



ARTERIAL NETWORK SEMINAR SERIES

INTRODUCTORY PAPER: CULTURE AND DEVELOPMENT

Introduction

This is a discussion paper on the theme of culture and development. Its purpose – as with future seminar papers - is to introduce the topic, to consider how it might be relevant to African conditions (if at all), to encourage debate and in order to work towards a civil society response to the topic and to make concrete recommendations for Arterial Network to pursue on the theme.

This paper does not reflect the views of Arterial Network on culture and development; it is an introductory paper that will be developed through seminars, reading groups and discussion over the course of the year. The intention is to publish final versions of these seminar papers by the end of 2010 or early in 2011 as Arterial Network's contribution to the regional and global discourse around these themes.

The purpose of these papers – and the monthly seminars and reading groups - is to engage rigorously with discourses (often emanating from beyond the continent) that directly affect priorities, strategies, practices and the allocation of resources to and within the African creative sector, and to articulate informed responses to these discourses rooted in civil society (rather than state or parastatal) experiences and interests.

The document has a series of questions after particular sessions to encourage debate and discussion within the seminars and/or reading groups. However, debate is not limited only to these questions but to any theme, position or statement within the paper. The responses to the paper will be recorded and taken into account in the further development of the paper, which will hopefully lead to an Arterial Network position paper on the subject.

The ultimate end of these papers – and the seminar series and reading groups – is not to contribute to academic discourse and debate for its own sake or to more talk shops (although this may happen), but rather to contribute to informed action in order to change and objectively improve the conditions in which Africans – and artists and the creative sector in particular - live and have their being.

A brief history of 'the cultural dimension of development'



In the last twelve months of the first decade of the twenty-first century, there was much renewed attention given to the theme of culture and development, or 'the cultural dimension of development'. The European Union hosted professionals and culture ministers from the EU and African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries at a colloquium in April 2009 on the theme 'Culture and Creativity: Vectors for Development', resulting in the *Brussels Declaration by Artists and Cultural Professionals and Entrepreneurs*.

The Euro-African Campus for Cultural Cooperation took place in Maputo in May 2009 with Interarts, the Observatory for Cultural Policies in Africa (OCPA), the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation towards Development, Mozambique's Ministry of Education and Culture and the Maputo Town Council as key partners to discuss cooperation in the field of culture and development.

In October, UNESCO hosted a symposium on 'Culture and Development: A Response to the Challenges of the Future'.

The Commonwealth Group on Culture and Development – initiated by the Commonwealth Foundation – prepared the *Commonwealth Statement on Culture and Development* that was presented to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Trinidad and Tobago in November 2009.

Yet, more than a decade earlier, UNESCO published in 1998 *Our Creative Diversity: Report of the World Commission on Culture and Development* under the leadership of Javier Perez de Cuellar. This report was the culmination of six years work by a group of 'independent economists, social scientists, artists and thinkers...who were asked to explore the interactions between culture and development and put forward proposals to help the international community deal with them better'.

This Report was regarded as the definitive statement on the theme at the time, and yet, in 2009, the theme was once again under discussion in international forums, not so much to reflect on the progress made since the publication of the report in 1998, but almost to start afresh.

But even the 1998 World Commission Report on culture and development came at the end of the UNESCO World Decade for Cultural Development.

At an international seminar on culture and development hosted in 1991 by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), Dr Carl Thamm – the Director General of SIDA at the time – opened the seminar saying,

....material growth alone does not compose the evolution and transformation of a society. It is also this conviction which constitutes the foundation for...SIDA's work in the field of culture. In a world characterised by enormous chasms between rich and poor countries, by mass poverty and desperation emanating from misery and injustice, by enormous environmental problems...it might appear extravagant and esoteric for a development agency to deal with cultural issues. I believe – I am convinced – that this is an error of judgment. It was no coincidence that in 1987, the General Assembly of the United Nations proclaimed the period 1988-1997 as the World Decade for Cultural Development, thereby acknowledging and promoting what was called the 'cultural dimension of development'.

In explaining the World Decade for Cultural Development, UNESCO's Practical Guide to the World Decade for Cultural Development published in 1987 (little more than decade before the World Commission Report of 1998), states:

Despite the progress achieved, the results of the first two International Development Decades revealed the limitations of a development concept based primarily on quantitative and material growth. From 1970 onwards, critical reflection gave rise to the Intergovernmental Conferences on Cultural Policies...in all parts of the world, and finally led to the Mexico City Conference of 1982 to put forward with great conviction the idea that 'culture constitutes a fundamental part of the life of each individual and of each community...and development...whose ultimate aims should be focused on man (sic)...must therefore have a cultural dimension. The two principal objectives of the World Decade for Cultural Development- greater emphasis on the cultural dimension in the developmental process and the stimulation of creative skills and cultural life in general – reflect an awareness of the need to respond to the major challenges which shape the horizon of the twenty-first century.

A decade into the twenty-first century though, it would appear that not much progress has been made since the early 1970s when the theme of the cultural dimension of development was being embraced globally.

In February 1998, the same year that the World Commission published its report, a Pan-African Consultation on Cultural Policies for Africa was held in Togo, organised by UNESCO and the then Organisation of African Unity in collaboration with the Togolese Government, the Rockefeller Foundation, Ford Foundation and the Swedish International Development Agency. 170 participants from 28 African countries met to debate and adopt recommendations regarding the challenges of cultural diversity, the redefinition of cultural policies to take account of culture and development and regional strategies for the next millennium.

These recommendations fed into the Stockholm Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies for Development held from 30 March-2 April 1998 which agreed, amongst other things that 'cultural policy, as one of the main components of endogenous and sustainable development policy, should be implemented in co-ordination with policy in other social areas, on the basis of an integrated approach. Any policy for development must be profoundly sensitive to culture itself'.

Yet, as far back as 1976 i.e. 22 years before the Togo consultation and the Stockholm conference, the heads of state and of governments in the Organisation of African Unity adopted the African Cultural Charter which committed African countries 'to work out a national cultural policy' and 'integrate the cultural development plan in the overall program for economic and social development.

It may be concluded then that for at least 40 years, the 'cultural dimension of development' - that culture is integral to development, and that cultural development and planning must be incorporated into and cut across other sectors such as economic, social and human development - has been recognised internationally and within Africa,

But why did this recognition of the 'cultural dimension of development' even occur? What was the practice of development prior to that time?

In his book, *Tradition, culture and development in Africa*, Dr Ambe J. Njoh writes that
On the eve of independence for most African countries in the 1950s, development economists and international development agencies were beginning to seriously contemplate the necessary strategies for facilitating development in the emerging nations....As the 60s drew to a close, some

dissenting voices could be heard in the development economic community. These voices...began to question the sagacity of defining the concept of development in strictly economic terms.

Similarly, SIDA's Dr Carl Thamm view that '...material growth alone does not compose the evolution and transformation of a society' resonates with this and with UNESCO's assessment that 'the results of the first two (United Nations) International Development Decades (1960-1970 and 1971-1980) revealed the limitations of a development concept based primarily on quantitative and material growth'.

The shift from emphasising the material and economic aspects of development to the cultural dimension of development was an interesting one given Njoh's criticism of leading development economists in the late 1950s and 1960s 'who considered the cultural transformation of Africa and other developing regions as a *condition sine qua non* (a prerequisite) for economic development. For these economists...the customs and traditional practices of non-western societies constitute a hurdle to so-called modern development aspirations.'

Njoh refers to the work of a leading developmental theorist, Sorenson who summarised the 'popular theory that underdevelopment in third world societies such as Africa is due to internal as opposed to external factors' thus:

Basically, the theory holds that so-called traditional societies...are underdeveloped because of a lack of important propellants of development, including a work ethic, morals, innovative and entrepreneurial capacity, free market mechanisms, a propensity for taking risks and organisational acumen. The absence of these factors, according to the theory, is itself a function of flaws in the culture, customs and social mores of traditional societies. Particularly noteworthy in this latter respect is the fact that the theory considers the leading cause of underdevelopment in so-called traditional societies as the fact that such societies tend to place a lot of emphasis on kinship and family rather than on individual success and little or no emphasis on sophisticated technology and the acquisition of material wealth.

Those subscribing to this theory – says Njoh – 'suggested that it was impossible for Africa to develop without abandoning its traditional practices and assuming Eurocentric cultural values, beliefs and ideology.'

Njoh concedes that 'certain aspects of cultural and traditional practices in Africa...and other parts of the world in general encourage behaviour that constitutes impediments to development however it is defined. The question is: which are these aspects?'

This, indeed, is the key question. Who decides - and on what basis - which cultural aspects to abandon as impediments to development?

Yet, rather than urge the wholesale abandonment of traditional cultural values and the embracing of cultural values and beliefs of the global north in order for development to be effective, proponents of the 'cultural dimension of development' appear to propose instead that development strategies need to be understood, planned, designed and executed in the context of the cultures of the supposed beneficiaries of those development strategies.

Questions to consider:

1. Can you provide practical examples of success stories from your own experience that illustrate the 'cultural dimension of development' i.e. where development has taken place in a manner sensitive to, and integrated into local culture?
2. In your view, and based on your experience, are there elements of African culture that are obstacles to development? If so, what are these?
3. In your view, and based on your experience, are there African cultural values, beliefs and practices that could facilitate and enhance development goals?

Reinventing the 'culture and development' wheel

That there has been so much activity in the last year (2009) around the theme of the 'cultural dimension of development' reflects how little progress has been made at a practical, concrete level in this regard over the last four decades.

The signatories to the 2009 *Brussels Declaration by Artists and Cultural Professionals and Entrepreneurs* state in the preamble:

After so many conferences where clear diagnoses were established and specific recommendations were made but not pursued, after so many resolutions, programmes and action plans rarely put into practice, it is with a mixture of scepticism and hope that we have come to participate in this Colloquium. The European Union has developed, over many years, important cultural cooperation programmes with all ACP countries. However, these programmes have not really been able to deliver national cultural policies nor helped to build more structured and professional cultural sectors at a national or regional level. Moreover, they remained limited to the cultural sector, with no real influence on development policies.

If the culture and development wheel appears to be reinvented more than it appears to be moving forward, it is important to ascertain the reasons so that either theory is translated into concrete reality and programmes on a sustained and critical mass basis, or the theory is finally dismissed as just that, theory, without having any practical value.

The following are some possible reasons for the legitimate scepticism expressed in the Brussels Declaration preamble:

1. The 'cultural dimension of development' is a vague concept, good in theory but hard to sell with concrete examples of success. Proponents of the concept have failed to articulate, market and persuade those in authority of the concept. Culture in its broad anthropological sense, the arts and the creative industries have all become infused as part of the concept adding to, rather than clarifying, the confusion and vagueness. There is a need for much greater clarity and for numerous examples of what is meant by the concept in practice, showing its effects.
2. Where there is some success in convincing those in political authority of the validity of the concept, they tend to be ministers responsible for culture who generally are at the bottom of the political food chain, rather than ministers with real political, policy or economic power. This was the case in Brussels in April 2009 too i.e. there is a need to persuade politicians with real power about the 'cultural dimension of development'.
3. But, the politicians who need to be convinced in the developing world of the cultural dimension of development more often than not are part of the new elites whose values, aspirations and beliefs are aligned with those of the global north and are out of touch with, or are themselves sceptical about, the culture of the masses of people whom they represent and who would be the primary beneficiaries of

development rooted in culture. This is recognised even within the OAU's Cultural Charter of 1976 which states that "colonization has encouraged the formation of an elite which is too often alienated from its culture and susceptible to assimilation and that a serious gap has been opened between the said elite and the African popular masses". It is not only colonisation that has led to this but also the changing tastes and aspirations of those who, having been liberators from colonisation or apartheid, come to taste the fruits and perks of power and become alienated from the masses.

4. Development strategies, policies and renewing strategies – like the New Partnership for Africa's Development – are often top down initiatives that tend to genuflect more to the global north than to the experience of those who are the supposed beneficiaries of development.

5. Development strategies rooted in and sensitive to culture are by definition localised in their effect, and are difficult to document, quantify and market politically; it is easier and more politically strategic for governments in developing countries to embark on traditional, highly visible development strategies that win short term votes.

6. While EU governments and European development agencies advocate the cultural dimension of development, in Africa, the real drivers of development in the past have been the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund who – with their harsh structural adjustment programmes - have paid scant regard to the soft aspects of the development agenda. More recently, a key driver of development of within Africa is China whose development strategies (with the support of local governments) are of the traditional material and economic kind with little respect for culture or the environment.

7. While governments in the developing world may pay lip service to 'the cultural dimension of development' in order to access the aid attached to such development, there is an absence of vision, political will and local resources to implement this concept in practice.

8. Even though the theory about the 'cultural dimension of development' may be sound – at least when it refers to culture in its anthropological sense – in practice, there is very little training of development practitioners in local culture and in indigenous knowledge systems so that there is an absence of local and international expertise to implement culturally-integrated developmental programmes on the scale required for the concept to be validated.

9. Development is not driven primarily by the needs and interests of the supposed beneficiaries of development; it takes place in the context of a world order with huge and structural wealth divides. The primary interests of the global north – the wealthy part of the world – are increased profits in order to increase and sustain their levels of comfort, and security, the means to shield them and their lifestyles from any external threat. Development strategies – their intention and nature – will be subjugated to these interests in the west and the interests of global players seeking economic, geo-political and strategic advantage in Africa. The cultural dimension of development is a relative luxury in the context of these primary drivers.

10. African civil society has not sufficiently been engaged in the discourse of the cultural dimension of development, has not been empowered – or have not empowered themselves - to act in terms of this discourse, and has not taken sufficient ownership, responsibility or initiative in understanding, applying and driving the concept at national, regional and continental levels. The African cultural sector is thus complicit in the international growth of the 'culture and development' discourse industry through its relative passivity rather than its concrete implementation.

Questions to consider

1. How long have you been familiar with the term 'culture and development' or the 'cultural dimension of development'?
2. What have you understood this term to mean?

3. Is this a term that is generally used and understood within the creative sector in your country? If so, how?
4. Is culture and development, or the cultural dimension of development reflected in your country's cultural policies and practices?
5. Are people and organisations involved in culture integrated into the planning of development programmes in your country?
6. Do you think, and based on your experience, that the politicians responsible for arts and culture on the one hand and for development, planning and finance on the other are familiar with the terms and implications of culture and development?
7. What would you say are the primary drivers of development in your city, region and/or country?
8. Has the arts/creative sector ever been consulted in the development of cultural policies for your city/province/country? If so, when was the last time that this happened?

Towards an understanding of development

Development is a much-used word that always appears to have two implicit assumptions:

- a. that development is always 'a good thing' and
- b. that everyone understands development to be the same thing

Nothing could be further from the truth, and yet, outside of academic circles perhaps, the term is seldom interrogated with rigour and within the creative sector – certainly the African civil society creative sector – there is no one meaning or understanding of development. While these two implicit assumptions might have served us adequately to date and while it may be counterproductive to attempt to arrive at one commonly accepted view of 'development', there are so many competing definitions, understandings, assumptions and contradictions related to the term that it is necessary at least to unpack these in order to understand the relationship between 'development and culture'.

For example, what does 'cultural development' as in the World Decade for Cultural Development mean? Does it mean the development of cultural infrastructure, expertise, resources, theory and practices in order for the cultural sector to contribute to general social, economic and human development? Does it mean the pursuit of development goals by inserting and aligning these with the cultural practices, values, beliefs and traditions of the intended beneficiaries of 'development'? Or does it mean that the 'backward' elements of traditional cultures – or any cultures – need to be eliminated i.e. that the cultures of people need to be evolved rapidly for them to experience the full benefits that development has to offer?

The point is that the creative sector could be called upon to support the notion of a World Decade for Cultural Development, but it could have quite different – and even contradictory – meanings.

The World Commission Report states:

Both culture and development have become protean concepts, with an elusive and sometimes bewildering variety of meanings.

The Report concentrates on two views of development:

- a. development as a process of economic growth, 'a rapid and sustained expansion of production, productivity and income per head' and

- b. development – as defined by the UNDP’s Human Development Report – as ‘a process that enhances the effective freedom of the people involved to pursue whatever they have reason to value’.

Yet, neither definition is satisfactory. Post-apartheid South Africa experienced its most sustained period of economic growth, the government having chosen the ‘trickle down, economic growth’ model of development, yet the primary beneficiaries have been an elite, with unemployment and poverty rising to record levels in that same period which also saw a decline in education, in public health services, in life expectancy and a rise in violent crime.

As for the second definition, the United Nations Development Programme is a better advocate of the Human Development concept than the vague, tenuous definition assigned to it by the World Commission Report.

Human development is a development paradigm that is much more than the rise and fall of national incomes. It is about creating an environment in which people can develop their full potential and lead productive, creative lives in accord with their needs and interests. People are the real wealth of nations. Development is thus about expanding the choices people have to lead lives that they value. And it is thus about much more than economic growth which is only a means – if a very important one – of enlarging people’s choices.

Mahbub ul Haq, co-founder of the Human Development Report (along with Indian economist Amartya Sen) writes that ‘the basic purpose of development is to enlarge people’s choices...the objective of development is to create an enabling environment for people to enjoy long, healthy and creative lives’.

The introduction to the 2009 Human Development Report goes on to say

This way of looking at development, often forgotten in the immediate concern with accumulating commodities and financial wealth, is not new. Philosophers, economists and political leaders have long emphasised human wellbeing as the purpose, the end of development. As Aristotle said in ancient Greece, ‘wealth is evidently not the good we are seeking, for it is merely useful for the sake of something else.’ In seeking that something else, human development shares a common vision with human rights. The goal is human freedom. And in pursuing capabilities and realising rights, this freedom is vital. People must be free to exercise their choices and to participate in decision-making that affects their lives. Human development and human rights are mutually reinforcing, helping to secure the well-being and dignity of all people, building self-respect and the respect of others.

From this, it may be possible to arrive at a progressive, working definition of development as ‘***the ongoing generation and application of resources to create and sustain the optimal conditions in which human beings may enjoy all the rights and freedoms enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights***’.

As a reminder, some of the key rights and freedoms in the Declaration are:

Article 1: All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Article 2: Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration without distinction of any kind such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

Article 3: Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

Article 7: All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.

Article 9: No-one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.

Article 13: Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state.

Article 16 (1): Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution.

Article 16 (2): Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses.

Article 18: Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes the freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, and to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

Article 19: Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

Article 20: Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.

Article 21 (1): Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives

Article 21 (3): The will of the people shall be the basis of authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent voting procedures.

Article 22: Everyone...has the right to social security and is entitled to realisation, through national effort and international co-operation and in accordance with the organisation and resources of each state, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.

Article 23 (1): Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.

Article 23 (2): Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection

Article 25 (1): Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

Article 25 (2): Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.

Article 26 (1): Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory....

Article 26 (2): Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

Article 27 (1): Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.

Article 27 (2): Everyone has the right to the protection of the moral and material interests resulting from any scientific, literary or artistic production of which he is the author

Article 28: Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realised.

Article 29 (2): In the exercise of his rights and freedoms, everyone shall be subject only to such limitations as are determined by law solely for the purpose of securing due recognition and respect for the rights and freedoms of others and of meeting the just requirements of morality, public order and the general welfare of a democratic society

Article 30: Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth herein.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted on 10 December 1948 by the General Assembly of the United Nations without dissent. But while members of the United Nations are party to this Declaration, it is clear that there are vast differences in the pursuit and practice of the rights and freedoms within and between states.

Most of the 38 countries ranked in the Very High Human Development category of the Human Development Index that measures life expectancy, literacy, education and standards of living in 182 countries, are western democracies, but at least four – Brunei, United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Kuwait – are not. No African countries feature in this category.

Of the 44 countries ranked in the High Human Development category, Libya is the only African country, and features at number 55. It, too, is not a democracy, and neither does it have a proud human rights record.

The Medium Human Development Category lists 75 countries, including nearly 25 African countries i.e. Tunisia (98), Gabon (103), Algeria (104), Equatorial Guinea (118), Cape Verde (121), Egypt (123), Botswana (125), Namibia (128), South Africa (129), Morocco (130), Sao Tome and Principe (131), Republic of Congo (136), Comoros (139), Swaziland (142), Angola (143), Madagascar (145), Kenya (147), Sudan (150), Tanzania (151), Ghana (152), Cameroon (153), Mauritania (154), Djibouti (155), Lesotho (156), Uganda (157) and Nigeria (158).

The Low Human Development category comprises 24 countries of which 22 are African countries. South Africa – boasting the continent's largest economy, a sound democracy having had four elections since 1994 and a free market system – is ranked 129 on the list. Of the 50 countries ranked at the bottom in terms of human development indices such as literacy, education, life expectancy and quality of life, 39 are on the African continent. The situation is even worse if one considers that Zimbabwe and Somalia are not included in this list because of a lack of data.

In 2010, no less than seventeen African countries – nearly a third of those on the continent - will celebrate 50 years of independence. Sadly, in many of those, life expectancy and the quality of life have deteriorated significantly in that time.

Moeletsi Mbeki, brother of the former South African President who ironically both fronted the 'African Renaissance' concept and was at the same time responsible for the dramatic decline in life expectancy in South Africa because of his AIDS denialism, writes in his book, *Architects of Poverty*:

Half a century after its liberation from colonialism, Africa has dropped so far down the development scale that experts refer to Africans as mankind's Bottom Billion, who can only come out of the black hole they have dug for themselves through intervention by the rest of the world.

...what has gone wrong has been the massive mismanagement by Africa's ruling political elites, with the help of Western powers, of the economic surplus generated in Africa in the past 40 years.

Leaders of 170 countries have agreed on a set of 8 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to be achieved by 2015. Given the position of most African countries at the lower end of the Human Development Index, the MDGs have particular relevance to Africa.

Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

Target 1: halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than \$1 a day

Target 2: halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger

Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education

Target 3: ensure that by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling

Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women

Target 4: eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015

Goal 4: Reduce child mortality

Target 5: Reduce by two-thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate

Goal 5: Improve maternal health

Target 6: Reduce by three-quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio

Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

Target 7: have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS

Target 8: have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases

Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability

Target 9: integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources

Target 10: halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation

Target 11: have achieved by 2020 a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers

Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development

Target 12: develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system (includes a commitment to good governance, development and poverty reduction – both nationally and internationally)

Target 13: address the special needs of the Least Developed Countries (includes tariff- and quota-free access for Least Developed Countries' exports, enhanced program of debt relief for heavily indebted countries and cancellation of official bilateral debt and more generous development assistance for countries committed to poverty reduction)

Target 14: address the special needs of landlocked developing countries and small island developing states

Target 15: deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries through national and international measures in order to make debt sustainable in the long term

Target 16: in cooperation with developing countries, develop and implement strategies for decent and productive work for youth

Target 17: in cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries

Target 18: in cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications technologies

In recent times, and given the environmental destruction wreaked in the name of 'development', it has become fashionable to talk of sustainable development which is defined as 'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. Such development appropriates or is sensitive to natural resources in the meeting current human needs while preserving the environment so that these – and other - needs can also be met by future generations.

Questions to consider:

1. Can development be defined as 'the ongoing generation and application of resources to create and sustain the optimal conditions in which human beings may enjoy all the rights and freedoms enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights'?
2. What is the relationship between democracy, human rights and development given that in Africa, one is able to live the longest (life expectancy of 77) and have the best quality of life in Libya, a country that is not a democracy and curtails some of the human freedoms enshrined in the UDHR, while, on the other hand, in South Africa, the largest economy on the continent with a vibrant democracy and a constitution guaranteeing human rights and freedoms, life expectancy, employment, education levels, personal security, etc have declined over the last fifteen years?
3. Why is a country like Cuba – criticised by some in the West as a communist country, without a free market economy, having had to deal with a trade embargo by the USA and not having the democracy and human rights enjoyed in western countries – ranked higher than any African country on the Human Development Index and is able to send excess doctors, teachers and other professionals to help in other countries?
4. Is a free market economy – as western countries would advocate – the best means to generate resources for developmental purposes when China and its statist economic policies and state-controlled companies has been the country with the highest growth rate for more than a decade, resulting in mass development in that country?
5. Given the structural inequalities in the world and the growing presence of China as a player on the African continent, to what extent is development aid provided by either the West or China designed first and foremost to improve the quality of life of the poor in Africa, rather than serve as means to forge relations with African countries and/or their political elites to ensure the political influence or hegemony or counter the hegemony of either the West or China i.e. whose interests does development aid to Africa really serve?
6. What impact will China have on the growth and sustainability of human rights and democracy in Africa? Will it be any different – and if so, how – to what has been achieved – or not – by western aid and development assistance for the last 50 years?

7. Are there other goals – besides or in addition to the MDGs – that African civil society needs to be striving towards to realise development as defined in the working definition of this paper – or as you have defined it?
8. Are there particular contributions that the arts and creative sector can or should make to the attainment/pursuit of development generally and of the MDGs in particular, and if so, what would these be?
9. What, in your view and/or experience, are the key obstacles in your country, in Africa and globally to the attainment of the MDGs?
10. Notwithstanding the development programmes of the last five decades, poverty remains and in some cases has increased. How much does this have to do with the ‘backward cultures’ of the supposed beneficiaries of development and how much does it have to do with other factors? If it is because of other factors, articulate what these are.

Understanding culture and the ‘cultural dimension of development’

The Ugandan National Culture Policy adopted in December 2006 defines culture as ‘the sum total of the ways in which a society preserves, identifies, organises, sustains and expresses itself’. Njoh defines African culture as ‘the knowledge, beliefs, customs, morals, tradition and habits of African people.’

Culture in this anthropological, all embracing sense, refers to the abstract i.e. the ideas, moral values, beliefs and aesthetic tastes which emerge out of, which evolve and inform a particular community in its attempts to make meaning of, or to shape and reshape its material reality. This reality is determined by climactic, environmental and geographic factors, human-made economic, political and social structures and the social forces operating within their society. At a concrete level, culture also refers to the visible expression of these ideas, values, beliefs and aesthetic tastes in the lifestyles of the community, their social forms of interaction, their political, economic and social forms of organisation, their religious rituals, their art, etc.

The abstract and the concrete co-exist in a dynamic, dialectical relationship, with each constantly informing, challenging, reshaping and giving rise to new elements in the other as the community lives out its life in conditions that are impacted upon not only by internal developments, but also by external forces and influences.

Understanding culture in this way makes it easy to understand the ‘cultural dimension of development’ as development – however it is defined or pursued – will impact on – and will be impacted upon by the culture of the intended beneficiaries of that action.

Development itself is an act of culture. Whatever interests it serves and however it is defined, development is based on values, worldviews, ideas and ideological assumptions implying that a community, a country or a region is in need of ‘development’. Through the development process, the values, beliefs and ideas of the intended beneficiaries of development, are acted upon and change, and/or these values, beliefs and ideas obstruct the development action, so that development and culture co-exist in a dynamic and creative tension, with each informing and sometimes giving rise to new aspects of the other, not just in a linear fashion, but simultaneously.

Development, if it is to achieve its ends, may cause a rupture to a community’s culture or it may align with the community’s culture more organically, shifting values, beliefs and ideas more subtly.

However, the links between culture and development are almost always considered in terms of the culture of the supposed beneficiaries of development, and the extent to which their values, ideas, beliefs, customs, traditions, etc may facilitate or hinder development. It is perhaps equally important to turn the looking glass the other way to consider the extent to which the values, ideology, beliefs, customs, ideas and morals i.e. the culture of the west or global north and their economic and security interests, pose obstacles to real development and/or dictate, define or place pressure for certain kinds of development to take place.

It is to be expected that those who provide resources for development will seek to have their interests reflected in the manner that such resources are utilised, but the point being made here is that it is necessary to interrogate more rigorously the underlying or implicit values, beliefs, ideas and worldviews that inform particular development interventions from the global north to determine whether these – rather than the cultures of Africans – are the primary impediments towards development.

While the anthropological understanding of culture may resonate and interface clearly with development (however it is defined, and whether development practitioners recognise it or not), it is much more difficult to make a case for the arts and the creative sector generally within the ‘cultural dimension of development’.

If it is difficult for proponents of the ‘cultural dimension of development’ and for the creative sector to articulate a clear case for the arts within development (and, to be frank, many of the attempts to do so sound superficial, evangelical and vague), then it is much more difficult for those who need to be convinced so see the links. In recent times, the creative sector and proponents of the cultural dimension of development have emphasised the creative industries and their potential contribution to development. But the much-vaunted contributions of the creative industries – job creation, income-generation, product development for export markets, etc – are framed within the most narrow, conservative and traditional definition of development, one that emphasises economic growth as the key indicator of development.

According to UNCTAD’s Creative Economy Report 2008, Africa’s contribution to world trade in cultural goods and services is less than 1% of such trade. Many would urge African governments to invest in the creative industries because of the success of these industries in the so-called developed world in the last 25 years, with the key motivation being the creative industries as a potentially significant economic driver.

However, creative industries, in order to survive and flourish, require significant local, regional and/or international markets. On the one hand, Africa represents a huge market of just under one billion people; on the other hand, as emphasised by the Human Development Index, it is a market with very limited disposable income to spend on luxury goods such as CDs, films, theatre and dance performances, fine art and literature. Even in South Africa, the continent’s largest economy, an average literary best-seller would account for about 5000 sales, hardly sufficient to sustain writers and a publishing industry.

With the creative industries mooted as one answer to development challenges in Africa, are we not guilty yet again of imposing a developmental driver that is appropriate in one context (mainly the ‘developed’ world) on another, and, ironically, a cultural driver at that? How possible and sustainable are creative industries in countries and a region where most people live on less than \$1 per day?

At the same time, notwithstanding the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, it is extremely difficult for African artists and their creative products to be exported into the markets of the global north, and with rising security concerns and increasing nationalism in Europe, the United States and elsewhere, artists from the south are finding it much more difficult to move globally.

Furthermore, the emphasis on the creative industries as the best contribution that the creative sector can make to 'development' in the hope of convincing sceptical politicians of the value of the arts, ironically runs the risk of undermining the arts as these are reduced to their economic value and to 'what the market wants' and their broader value to society is compromised as investments and subsidies are made primarily to those disciplines and cultural activities that show the best economic return.

There are three broad categories of artistic practice that have relevance to the 'cultural dimension of development'.

- a. the arts practised for their own sake and as the creative means through which a society or community reflects on itself, and is challenged to move on or is affirmed in where they are
- b. the arts utilised for overt developmental purposes such as the use of theatre to spread health messages, or the appropriation of photographs or visual art to counter negative images of women and
- c. the creative industries where the primary drivers are the generation of profit and other economic benefits through the arts

The latter two are much easier to justify and relate to the 'cultural dimension of development', but both have the potential to undermine the practice of the arts in their own right and which in terms of helping a community to come to terms with its existence and challenges, is probably more necessary and important. Article 27 affirms the right of everyone freely to participate in the cultural life of the community and to enjoy the arts – not because of their economic or instrumental value, but because they have value in their own right and for the psychological, emotional and spiritual well-being of the members of the community.

The arts are integral to the culture of a community. Music, dance, theatre, visual arts, literature and film are creative means through which individuals within a community explore, interpret, challenge and celebrate the human condition within particular material and cultural realities. In doing so, the arts reflect certain ways of looking at, thinking about, and understanding the world, and the ideas, beliefs, ideological assumptions and values that shape that world. For this reason, their role within a society's development is much more important than the utilitarian or economic values generally assigned to them when affirming their relevance to the 'cultural dimension of development', and yet, it is extremely difficult to convince decision-makers of the need to support the arts which are deemed to be luxuries, rather than as being integral to culture and thus to development. Accordingly, advocates of culture and development tend to emphasise the creative industries and their economic benefits in an attempt to persuade politicians to support the arts, which then raises the dangers alluded to earlier.

Questions to consider

1. Is development always a good thing?
2. What, in your view, is development?
3. Who or what is being 'developed'?

4. What about 'developed' nations and citizens in 'developed' countries do you admire?
5. What about 'developed' nations and citizens in 'developed' countries do you despise or are happy not to have?
6. Is culture and development – or the cultural dimension of development - the most important discourse that should influence the African creative sector currently? Are there other more important discourses and themes that should shape our actions? If so, what are they?
7. Notwithstanding the unanimous adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) more than 60 years ago, is the UDHR itself a product of, and biased in favour of particular cultural contexts or has it stood the test of time as a universal benchmark applicable to all countries and communities?
8. What is the strategic value to the arts and creative sector in promoting the cultural dimension of development in Africa rather than, for example, the arts and democracy or the arts and human rights?

Towards an Arterial Network position on Culture and Development or 'the cultural dimension of development'

Indicate here what you think should be Arterial Network's

1. definition of development
2. definition of culture
3. understanding of the relationship between culture and development
4. understanding of the arts and of their relevance to the cultural dimension of development, if any
5. position regarding the relevance of the 'cultural dimension of development' to Africa in the context of current global inequities and the primary interests driving development in Africa
6. priorities should be with regard to culture and development, if any
7. priorities should be other than culture and development

Recommendations

Based on your proposals above, what would be key practical, concrete recommendations for Arterial Network to act on in terms of the discourse and pursuit of the 'cultural dimension of development'?

Prepared by Mike van Graan, January 2009

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