children instead of going to work; a child may prefer to spend time on her homework or playing than doing chores; and an artist may prefer creative work over a job that pays well but does not provide personal fulfilment.

²⁹ It must be noted, however, that difficult or suppressing situations have often inspired creative work.

³⁰ In most cases, some people have jobs that pay the bills, but keep doing their creative work on the side.

³¹ Clark 2014.

On the last, the cultural sector normally provides individual happiness and societal welfare. In the *Economics of Culture Policy*, David Throsby makes a germane point: “The types of jobs created in the cultural sector are greener, more enjoyable and deliver greater non-pecuniary rewards to workers than is the case for jobs in other sectors such as manufacturing.”³² Indeed, as Confucius once said, “If you choose a job you love, you will never work a day in your life. Confucius must have known then what science now confirms: Passion protects us physiologically, allowing us to work longer and harder than we would be able to toiling away at a job we hate.”³³

CREATIVE WORK AS A PUBLIC GOOD

As noted earlier, creative work can extend happiness and well-being to others. (This could be via the direct and indirect benefits of the so-called positive externalities in economic theory.) Consider arts education. In his *Happy Meeting of Multiple Intelligences and the Arts*, Howard Gardner notes:

Among [other compelling reasons for arts education] are the likelihood that skill and craft gained in the arts help students to understand that they can improve in other consequential activities and that their heightened skill can give pleasure to themselves and to others. (This could be construed as an instrumental argument, but it is instrumental only in the broadest sense.) Human beings have done many terrible things, but they have also done some wonderful things; among these are the artistic genres and works that have accumulated over the centuries and that remain one of the best markers of a civilization. The arts also provide uniquely individualistic insights into remote persons and cultures, even as they also allow one to be in closer touch with the thoughts and emotions of those around one, and indeed, with one's own mental life.³⁴

With respect to learning from our past, artworks from ancient civilizations continue to function as a foundation for new knowledge. In what may be called ‘new ideas from dead artists’, writers from the past have inspired contemporary writers. Dead musicians continue to inspire new music. A new stroke of contemporary art and architecture in Asia and Africa borrows heavily from old masters. And so on. These examples show how creative work can extend its public utility even across centuries. Some companies, such as Apple, borrow heavily from creative arts to execute and market their products.

Nonetheless, creative activities can also be used for purposes that can stall human development. For example, over the past few years, a strand of the music industry “has built its identity on the

³² Throsby 2010, p. 40.

³³ Enayati 2012.

³⁴ Gardner 1999.

ability to objectify, degrade, and outright insult women with lyrics and pop culture images.”³⁵ And some fundamentalist groups use music and poetry to recruit and retain new members. Via the arts, these activities can build ‘negative social capital’.

But creative works can also build bridges in terms of social welfare. Among the towering examples of the arts in extending positive benefits to society is the role of music in ending Apartheid in South Africa. It is difficult to find data to support this premise. Even so, in “Anti-Apartheid Freedom Songs Then and Now,” cultural anthropologist Tayo Jolaosho describes one example this way: “Whether subtle or strident in their condemnation of the apartheid regime, freedom songs served as vehicles for protest, and often changed to express evolving social concerns. Their adaptation involved lyrical changes that were structured by melodic and—just as crucially—rhythmic foundations.”³⁶ Surely, to reflect on South Africa is to realize how creative work can go beyond providing individual happiness to societal welfare.

This welfare can also extend across borders, linked by creativity in cultural tourism, for example. Again, take music. While aspects of music tourism are diverse, from tours of concert halls to dance parties in far-flung places, “in every context tourists derive meaning and pleasure from the experience.” Tourism “is not usually intended to be an ordeal;” in general, most tourists travel for pleasure or happiness for that matter, “(and linking place, meaning and personal history may itself be intensely pleasurable), and part of the expression of a personal aesthetic.”³⁷ In a cultural setting, this experience is clear. At music festivals, for example, “participants and spectators are brought together to the extent that the performance as theater evokes and solidifies a network of social and cognitive relationships existing in a triangular relationship between performer, spectator and the world at large.”³⁸

With respect to economic growth, moreover, employment in the cultural sector can invigorate urban development. “Cultural activities of various sorts,” as Throsby concludes, “have been used as a circuit-breaker to deal with problems of urban youth unemployment and social isolation. Arts projects in some cities have been used to revitalize depressed areas and restore a sense of civic pride.”³⁹ These are precisely some of the modes through which creative activities can build and sustain a culture of wider well-being—from personal happiness to public welfare.

³⁵ Peterson 2014.

³⁶ Jolaosho 2014, p. 2.

³⁷ Gibson and Connell 2005, p. 268.

³⁸ Beeman 1993, p. 386, in Cavicchi 1998; cited in Gibson and Connell 2005, p. 269.

³⁹ Throsby 2010, pp. 40, 131.

Case study: the Danish Centre for Culture and Development

We believe that art, culture and creativity are central parameters for sustainable human and social development. And we believe that art, culture and creativity are determining factors for democratization, respect for human rights and enhancement of economic growth.

—Danish Centre for Culture and Development

Denmark has touched on the above social and economic benefits of creative work in a 2013 development strategy, “The Right to Art and Culture” (this followed “The Right to a Better Life” endorsed by the Danish Parliament in May 2012).⁴⁰ The Centre for Culture and Development, or Center for Kultur og Udvikling (CKU), an autonomous institution that works under Denmark’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, implements this policy. It “manages culture and development programmes in the Middle East, Asia, West Africa, and East Africa.”⁴¹ In cooperation with Danish embassies and representations and local partners, the centre promotes cultural development and social activities. CKU’s priorities are highlighted in Table 2.

Table 2: CKU priorities

- 1 Empowering people through active participation in art and cultural activities
- 2 Ensuring freedom of expression for artists and cultural actors
- 3 Enhancing economic growth through creative industries
- 4 Strengthening peace and reconciliation in post-conflict areas through art and cultural activities
- 5 Promoting intercultural dialogue and intercultural collaboration.

Source: Centre for Culture and Development.

ASIA: BHUTAN

In Asia, CKU has done work in Afghanistan, Bhutan, Indonesia and Nepal. The programme in Bhutan has supported creative work through a new film policy and the promotion of “cultural and

⁴⁰ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark.

⁴¹ Centre for Culture and Development, “Our Work.”

natural history” to young people—the latter led to “the establishment of the Gallery of Natural History at the National Museum in Paro.”⁴²

ENCOURAGING A SUCCESSFUL FILM POLICY AND INDUSTRY

The film industry is among the growing creative sectors in Bhutan. And with support from Denmark, the Bhutan Film Association, and the Ministry of Information and Communication have developed a national film policy. “To ensure that the new film policy will be successfully implemented, CKU [has supported] the establishment of a National Film Commission.” The commission has formulated “duties and governance structures as well as knowledge sharing and exchange with Danish film partners.” Towards ensuring a self-sustaining film industry, the programme aims to provide international networks and training to Bhutanese filmmakers.⁴³

PROMOTION AND PRESERVATION OF CULTURAL AND NATURAL HISTORY

“Professionals involved in preservation and promotion of natural history heritage are brought together in a regional network in the [South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation]. The Bhutanese National Museum in Paro shares its experiences with renewing and promoting the Museum’s Natural History Gallery in order to ensure knowledge sharing and to encourage collaboration...”⁴⁴

AFRICA: DESIGN NETWORK AFRICA AND THE AFRICAN MUSIC FESTIVAL NETWORK

CKU’s Design Network Africa (DNA) links “highly respected designers from East, West and Southern Africa who have been selected for their diverse voices, sophisticated and original product and unique global identities and who represent the vibrancy and distinctive expression of a new African identity. The programme has been designed to encourage collaboration between the designers, sharing common difficulties and solutions, mentorship and utilizing new manufacturing processes and materials in a true interchange of skills, aesthetics and narratives. DNA is focused on identifying the specific areas of need of each company and is an immediate and business orientated initiative, repositioning the design companies in particular, but ‘African Design’ in conjunction in the worldwide retail and media arena.”⁴⁵

⁴² Centre for Culture and Development, “International Development.” Bhutan.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Design Network Africa.

“The African Music Festival Network (AMFN) is a new, vibrant network linking African music festivals together to improve and increase their creative and economic potential. Consisting of 16 festivals, the Network was initiated by the Danish Center for Culture and Development (DCCD) in partnership with Pamberi Trust Zimbabwe to exchange knowledge and share resources. The purpose of AMFN is to strengthen and spread the expertise that already exists among festivals on the African continent. The initiative provides a framework for the festivals to help each other build up organisational and technical capacity. AMFN focuses on marketing, management, fundraising, budgeting as well as sound and lighting technique. Our goal is to enable festivals to economically survive so that they remain an important and vital inspiration in African music and play a decisive role in the cultural industry and local communities.”⁴⁶

ARAB STATES: STATE OF PALESTINE

In the State of Palestine, aside from the cultural hub of Ramallah, opportunities are limited for independent arts organizations and artists. CKU seeks to bring artists out of isolation. “Limited public access to art and cultural activities and isolation of cultural operators are the main challenges that the programme seeks to address.” The programme works in the following key areas:

- *Improving access to culture* by strengthening cultural involvement for less privileged and marginalized groups in the State of Palestine.
- *Promoting art and culture in public space* by supporting arts organizations and collectives “in developing new models and sustainable initiatives that combine arts development with stronger outreach into the public sphere.” The aim is “to generate debate and reflection on contemporary issues.”
- *Creating platforms for arts productions, training and exchanges*: The aim here “is to widen access to art and cultural activities [via] platforms where youth are free to express themselves.”
- *Strengthening the sustainability of arts organizations*: Through establishing private and public partnerships, the programme seeks “to strengthen the impact and economic viability of [arts] initiatives.” The aim is “to expand opportunities for learning, inspiration and development of art productions for emerging arts collectives and companies.”
- *Enhancing job opportunities for youth*: “Strengthening technical skills among disadvantaged youth with a focus on creative and non-violent expressions can lead to

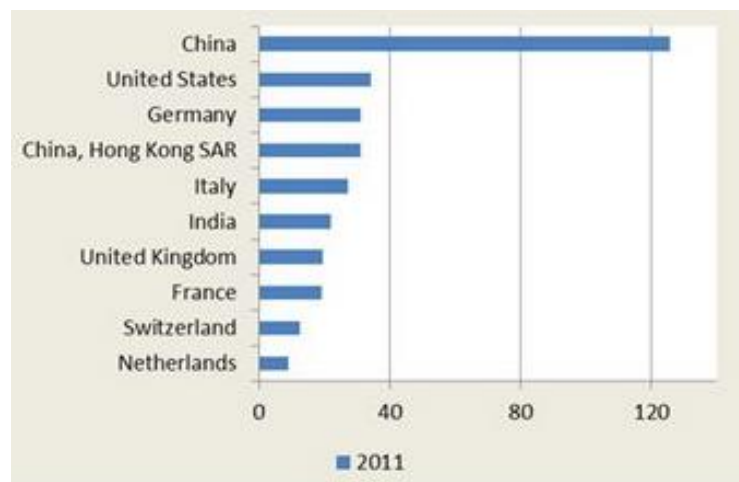
⁴⁶ African Music Festival Network.

enhanced opportunities for income generation. Targeted training for young professionals link culture with other sectors such as media, and building up technical skills in relevant fields such as documentary film and photography.”⁴⁷

LESSONS FROM DENMARK

Time will tell whether or not Denmark will achieve its culture in development objectives—it is difficult to praise such a programme without rigorous statistical data. That said, Denmark’s efforts show some ways culture can be incorporated in a development strategy. Even if there are questionable gaps—elite capture comes to mind—Denmark has demonstrated a framework other organizations can improve on, or simply use to get started. As Figure 4⁴⁸ indicates, while exports in global creative output are expanding, developing countries are not fully participating. Therefore, the need for strategic policies is urgent. A visible and invisible barrier of negative bias affecting local creative products is another concern with many implications.

Figure 4: Top exporters of creative goods (US\$ in billions)



Source: UNCTAD, based on official data in UN COMTRADE database

Mindsets and biases related to local creative products

Traditional creative local products from the developing world face a startling disadvantage: They are generally perceived to be of lesser quality than Western products and more so even in their

⁴⁷ Centre for Culture and Development, “International Development.” State of Palestine.

⁴⁸ UNCTAD.

respective domestic markets. As C. A. Bayly explains, some places like Japan made an easier transition from the past to modernity. “In many areas, however, native styles of painting, stone carving, woodcarving, and pottery making declined in quality and respect even among their own people during the second half of the nineteenth century.” “In the long run,” as Bayly puts it, works like those from Africa and the Pacific “were to become dangerously dependent on the Western tourists market and local sponsorship by the national state.”⁴⁹ In the 21st century this picture has not changed much.

Further, as we saw earlier, women contribute greatly to the ancient tradition of ceramic making. Yet as Moira Vincentelli cites, they are as if trapped here: “Because of the technology used and the domestic and functional nature of the wares, women’s ceramics lack prestige and have been neglected by scholars and collectors.” In the West, moreover, visual culture is understood “in terms of hierarchical classification systems and oppositional categories.” These categories include “high culture and popular culture, fine art and craft, aesthetic and functional, contemporary and traditional.” Ceramic makers from different continents “are divided further by the imbalance of power between the West and the developing world.”⁵⁰

That imbalance is further aided by this fact: In the framework of liberal international trade, generally, all products have a rightful place in local and international markets. And people have a right to buy what they want. But many traditional products suffer from the thought that they are inferior. (Let us consider Africa. A mug from Switzerland could be chosen over a mug from Zimbabwe; a Christmas card from Britain is more likely to be picked over one from Ghana; and French Champagne is more likely to be selected over local wine in Nigeria.) Local items have to be competitive. But how is bias effectively captured in the liberal trade regime?

That question asks us to remember this point: Bias can cut both ways. In fact, although price and quality can be factors, Richard Friberg and others make a key observation in their case study of wine: (Other things being equal), “a disproportionate market share for domestic products characterizes many goods markets – a phenomenon often referred to as home bias.”⁵¹ But again, this home bias is as if absent in Africa. “So much of what African consumers use is imported and in extreme case cases, like Angola, almost everything – including food – is imported. It is a situation which often leads to ballooning deficits and other budgetary problems.” So what to do? “One desirable solution is to boost local manufacturing and encourage locals to buy locally-made goods” as

⁴⁹ Bayly, pp. 382-383. In many cases, however, even state sponsorship for native creative output is meagre.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Friberg et al. 2008.

Ghana is trying to do.⁵² Such policy action is badly needed. This is because as much as the above points are generalities, the mindset issue is alive and well. And it too often hurts the value of local African products, let alone the impetus to sharpen local knowledge and innovation in development.⁵³

THE CONVENTION ON CULTURAL DIVERSITY

The observation above brings up the issue of globalization. In our increasingly globalizing world, there is a looming threat that ‘cultural dumping’, notably from the United States, is contributing to the neglect or the crushing of local arts. The ‘McDonaldization’ thesis has gained attention in recent years. Given that sentiment, the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions is worth noting. Article. 2.3 states, on the principle of equal dignity of and respect for all cultures: “The protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions presuppose the recognition of equal dignity of and respect for all cultures, including the cultures of persons belonging to minorities and indigenous peoples.”⁵⁴

This principle is important in understanding how world cultures contribute to people’s capabilities in each and every nation. It is difficult to evade this observation—and even the previous one on women—in efforts to sustain the richness and diversity of global cultural contributions. These concerns deserve a place on the agenda of policy debates. Further, since cultures (and the arts) are constantly evolving, learning and borrowing from each other, such discussions need to include local citizens, young and old.

Globalization has certainly accelerated cultural interactions. Yet most of the content is dominated by Western culture. So to achieve the “equal dignity of and respect for all cultures,” more needs to be done—and here developing countries cannot escape the responsibility to effectively promote their own cultures.⁵⁵ The following recommendations discuss some ways this could be achieved.

⁵² BBC 2016. See also Forum for the Future.

⁵³ See a related concern in African Development Bank Group 2014.

⁵⁴ UNESCO 2005.

⁵⁵ Wolfensohn 2013. For more on this, see Kabanda 2014.

Policy recommendations

CHANGING MINDSETS AND BIASES RELATED TO CREATIVE WORKS

Pure economic theory is often premised on the notion that people are rational thinkers who make the right decisions given the options to maximize their utility. This thinking hits lots of right notes. But it also misses many. Questions of ethics, fairness and even sustainable living, for example, do not sit well here. People often make irrational choices and are even influenced by negative perceptions. These choices may not only hurt them; they may also hurt their societies. From financial meltdowns at Wall Street to pollution problems in Ulan Bator, examples are all too common. Of course, this scenario is complex. But careful scrutiny suggests that human behaviour is intricate, and deserves a closer look in development policy.

The World Bank's *World Development Report 2015*, called *Mind, Society, and Behavior*, considers psychological and social influences to advance development approaches.⁵⁶ This is a turning point. It is in this line of thought that such questions should be considered: Where do local creative products stand in terms of likeability and competitiveness? In addition to the concerns of infrastructure, entrepreneurship capabilities and the like, what are the perceptions around creative work? Why do some young people see work in such areas as crafts as backward, a sharp contrast to modernity? Is it helpful to change the way people see this field? If so, will a shift in thinking help promote gainful development policy on creative work? Some ways forward could be to:

- Administer local, regional, and even global surveys on how local and traditional creative work and creative products are perceived. This can be done by local and international organizations in conjunction with ministries of culture, education, trade and competitiveness, for example. Such data could provide a basis for policy and advocacy related to creative work.
- Promote media cultural responsibility. Under so-called public-private partnerships, Kaushik Basu suggests a media cultural responsibility.⁵⁷ Under this commitment, media outlets could devote space to educate and promote traditional creative products.
- Generously support holistic arts education programmes, taking into account the promotion of local arts and multidisciplinary policy intervention. Arts education is marginalized in many countries, and where it exists, it likely focuses on Western arts.

⁵⁶ World Bank 2015.

⁵⁷ Basu 2011, p. 79. This idea is also discussed in Kabanda 2014.

Yet arts education's contribution to children's development is immense.⁵⁸ In addition to integrating required arts courses in curricula, ministries of education and culture and other actors could go further by mandating that these include traditional arts. This approach could extend to history, religion, geography, math and even sciences—on the last, recall that vibrations and pitches of sounds, for example, are prominent in physics.

“Too often arts advocates meet in separate chambers with other like-minded weary warriors at a distance from ‘them’—the administrators and policymakers whose perspective on arts learning are assumed to be negative and not explored further.”⁵⁹ This communication gap needs to be bridged. Countries could develop their own approaches, but in each case, artists, anthropologists, economists, historians and policy makers, for instance, could collaborate to come up with sound arts education policies. This could help promote the diverse cultural wealth of their respective nations.

YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT AND PERCEPTIONS AROUND CREATIVE WORK

One of the most pressing issues of our time is youth unemployment. While creative work is hardly a panacea, it can play a role, since each and every nation has ripe cultural traditions. This is a low-hanging fruit easy to pluck; it could enrich the menu of development strategies to attack the tyranny of youth unemployment. Strategic policies need to be applied in education, counselling, marketing and advocacy to build respect for locally produced goods. This respect may entice young people to join or carry on creative work. The way things stand, it is not unreasonable to suggest that if creative workers are seen at the bottom rank of society, few young people would want to be them or even respect their products—this problem also exists in such fields as agricultural and teaching. It is important to:

- Encourage and support creative young people to form arts cooperatives and other entrepreneurial ventures. Governments, schools, and international and local agencies should assist these young people not only with funding, but also with marketing their products abroad. This could be done through embassies and international agencies,⁶⁰ for example. Other support can be executed through scholarships, grants, fellowships, exchange programmes with education institutions, internships and mentorship programmes.

⁵⁸ For example, see Davis 2008.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁶⁰ Kabanda 2013, p. 92.

FIGHTING THE EXPLOITATION OF CREATIVE WORKERS AND GENDER BIAS

Women’s participation in creative work enriches human development by retaining jobs that expand cultural heritage, preserving creative skills for the next generation and much more. Their contribution, however, is too often compromised by what has been termed “capitalism on steroids.”⁶¹ In *Crafts, Capitalism, and Women*, Ronald J. Duncan documents how the ills of our global economy fuel the exploitation of women potters in La Chamba, Colombia. “He argues that the treatment of home-based craft workers that occurs today among women and children in La Chamba and other areas of Latin America is structurally similar to the slavery and indentured servitude that followed the [Spanish] Conquest.”⁶²

Women potters of La Chamba make some of the most beautifully finished ceramics of South America... [T]hey have been doing so for more than a millennium. Grandmothers make traditional cooking pots, mothers make utilitarian bowls for sale to urban families, and daughters make one-of-a-kind art pieces on special order. But even though their work is exported to Europe and the United States, the potters are paid less than the minimum wage for their work. Despite being part of the booming global economy, the women reap precious few of its rewards.⁶³

Given the nature of the global economy, it is not uncommon to find creative products from the developing world in Western malls. So, the clear policy intervention may be to ask how the international community, including UNDP, the World Trade Organization, the World Bank and the International Labor Organization, can act in concert with respective governments to effectively curb the exploitation of women, children and even men in creative work. This issue has been on the radar of many human rights groups and international organizations. But, even in other sectors, it remains a huge concern.⁶⁴ Some recommended actions are to:

- Provide training and useful information. Among the ways human development can help curb exploitation in creative work is by tackling such problems as information asymmetry and the general lack of awareness. Several questions deserve attention: What kinds of agreements do these workers have to sign? Do they have any legal rights? What is the final price of their creative works? How much does the so-called middleman take? What are the typical customs for their products? This is where local community councils, cooperatives, and ministries of trade, education, gender and culture can especially be beneficial. They can work hand in hand with the international community to help

⁶¹ Hymowitz 2005.

⁶² University Press of Florida 2000.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Kabanda 2014.

creative women reap the best rewards for their work, as they share their creativity with the world and advance human development.

- Create or strengthen mentorship, funding, marketing and other initiatives specifically targeting women in creative work. In places where cultural norms are especially a barrier for women's advancement, it is crucial to work with elders, men, family members, schools and others—these actors need to buy into ideas that may be seen 'imported', but can actually make a difference in women's freedom to fully participate and benefit from their artistry.
- Commission a study on women in creative work. The paucity of policy literature here indicates that more learning is needed. The study could provide a framework for public policy on gender and creative work, as it asks such questions: What are the best examples of policies that protect women in creative fields? Should there be a global protocol that ensures basic wages and social protections for creative women? Given that such measures as pension plans and tax credits are difficult to execute, how can such a protocol be upheld?

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY PROTECTION

Indigenous arts have faced a dilemma in the modern world. Mechanization has certainly helped production. But artistry has suffered from mass production. "An early example of this," as C. A. Bayly illustrates, "was the rapid elimination of artisan textiles industries of South Asia and even the as-yet uncolonized Middle East."⁶⁵ To a remarkable degree, this production can be linked to the long-standing 'intellectual theft' of traditional knowledge. In India, for instance, the shawl had been associated with aristocratic merit. "By the 1830s," however, "Scottish industrialists in Paisley, near Glasgow, had begun to mass-produce Indian styles, and these were then sold on a global market place for shawl products."⁶⁶ This practice continues even today in many global commercial deals. What is more, from country to country, it is difficult to tell what knowledge is in the public domain, and what is not. Maybe the Scottish had the right to copy Indian shawls? Maybe they did not? What is the role of intellectual property rights here?

The easier strategy is to promote education on intellectual property. Many artists and even policy makers do not really know the difference between a patent and a copyright. Even more, many do not know the advantages and disadvantages of this system. Workshops, media platforms and so forth

⁶⁵ Bayly 2004, p. 372.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

can help. The difficult part is to strengthen ways to collect fees from intellectual output. And since related legislation is at different stages of maturity, each nation has to come up with its own strategy, while also learning from other countries where progress has been made.

Concluding remarks: data and infrastructure

Since data and infrastructure limitations often constrain policies for culture in development, this remark touches on these two points. UNESCO's Institute for Statistics and other organizations are taking steps to better collect data on cultural output. But many countries still have weak statistical accounts. Data are data. They do not necessarily lead to action. Collecting cultural data, however, should become a priority in local, regional and global development agendas so that it can then support better cultural policies, even if the many benefits of the arts and creative work are 'priceless' and cannot easily be measured.

To borrow an example from India, Basu illustrates what is common in many developing countries: It is not the "dearth of artistic genius" that is lacking in the development and commercial success of local arts, but rather, the lack of "appropriate institutions and infrastructure." Further, as noted earlier, education is important. For example, intellectual property training can go a long way. So does "stimulating the common person's interest"⁶⁷ and cultivating respect for local creative work. "When we think of infrastructure," meanwhile, "we are right to demand better airports and roads but we must not forget that even the arts, music, and culture need infrastructure and, curiously, once provided with this, they can also yield large commercial dividends that benefit the whole nation."⁶⁸ This kind of scenario can also stimulate happiness and well-being—benefits that could increasingly flow when the ecosystem of creative work and human development is robust across the world.

⁶⁷ Basu 2011, p. 76.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

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