AFRICAN ALTERNATIVES: THE FUTURE OF CREATIVE CITIES

New findings on culture and the creative economy in Sub-Saharan Africa’s cultural capitals

A report from World Cities Culture Forum, British Council and Andani.Africa
World Cities Culture Forum
World Cities Culture Forum is the leading global network of civic leaders from over 40 creative cities from across six continents. Our leaders share ideas and solutions to build a world where culture is at the heart of thriving cities. We have established the principle that culture is a golden thread in cities: supporting communities, improving health and wellbeing, attracting tourists and boosting economies.

British Council
The British Council builds international connections between the United Kingdom (UK) and countries worldwide, with the aim of promoting peace, prosperity and trust. It uses the UK’s cultural expertise to build relationships and grow networks that explore creative ideas across 100 countries. This work continually reflects culture’s need to be at the heart of making policy, as well as the benefits of collaborative approaches to culture.

Andani.Africa
Formed in 2016, Andani.Africa is a leading research, insights, and strategic advisory company specialising in and addressing knowledge gaps in the African creative and cultural industries. It works within the intersection of tradition and culture that we call Data Humanism: African forms of storytelling that share insights and knowledge in the tradition of the oral histories of our forebears, and the technological advances afforded us by new digital forms of data analysis and visualisation, harnessing AI for African creative industries knowledge production.
In the decade since World Cities Culture Forum was founded, our core beliefs have remained the same. Firstly, we believe that culture is a golden thread in cities - supporting communities, improving health and education, reducing inequality, and driving economic growth and peace and prosperity in our cities now and into the future. Secondly, we know we can achieve more by working together, being generous with ideas and learning from one another.

African cities are vitally important to World Cities Culture Forum. By 2050 the African population will double and more than 80% of that increase will be in cities. It will mean that 65% of the world’s largest cities will be located in Africa by the end of the century. That’s why the role of dynamic leaders from across Africa is key, not just in their own cities and countries, but also on the global stage.

Over the past months, we have spoken to the city and creative leaders in 11 cities across Sub-Saharan Africa including Accra, Addis Ababa, Cape Town, Dakar, Freetown, Harare, Johannesburg, Kampala, Kigali, Lagos and Nairobi.

We heard about a range of challenges culture faces in cities, but more importantly, the opportunities that exist for positive change. This document highlights the key findings, trends and recommendations for next steps to grow and support cultural policy and the creative industries and be part of a global city movement.

This research on the cultural landscape in Sub-Saharan Africa has been commissioned in partnership with the British Council. It has connected and deepened our engagement with leaders in the region through extensive surveys, interviews and regional roundtables.

We also held a public online dialogue with the key leaders in the region, African Alternatives: the future of creative cities. It brought together policymakers, partners, and was attended by over 200 people from over 90 different cities worldwide. The commitment and opportunity for African leaders and creatives to connect with one another and the rest of the world is inspiring.

We will now build on this research as well as our work with the Creative Vibrancy Index for Africa. We look forward to strengthening our collaboration and friendship with African cities and together continuing to build a global movement that unlocks the power of culture to create thriving cities now and in the future.

Finally, I want to thank the British Council for their continued support, and our research partners in Johannesburg, Andani.Africa, for their dedication and comprehensive approach.

We look forward to this journey together.

Justine Simons OBE
I was delighted to be part of the research process where British Council worked in partnership with World Cities Culture Forum and AndaniAfrica to identify key data and perspectives about cultural policy and creative networks across 11 African cities. The research process determined a strong frame for action, bringing new generation and intergenerational wisdoms together. The research has helped accentuate the distinct essence of place and culture in African cities and networks with their myriad identities and histories and contemporary expression have in imagining a better, more inclusive world.

Surely the future of our planet and all its global challenges is one where we have a creative, conscious, and collaborative community – creative networks, with peer support all imagining and creating a world, embracing ancient and indigenous knowledge with modern technologies in an African state of mind, decolonising with confidence. The research also acknowledged that change is happening on a dynamic level all around us. Staying ahead of the wave and informing the future was key and addressing current gaps in knowledge, mindsets in ways of working needed to adapt and pioneer a new vision, owned by all, channelling aspiration with structure and fluid systems, skills, knowledge and key analytics.

The creative economy, arts and heritage all provide a key role especially in determining sustainable livelihoods that bring positivity and hope in our future city lives. The pace of change across African cities and the continent is evident and there is huge potential to take and define the space, especially with an aspiring and confident young and ambitious generation. Being together and connected as a creative and cultural sector is so key, sharing and learning so vital. Being generous and working hard to enable co-creation by building trust, via supportive networks that generate key data, evaluation and learnings so key. Having a good and robust understanding of what works and what doesn’t for local, regional and international synergy, therefore positioning cultural policy and creativity as a vital recipe in the modernisation of our diverse and inclusive cities.

The motto, *culture is the solution, not the problem.*

**Skinder Hundal MBE**
Cities that took part in the research: Accra, Dakar, Freetown and Lagos in west Africa, Addis Ababa, Kampala, Kigali and Nairobi in east Africa, and Cape Town, Harare and Johannesburg in southern Africa.

Context

Growing cities, growing opportunities

By 2050 the African population will double and more than 80% of that increase will be in cities. An estimated 65% of the world’s largest cities will be in Africa by the end of the century.

Understanding cultural policy in African cities

In partnership with the British Council and Andani.Africa, World Cities Culture Forum conducted research on the cultural policy landscape in Sub-Saharan African cities. This work builds on our partnership with CcHUB and Africa No Filter on the The Creative Vibrancy Index for Africa, which ranks the growth and vibrancy of Africa’s creative industries.

Representatives from 11 cities took part in the research through interviews, surveys and regional roundtables. These representatives include cultural practitioners, city leaders, cultural leaders, funders, city networks as well as academics.

The action research gathered stakeholder voices to find out the priorities for culture in the region, with the aim of recommending a regional programme.

This policy briefing summarises the key research findings, programme recommendations that have been co-created with leaders, and a snapshot city profile for each of the participating cities.
Regional overview

Igniting prosperity in African Cities through culture and creativity!

As we celebrate the vibrant tapestry of African cities, brimming with cultural expression and diversity, it’s crucial to recognise the immense opportunities that lie within the creative heartbeat of the continent. Africa’s urban landscapes are not just repositories of heritage and tradition; they are dynamic centres of innovation, awaiting the right policies to support unlocking their full potential.

Despite challenges such as the lack of comprehensive cultural policies, there is a remarkable story of progress and resilience. While only a few countries in our sample possess national cultural policies, over a third of the African cities we studied have taken the reins, putting their own cultural strategies in place.

Cities like Cape Town, Dakar, Kampala, and Nairobi are paving the way, proudly embracing their cultural richness through official policies. However, it’s not just about having policies on paper; it’s about breathing life into them. Even in the face of limited support for implementation, these cities stand as beacons of creativity, navigating challenges with an unwavering spirit.

City policymakers on the African continent are increasingly recognising the value of culture and the creative economy. Culture is not merely an ornament to adorn a city; job creation, income generation, and overall economic growth are all tangible outcomes of fostering a cultural ecosystem. Take Kampala, for instance, although the policy may be limited in scope and lacks state support for implementation and strategy, the city continues to pulse with artistic vigour, creating a resilient cultural ecosystem that defies constraints and is led by creatives. Nairobi, with its cultural heritage policy, showcases the power of identity preservation. Lagos, in a unique approach, aligns with national cultural policy, highlighting the importance of a cohesive national and city-level vision. South Africa, with its national policy, exemplifies the potential of cultural policy, even with inconsistencies when it comes to local policy and implementation or strategy at the city level. These cities are not just responding to challenges; they are shaping the narrative of the power of culture to contribute to sustainable development.

Moreover, the multifaceted view of culture among city policymakers, closely tied to identity, community, and belief systems, resonates with citizens.

83.58% Lacking understanding of role/potential of culture
82.09% Funding models & priorities
76.12% Economic inequality & poverty
73.13% Governance & institutional challenges
64.18% Digital access & skills development
61.19% Access to education & skills development
55.22% Silo mentality/lack of collaboration
38.81% Urbanisation
31.34% Environmental degradation/climate change
31.34% Gender inclusivity & gender-based violence

Above: Key trends & challenges identified in African cities in relation to culture by percentage of respondents
It goes beyond economic gains, touching the soul of societies. The acknowledgment of culture’s role in shaping individual and collective identities fosters a sense of unity and belonging that transcends geographical and social boundaries.

The challenges faced by African cities become stepping stones for growth rather than insurmountable obstacles. Urbanisation and population density, often seen as issues, transform into opportunities for cultural initiatives to address prevalent problems like poverty and youth unemployment. The very trends surrounding the creative economy and employment become catalysts for change, propelling cities into hubs of innovation and opportunity.

To truly capitalise on these opportunities, a holistic approach is needed. The drivers of cultural policy, including job creation, cultural tourism, heritage preservation, education, diversity, equal access, and inclusion, are not disparate elements but interconnected facets of a thriving cultural ecosystem. Sustainability and climate awareness, emerging as crucial drivers, highlight the responsiveness of African cities to global challenges.

As we look to the future, envisioning the potential of African cities, there is a palpable sense of optimism. Education and skills development programmes stand as pillars, nurturing the abundant cultural talent within these urban landscapes. The call for a deeper understanding of culture’s role and potential, increased data and visibility, and heightened awareness is not a lament but a rallying cry for a brighter tomorrow.

African cities stand at the precipice of a cultural renaissance, armed with resilience, creativity, and a vision for a prosperous future. By embracing the opportunities within their grasp, these cities can transcend challenges, becoming not just cultural hubs but thriving centres of innovation, unity, and economic prosperity. The dynamic force of cultural vibrancy is not a fleeting moment; it is the heartbeat propelling African cities into an era of greatness.

Key findings

Cities need data to advocate for cultural policies. Showing the economic value of culture can drive job creation and cultural development in cities. Culture and the creative economy can provide solutions to rapid urbanisation, economic inequality, unemployment, and create opportunities for women and young people. The Creative Vibrancy Index for Africa is a great starting point to build on developing evidence-driven policy using benchmarking, mapping and sharing case studies. Data has the potential to change mindsets and perceptions of culture, showing culture as a solution.

African knowledge has a place in cultural policy. Policymakers and cultural leaders are calling for the development of Afrocentric knowledge creation. This includes the exchange of ideas from Global South to South, the development of post-colonial African scholarship, and the inclusion of indigenous and community knowledge in cultural creation. Leaders will need to meet challenges like rapid modernisation with a recognition for African identities and African histories. It is also a way to address the past, where the legacy of colonialism still shapes the cultural landscape and environments within cities. Policymakers can promote African solutions to reimagine the spatial heritage in cities, reorganise funding models, and change how culture is accessed to be more equitable.
Policy implementation is a challenge. Lack of understanding and buy-in from governmental bodies combined with silo approaches across the culture sector weakens policy implementation. This can result in opposing policies between city and state. Explicit cultural policies and dedicated cultural departments will help to prioritise cultural policy implementation and ensure buy-in from across the political and cultural ecosystems.

Funding models need to change. Partnerships need to be built on equal terms. Private funders should acknowledge the power relations that exist while funding city projects in Sub-Saharan Africa. This trust is needed for successful cooperation, especially when limited state support for culture means cities look for alternative sources of funding. Cities themselves must also adapt to creative practitioners’ needs and extend the trust with their resources.

African leaders can redefine what cultural policy looks like in their cities. More than a third of cities surveyed report a cultural policy in place, with others increasing efforts to address culture officially. Identifying the main drivers of cultural policies in Sub-Saharan African cities will allow the creation of needs-led policies for the unique context of different cities. These may be comprehensive, cross departmental strategies, or smaller micro-interventions that support and strengthen existing cultural activities.

Networks are key sources of learning for cities. The value of connection is important for policymakers and leaders, who expressed a need for a space to collaborate, exchange with peers and collectively learn. By sharing best practices, adapting successful policies, and accessing research, cities can enhance their cultural ecosystems, and create evidence-based policies that meet their unique needs.
Key drivers of cultural policy in African cities

Data & survey results

In this high-level research, key survey statistics were gathered from 67 respondents, made up of policymakers and broader cultural stakeholders. To fill notable gaps from the survey and desktop review, we also set up a series of interviews with a further 18 respondents in each city context.

Opportunities

- 100% of African policymakers surveyed named job creation and creative economy as one of the main drivers of cultural policy in cities.
- 80% of African policymakers surveyed view culture as the foundation for creative and artistic expressions that drive the economy.
- 90% of respondents recognised networking and peer support as a key benefit of a cities network.

Challenges

- 73% of respondents identified governance and institutional challenges as key concerns of cultural policy development.
- 76% of respondents recognised economic inequality as a significant city challenge.
- 1 in 2 identified a silo mentality and lack of collaboration as challenges in the cultural sector in Africa.
Cultural policy environment in African cities

- Cultural policy in place at national level: 4 cities
- Cultural policy in place at city level: 4 cities
- Cultural policy being formulated: 2 cities
- No documented cultural policy: 2 cities

- 1 in 2 respondents identified a silo mentality and a lack of collaboration as challenges in the cultural sector in Africa.
- 73% of respondents identified governance and institutional challenges as key concerns of cultural policy development.
- 90% of respondents recognised networking and peer support as a key benefit of a cities network.

All African policymakers surveyed named job creation and creative economy as one of the main drivers of cultural policy in cities.
Findings from the research have shown the need and value for World Cities Culture Forum to develop a regional city network and programme. The following recommendations have come from policymakers and stakeholders engaged in the research.

**For World Cities Culture Forum**
- Proactively engage African capitals to become city partners and represent the region within the global Forum.
- Develop a funded African Fellowship programme for African capitals to join the World Cities Culture Forum, supporting cultural and city leaders over a sustained period of time.
- Acknowledge that the African experience is a learning opportunity for other global cities.

As World Cities Culture Forum develops this work, we have given three recommendations for African cities who want to join us on this journey.

**For African capitals**
- Commit to data and evidence-based policy making for culture by building on the Creative Vibrancy Index for Africa.
- Develop partnerships and collaborations amongst African cities and with other world capitals.
- Advocate for culture by building alliances between civic leaders and policymakers in city governments.

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**Dance Evolution Evening**, Western Cape Department of Cultural Affairs and Sport
City profiles
Accra, Ghana

Geographical area: 225.7 square kilometres

Total population: 2.67 million (2023 estimate)

GDP per capita: USD 2,374 (2021 figure for Ghana)

Main industries: Accra is a centre for manufacturing, marketing, finance, insurance, and transportation.

Languages spoken: English is the city’s official language. Other languages such as Akan (Fante/Twi), Ghanaian Pidgin English, Ewe and Hausa are popular within the city.

UNESCO connections: UNESCO named Accra UNESCO World Book Capital for 2023, and Ghana’s Forts and Castles, Volta, Greater Accra, Central and Western Regions and Asante Traditional Buildings are inscribed on the World Heritage List.
State of cultural policy and positive indicators for culture in the city:

The cultural and creative industries in Accra are largely driven by passionate practitioners who believe in the sector, and although the city does not currently have a written cultural policy, it is in the process of developing one. There is a national cultural policy which is currently undergoing review.

These are positive developments, and a better understanding of the role of culture is needed, as well as its potential to promote development within the city, in order for it to be better prioritised and for more resources to be made available to the sector. There is a national cultural policy which is currently undergoing review.

Greater cooperation and partnership between the city, key stakeholders within the creative sector and the national Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture will help to clarify the role of cultural activities in promoting development.

Promoting synergy across sectors offers an opportunity for all to better understand cultures’ potential in driving the development agenda. Culture could assist with this agenda by identifying the shared pressing needs within a community and dictating the better use of resources in the most pressing areas, for example, economic inequality and poverty.

Infrastructure support is needed; information and communication technology, functioning road networks, support from the service industry, etc. are all key ingredients necessary for culture-led development to work. Research and advocacy will help to engage city officials and the public, and encourage evidence-based policy recommendations.
Existing Otherwise 2022 installation view,
Photographer: Ernest Sackity,
Courtesy Savannah Centre for Contemporary Art Tamale
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Geographical area: 527 square kilometres
Total population: 5.47 million (2023 estimate)
GDP per capita: USD 1,475 (2023 figure for Ethiopia)
Main industries: The economy is largely driven by infrastructure development, manufacturing, agriculture and the service industry.
Languages spoken: Several languages are spoken in the city, with Amharic being the primary and official language spoken, and English the principal foreign language that is also widely understood.
UNESCO connections: Ethiopia’s Konso Cultural Landscape and Rock-Hewn Churches - Lalibela are examples inscribed on the World Heritage List, and the Fichee-Chambalaalla, New Year festival of the Sidama people is an example of on the UNESCO Lists of Intangible Cultural Heritage.
Culture and creative industries in the city:

2021 UNESCO studies uncovered that the Ethiopian film and audio-visual industry generated up to $70 million annually and contributed at least 0.8% towards the country’s gross domestic product. It was also estimated that the sector employs over 31 000 people. Design and creative services, visual arts and crafts, cultural heritage, books, and literature are the most popular manifestations of the creative culture in Addis Ababa. The city has a strong emerging fashion industry, with Hub of Africa Addis Fashion Week having witnessed the growth of the industry, the designers, and the recognition of Africa as a true destination for sourcing manufacturing, textiles, leather, labels, and more.

Funding models and government policies which do not see the creative industries as important have been raised as a challenge for the sector. There is a need for greater understanding of culture, its role in society and its potential to promote development. Threats to culture in the city are inequality and poverty, and access to skilled professionals, so education and job creation are key. In particular, digital access and skills development are limited – in an increasingly globalised world that is fast embracing technology and seeing creatives work more on digital platforms (particularly post-Covid), the limited and relatively inaccessible online and digital opportunities in Addis Ababa need to be addressed to help the sector grow and avoid missed opportunities.

Addis Ababa has a number of significant cultural venues, institutions and events, including museums and historical monuments like the National Museum of Ethiopia, the Statue of Emperor Menelik II, and the Tiglachin Monument, various local markets, contemporary events such as Design Week Addis Ababa, Hub of Africa Fashion Week, and the East Africa Art and Cultural Festival, and other initiatives like the Fendika Cultural Centre and Numma Consultancy Services (which focuses on socio-economic development through culture, arts, tourism and education). There is a predominance of religious and heritage/historical infrastructure, resulting in opportunities to grow visibility of contemporary art offerings.

Addis Ababa has the makings and potential for a thriving arts and cultural industry, armed with creatives known to produce high quality and competitive creative goods, its rich history, high population, and infrastructure readily available. If well-coordinated, its creative economy could be a force to be reckoned with based on its unique and authentic offerings. For the city to realise this potential, there is a need to start from the basics: working towards crafting a better understanding of the creative and cultural industries and their potential to promote development, professionalising the sector, improving support for the informal sector, and allocating the necessary resources needed to strengthen this crucial sector.

State of cultural policy and positive indicators for culture in the city:

The Ministry of Culture and Tourism in Ethiopia is responsible for researching, preserving, developing, and promoting the culture and tourist attractions of Ethiopia and its peoples, and has been actively engaged. At city level, a cultural policy for Addis Ababa is currently in development.

There is great potential for growing understanding of culture and its role in society, particularly its role in supporting development, including skilled jobs. Research underscores the importance of the creative economy towards overall state economies, contributing to employment and job creation, tax income and promoting overall well-being, which is a positive indicator for culture to contribute to easing poverty and unemployment in the city. Better advocacy is needed, as well as new policy initiatives which will require resource allocation and support from city government. Interest in the creative industries and appetite to participate in regional and international networks is strong.
Cape Town, South Africa

Geographical area: 2,455 square kilometres

Total population: 4.89 million (2023 estimate)

GDP per capita: USD 4,836.85 (2021); national is USD 6,776.50 (2022)

Main industries: The city’s economy is driven by five main sectors: manufacturing, finance, tourism, agriculture and construction.

Languages spoken: The most common languages in the city, also national official languages, are Afrikaans, Xhosa and English. Afrikaans is the most spoken home language in Cape Town, but with the city being a melting pot of cultures and nationalities, a common language is essential in bridging the language barrier, and most people are able to converse in English.
Cape Town is one of the most culturally diverse cities in the world. It is recognised as a leisure destination of note and a gateway to Africa with easy access and an enabling environment where traditional and modern cultures co-exist. The city boasts several arts, cultural and heritage sites, such as the Artscape Theatre Centre, iZiko Museums, Robben Island, UCT Michaelis Galleries, Zeitz MOCAA, among others, as well as the iconic V&A Waterfront which house the Watershed, a local vibrant craft and design space. Cape Town is an exciting cultural destination for both local and international tourists, and was voted one of the best places to visit in the world in 2014 and in 2016.

The city is also home to world renowned academic institutions, abundant creative talent and a vibrant arts and culture scene. The city is the first in Africa to be named a UNESCO Creative City of Design in 2017, acknowledging the city’s commitment to promoting and developing the cultural and creative industry.

Cape Town’s reputation in the creative industry is reinforced as the host of several major regular visual arts and design events with a growing international footprint, including Design Indaba, Open Design Festival, Investec Cape Town Art Fair, Cape Town Fashion Week, Decorex Cape Town, Cape Town International Animation Festival, the South African Eco Film Festival, and more. The city is also home to the largest film industry in Sub-Saharan Africa, where R5 billion injected into the industry created more than 35 000 jobs and the city issued over 3 900 film permits in the 2022/2023 year.

Culture in Cape Town has evolved from shared belief and community identity to its use for expression. Culture is also acknowledged as a key player within the economic front, with job creation being one of the key elements informing policy and programming. However, culture is still associated with social status, and the legacy of colonialism still shapes the...
city’s cultural landscape and perceptions around art. As such, there is a need to promote equitable access to culture and creative spaces in the city to demystify the sector and open it up to wider audiences.

There is also tremendous opportunity to improve understanding of culture and funding models to help creatives reach their full potential, as culture is not always prioritised in Cape Town, and funding is limited and often focuses on the end result rather than development.

State of cultural policy and positive indicators for culture in the city:

Cape Town actively works with the creative sector and is one of the few cities in Africa with a cultural policy at city level, the Arts Culture and Creative Industries Policy, established in 2014. The policy draws attention to the importance of the culture and creative industry, and facilitates the allocation of resources (human, financial or services from the city and infrastructure) towards supporting culture and creative industries.

In addition, it is aligned with other existing policies such as the Integrated Development Plan, OneCape2040, Social Development Strategy (2013), Economic Growth Strategy (2013), Cultural Heritage Strategy (2005), Cultural Heritage Tourism Strategy and Action Plan for Cape Town (2013), and the Western Cape Design Strategy (2013). This indicates that joint policymaking is happening across city departments, an atypical approach which ensures that culture does not sit in a silo. This has worked well in creating an enabling environment that promotes partnership between all stakeholders.

Cape Town is part of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, thus considered a thought leader for culture, incorporating cultural expression and creativity into the core of realising sustainable urban development. Cape Town city has gone a step further by designing policies that not only acknowledge the potential of culture and creative industry in economic development, but also aim to support the sector by allocating the necessary resources to make this possible.
Dakar, Senegal

Geographical area: 110 square kilometres

Total population: 1.5 million (2022 estimate)

GDP per capita: USD 1,438 (2019), national is USD 1,606 (2023 estimate)

Main industries: Dakar concentrates 80% of the economic activities of Senegal (with a national economy driven by mining, construction, tourism, fishing and agriculture) and is a hub for shipping and transport in the region. The tertiary sector has grown in line with urbanisation, so Dakar also houses headquarters of large companies and major financial and banking institutions, which serve all of Francophone West Africa.
Culture and creative industries in the city:

Dakar is a UNESCO Creative City of Media Arts and a member of the Organisation of World Heritage Cities. The city hosts large cultural and creative industries events including the World Festival of Black Arts, Dak’Art (Dakar’s Biennale of Contemporary African Art), Dakar Carnival and Dakar Fashion Week (Africa’s longest-running fashion event).

The city has a relatively well-developed cultural infrastructure, particularly in terms of museums, galleries and theatres, such as the Théodore Monod Museum of African Art, the National Gallery of Art, the Daniel Sorano National Theatre, the Grand National Theatre, the Maison de la Culture, and the Maison des Cultures Urbaines. While there are some private and public workspaces for creatives (such as Village des Arts for visual artists), distribution of creative products occurs mostly through small-scale informal mechanisms, such as shops, galleries and open-air markets. There are a several cultural centres and creative hubs, including the Centre Culturel Blaise Sengor, Raw Material Company, Kër Thiossane, and Dakar Design Hub.

International agencies, in particular Francophone ones, have been active in culture-led developments of Dakar. Cultural institutes, such as the Institut français, the Goethe-Institut, the British Council and the Instituto Cervantes, tend to provide venues and platforms for creatives to showcase their work and offer training or sector specific workshops. This has helped shape various industries, including Dakar’s globally influential music industry. There is great opportunity to formalise the economic side of these industries, and develop ways of generating revenue.

Dakar ranked eighth overall in Africa’s Creative Vibrancy Index, seventh for cultural vibrancy, sixth for enabling environment, and eighth for creative economy.

State of cultural policy and positive indicators for culture in the city:

Senegal has a long history of promoting arts and cultural activities, especially in its cosmopolitan capital Dakar. Entrepreneurship is generally a top priority of the national government. In recent years, Senegal has taken further
steps to enhance the development of the creative sector through the national Ministry of Culture and Cultural Heritage and its 'Direction des Arts' by offering grants to the sector, improving infrastructure and legislation, and setting up the intellectual property agency (Société Sénégalaise du droit d’auteur et des droits voisins) in 2017, with the aim to improve the status of artists, including a national health insurance for them.

In 2014, the city of Dakar started the process of formulating a cultural policy, under the initiative of the then very active Head of Culture and Tourism, based on consultations with a variety of cultural stakeholders. In line with national priorities, this was mainly driven by a focus on job creation, entrepreneurship and economic development, centred on supporting creation and distribution, training cultural actors, and encouraging private initiatives. Thus far, provision of infrastructure has been slow to develop, and the recruitment of qualified cultural mediators is yet to be enacted, but the city’s official website promotes key heritage sites, monuments and museums, and the city offers a ‘Fonds d’Appui aux Initiatives Culturelles Privées’ (a support fund for private cultural initiatives, contributing to cultural project implementation in Dakar, which had a budget of 150,000,000 CFA francs, about USD 250,000, in 2022). Dakar also joined the UNESCO Creative Cities Network to unite digital technologies and art, support creators and ensure they have access to digital tools, encourage the population to adopt digital technology, and contribute to enhance the local creative economy.

To help the Dakar creative and cultural sector reach its full potential, a clearer city vision for and understanding of culture is needed, as well as improved education and training opportunities, greater market accessibility, and development of taxation and import policies that support local production of textiles and other goods.
Freetown, Sierra Leone

Geographical area: 82 square kilometres
Total population: 1.3 million (2023 estimate)
GDP per capita: USD 1,079 (2018), national is USD 670 (2023 estimate)
Main industries: Freetown is Sierra Leone’s commercial and transportation centre, and its economy revolves largely around its natural harbour, the largest on the African continent. Main industries include food and beverage processing, fish packing, rice milling, petroleum refining, diamond cutting, and the manufacture of cigarettes, paint, textile, and beer. Exports include palm oil and kernels, cocoa, coffee, ginger, and kola nuts.
Culture and creative industries in the city:

Given that Freetown is still recovering from a civil war that went on for over a decade, there is a need for more cultural infrastructure in the city to be developed or redeveloped, and efforts to revive the city’s vibrancy are being implemented through reintroducing events/festivals and trialling new approaches to the festival culture directed towards attracting wider international audiences. The AfriCaribbean Festival is one such example which demonstrates how culture can promote tourism and generate income revenue for cities. Festivals that promote education, entertainment and exhibitions displaying local and diaspora artistic expressions are on the rise, such as the SLACfest. There is an evident bias towards festivals, as these are the most prominent manifestations of culture in Freetown, largely organised around specific holidays such as Easter, Eid al-Fitr, New Year’s Day, Independence Day, and others.

Cultural offerings in the city are heavily heritage oriented, including museums hedged on the history of the city and the civil war (such as the Sierra Leone National Museum, the Peace Museum and Memorial, and Freetown’s National Railway Museum), and religious cultural offerings (such as the Freetown Central Mosque and the St George’s Cathedral Church).

Freetown’s tourism sector is an integral part of the city, which has a vibrant nightlife. The most outstanding feature of the country’s cultural life is its dancing. The internationally known Sierra Leone National Dance Troupe plays a critical role in mainstreaming, preserving and promoting Sierra Leonean culture and heritage within the country and internationally. Masquerades, festivals, and theatre/plays are some of the ways that culture is embodied and enjoyed around the city. There is an interest in re-writing the people’s history and a keenness to be more creative in knowledge creation, education and tapping into the creative economy.
State of cultural policy and positive indicators for culture in the city:

Freetown does not appear to have formalised cultural policy, but the Minister of Tourism is active and promotes the Freetown cultural programming nationally and locally, and the Freetown Mayor and city officials have been actively involved in the fashion industry, as evidenced by the launch of the Freetown Fashion Design and Creative Arts Network in partnership with the Overseas Development Institute and other established fashion houses in 2020. The initiative is set to promote skills sharing and transfer, promote partnerships and collaborations whilst supporting the overall development of the creative industry.

The impact of the creative economy on the overall gross domestic product is yet to be fully measured and supported by hard data through research initiatives; fortunately, entities such as the British Council, World Bank, Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (Germany) and others have shown interest in investing in such research and the creative industry. At this rate, growth of the creative industry in Freetown is imminent.

There is growing knowledge and understanding of the potential of the cultural and creative industries, with more investment in and initiatives around the development and strengthening of the creative sector being initiated. The potential of the creative sector to produce art, promote expression and co-create cultural products that attract tourists, create employment and generate income is finally taking root, though more can be done to make the case for culture, develop adequate infrastructure and more responsive funding models, support better access to education and skills development (particularly in the digital arena) and establish a policy framework to guide, support, monitor and evaluate work being done within the cultural industries. Creative practitioners have also begun to organise themselves to better understand the landscape, coordinate on work being done and share information around other opportunities and funding.
**Harare, Zimbabwe**

- **Geographical area:** 940 square kilometres
- **Total population:** 1.578 million (2023 estimate)
- **GDP per capita:** USD 2,901 (2022); national is USD 1,376 (2023 estimate)
- **Main industries:** The economy is largely driven by finance, manufacturing, mining, agriculture, and tourism. Harare is the international trade centre for tobacco, maize, cotton, and citrus fruits.
- **Languages spoken:** The main native language groupings in Harare are Shona, Ndebele, and English. Shona is the most popular and widely spoken language, spoken by over 70% of the city’s population, followed by Ndebele spoken by at least 20% of the city. As a former British colony, English is also popular and is used in schools and for official business.
**UNESCO connections:**

One of Zimbabwe’s World Heritage List properties is the Great Zimbabwe National Monument, and its elements on the UNESCO Lists of Intangible Cultural Heritage are the Mbende Jerusarema dance and Art of crafting and playing Mbira/Sansi, the finger-plucking traditional musical instrument in Malawi and Zimbabwe.

**Culture and creative industries in the city:**

Harare has a diverse population and vibrant creative culture, with an impressive spread of offerings from theatres, galleries, music studios and more across the city, including the Njelele Art Station, Tsoro Arts and Social Centre, Chapungu Sculpture Park, First Floor Gallery, National Gallery of Zimbabwe, Shona Sculpture Gallery, Theatre in the Park, Reps Theatre, amongst others. Traditional music (such as mbira and marimba) and dance (muchongoyo) are popular in several performances. The city is also well known for hosting the Harare International Festival of the Arts, one of Africa’s largest international annual arts and culture festivals that showcases a diverse range of entertainment offerings such as music, dance, theatre, visual arts, crafts, etc., and enables cultural exchange between local and international artists. The fusion of traditional and contemporary style is visible in all facets of life, including the city’s architecture, fashion, art spaces, culture and more.

The vibrant culture that pulsates through the city offers the potential for future growth of the creative sector, which needs to be supported by an improved understanding of the role of culture beyond shared community identity and linkages to history and heritage - culture can also be a driver for development in society, with the potential to create employment, generate income, etc. Studies show that the creative industries contribute an estimated 6.9% of the national GDP, but more data is needed to accurately ascertain the impact of culture and creative industries within the overall city economy, and to advocate for and promote the sector. Several key actors, such as the National Gallery of Zimbabwe, National Arts Council, Alliance Française de Harare, Zimbabwe German Society/Goethe Zentrum Harare, Moto Republik, Culture Fund, UNESCO and key private stakeholders, are highly visible and are driving the cultural agenda in the city.

Harare ranked fifth overall in Africa’s Creative Vibrancy Index, eleventh for UNESCO connections:
cultural vibrancy, second for enabling environment, and seventh for creative economy.

**State of cultural policy and positive indicators for culture in the city:**

Harare does not have cultural policy at city level, but implements national policy. Although Harare ranked high as a culturally vibrant city with an enabling environment due to this national cultural policy, there remains a dearth of figures around the creative economy within the city, opening up opportunities for significant research in this area to provide clear insights on the role and importance of the cultural and creative industries and their potential impact on development in the city, as well as their role as a form of expression.

Zimbabwe has the second largest informal economy in the world, yet the informal sector has been criminalised by the Harare city council, which hampers the creative and cultural sector as a largely informal sector. As such, data is needed to demonstrate the benefits and contribution of the informal sector in order to influence policy reforms that can better support the creative and cultural economy and improve the quality of life for many within the city.

The Ministry of Youth, Sport, Arts and Recreation is visible and actively engaged with the creative space, and it has a history of working closely together with key stakeholders, as evidenced by the co-creation of the National Cultural Policy for Zimbabwe in 2015. This ministry appears to be involved in the new innovative trends around the creative sector, including but not limited to festivals and art fairs, while the Ministry of Home Affairs and Cultural Heritage is responsible for heritage sites. This separation places arts and culture in a precarious position, particularly given the socio-economic and political context of the country, so cooperation between the two ministries is vital to ensure culture in Zimbabwe, and Harare in particular, reaches its full potential.
Johannesburg, South Africa

Geographical area: 1,645 square kilometres

Total population: 5.77 million (2023 estimate)

GDP per capita: USD 20,100 (2014); national is USD 6,776 (2022)

Main industries: Johannesburg’s economy is dominated by four sectors: financial and business services, retail and wholesale trade, community and social services, and the manufacturing sector.

Languages spoken: The official language of Johannesburg is English, and since the city is home to a large number of people from all over the world, a number of other languages are also spoken in the city, including Xhosa, Zulu, Tswana, Sotho, and Afrikaans.
Culture and creative industries in the city:

Johannesburg is arguably one of the most diverse cities in the world from a cultural, linguistic, and artistic perspective, presenting endless possibilities for the growth and development of its creative economy, and contribution to South Africa’s economy through tourism and job creation. Johannesburg has a strong association with the arts, and the city benefits from South Africa’s position as one of the few countries on the continent with an active investment, funding and developmental programme in the creative and cultural industries.

The city boasts three municipal-owned theatres (Joburg Theatre, Roodepoort Theatre, and Soweto Theatre), the Johannesburg Art Gallery, the Johannesburg Public Library, several arts community centres in Soweto and Alexandra (including Uncle Tom’s Community Centre which is currently being upgraded, and the Mofolo Art Centre), a number of cultural and heritage precincts (including Newtown and Credo Mutwa Village), and several museums and heritage sites (including Museum Africa, Hector Pietersen Museum, Bensusan Museum of Photography, Geology Museum, Ditsong National Museum of Military History, and James Hall Transport Museum). In addition, Johannesburg’s diverse heritage is celebrated through programmes such as the annual city-sponsored Arts Alive festival and Johannesburg Carnival. Johannesburg is also rich in academic, private sector and non-profit infrastructure across the creative and cultural sectors, including museums, galleries, studios, theatres, hubs, etc.

Gauteng’s audio-visual industry contributes in excess of ZAR 2.5-billion (over USD 132 million) to the province, and more than 70% of the national filming and television industry is based in Gauteng, mainly in Johannesburg, which is also the country’s primary broadcasting hub for international television and radio.

Several key international organisations are active in Johannesburg and support arts and culture here: Goethe-Institut,
British Council, Pro Helvetia, French Institute, Alliance Française and Music in Africa Foundation.

Johannesburg ranked first overall in Africa’s Creative Vibrancy Index, third for cultural vibrancy, first for enabling environment, and fifth for creative economy.

State of cultural policy and positive indicators for culture in the city:

South Africa has a national cultural policy, the White Paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage, with provincial and municipal structures that incorporate aspects of the policy and its implementation - Johannesburg itself has implicit cultural policies, but they are not documented in a single policy or strategy document.

The State supports cultural development primarily through its national Department of Sport, Arts and Culture, and through its National Arts Council, National Film and Video Foundation, National Heritage Council, South African Heritage Resources Agency and other state-owned or state-funded entities. The Arts, Culture and Heritage Department within the City of Johannesburg aims to ensure the city is positioned as a creative destination of choice, and is committed to changing the face of Johannesburg by creating an enabling environment for culture to thrive, as well as ensuring all communities within the city are provided with creative and cultural outlets and access to galleries, museums and the like. The Directorate plays a critical role in economic, social and urban regeneration and in developing human talent through the vision of Johannesburg as a creative city, and its creative industries strategy is a powerful way to enhance the city’s profile, identity and distinctiveness, while simultaneously creating employment, developing human skills and promoting social cohesion.

Culture in Johannesburg can be further developed by improving resource allocation, developing new talent and market opportunities, and growing understanding of the value and role of arts and culture.
Kampala, Uganda

Geographical area: 189 square kilometres
Total population: 3.8 million (2023 estimate)
GDP per capita: USD 2,655 (2017); national is USD 964 (2022)
Main industries: The financial sector drives Uganda’s economy, and Kampala is its financial and economic centre. Due to its thriving agricultural position, Kampala is responsible for the country’s export of coffee, cotton, tea, tobacco and sugar. It also offers a vast array of businesses specialising in food, metal products and furniture, as well as a tractor-assembly plant. Kampala possesses a flourishing informal economy in the areas of transportation, trade, and recycling.
Culture and creative industries in the city:

Many of Kampala’s inhabitants hail from neighbouring African countries, as well as India and China, adding to its rich cross-cultural and multi-faceted population. Uganda’s ethnic art attracts the attention of many collectors from around the world and therefore assists with the generation of revenue for the country. These art pieces are made from a variety of materials – they may be carved out of wood or made from working iron, and ceramics and batik (textile painting) are other notable forms of ethnic artworks that are sold.

Since traditional/cultural institutions were abolished in 1966 and only re-instated in 1993, Uganda’s cultural sector is fairly young and still developing as a player within the country’s economy. Having said that, Kampala is rich in cultural institutions and infrastructure ranging from museums to theatres, video booths (found throughout towns and smaller rural trading centres screening a variety of films), galleries, cultural centres, and hubs. Examples include the Uganda Museums, Uganda National Cultural Centre (including the National Theatre), Goethe Zentrum Kampala, Bayimba Centre for Visual and Performing Arts, Circular Design Hub, KQ Hub, MoTIV, Innovation Village, African Writers Trust and Ndere Cultural Centre. Kampala also hosts several cultural and creative industry events and festivals such as Kampala Design Week, KLA ART, and the Nyege Nyege Festival.

In 2021 it was reported that copyrighting is at the core of a large portion of the cultural industries within Uganda and, since 1986, cultural industries have noted consistent growth within the country. In addition to several notable Ugandan writers, the tradition of oral storytelling also remains popular.
State of cultural policy and positive indicators for culture in the city:

Kampala's cultural policy is limited in scope, covered within the Directorate of Gender and Community Services and Production only as part of sustainable socio-economic programmes for youth focusing on creating opportunities of entrepreneurship, financial management, livelihood, partnerships and culture.

At national level, Uganda's Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development formulated a Cultural Policy in 2006, which was submitted for review in 2019. Government aims to support the cultural sector by way of technical assistance where possible, as well as through cultural exchanges, and in 2012, a regional conference was held in Kampala to discuss how art and architecture can be used to make the development of the city not only inclusive but also sustainable. The National Culture Forum works to promote arts and culture within the country; other than this, it is mostly private cultural institutions promoting and developing the sector.

There is growing youth involvement in the creative and cultural sector in Kampala, and clear passion and drive for the preservation and promotion of arts, culture and heritage in the city, shown through the number of private institutions, organisations and individuals lobbying for the sector. For it to grow, more attention needs to be directed at generating an appreciation for and understanding of culture (through reliable research and statistics, as well as greater media support); strengthening the commitment to preservation and promotion of local culture and cultural values; increasing access to education and skills development (particularly in the digital sphere); improving policy development, strategy, implementation and resource allocation; refining funding models prioritising support for arts and culture in the city; and building collaboration between political and technical departments.
Kigali, Rwanda

Geographical area: 732 square kilometres

Total population: 1.25 million (2023 estimate)

GDP per capita: USD 2,865 (2017); national is USD 940 (2022)

Main industries: The main sectors driving the economy within the city are agriculture, fishing and forestry. Other sectors that contribute to the city’s overall economy are government, transportation, communication, manufacturing, finance and microfinance. Tourism currently provides an important input to the economy as well.

Languages spoken: Rwanda has 4 official languages, the first being Kinyarwanda. Following this would be French and then English, with Swahili/Kiswahili being used in most commercial centres.
Culture and creative industries in the city:

Rwanda’s creative sector is predominantly driven by tourism, conferences and exhibitions. Improvements in infrastructure, coupled with the increasing number of destinations being offered by RwandAir, have given the country and the city of Kigali opportunities to host more such events that garner international attention.

Kigali hosts many talented individuals and a variety of offerings and infrastructure when it comes to the creative and cultural sector. Heritage sites, museums and galleries include the Kigali Genocide Memorial, Rwanda Art Museum, and Inema Arts Center, among others. Live music can be enjoyed at spaces like One Love or Repub Lounge, and theatre offerings include Theatre for a Change. The city has a number of creative and cultural centres, hubs and platforms such as the Kigali Centre for Photography, Kurema Kureba Kwiga – KomezArt, Goethe-Institut Rwanda, Envision Rwanda, Indiba Arts Space, Ishyo Arts Centre, L’Espace, Maison Beaulier, Mashirika Performing Arts and Media Company, Niyo Arts Center and the Rwanda Arts Initiative. Some noteworthy events hosted by the capital are the Africa in Colors Festival, East African Nights of Tolerance Festival, Ubumuntu Arts Festival, and Kigali Photography Festival. The creative sector also contributes to Kigali’s informal sector through the sale of handicrafts and basket weaving, as can be seen in initiatives like the city’s Agaseke Promotion Project.

For the creative and cultural sector in Kigali to reach its full potential, there is a need to make artistic spaces more financially accessible; ensure cultural institutions are more inclusive of the communities that they serve; grow support for smaller and emerging cultural organisations, including start-up financing; increase access to education and skills development in the sector, also with regards to advancing technological tools used to create, share and experience art; and promote creative collaboration.
State of cultural policy and positive indicators for culture in the city:

Kigali does not appear to have any written cultural policy, but culture is covered in the City of Kigali Master Plan 2050, so there is a level of strategic planning with regards to culture. The plan outlines goals and strategies for Kigali as a creative city, with key themes including tourism and culture, vibrant city, and heritage. Some notable strategies include reviewing, incorporating and supporting tourism; improving ICT accessibility and connectivity; building an online presence; creating more public spaces to showcase cultural and tourist activities; identifying and providing mixed use nodes and entertainment areas; creating a “24 hour city where people live-work-play-create”; developing heritage precincts; and preserving culturally important sites.

Prior to this, the 2002 Kigali Economic Development Strategy also saw culture included within tourism, and the city intended to improve existing tourist attractions, develop new attractions and events, improve access to attractions, and expand staff training and marketing. Opportunities for growth in this sector exist, and the benefits of an expanded tourism and hospitality sector are significant in terms of creating jobs, expanding the tax base, generating spin-off development, and bringing outside income into the city. To achieve this, government needs to better understand and prioritise culture and its role in tourism. Furthermore, a greater emphasis on all facets of culture and its broader role in contributing to job creation, entrepreneurship and the economy, as well as its role in shaping society and identity, is also needed to maximise the potential impact of the sector and facilitate greater inclusion.

When it comes to the promotion of arts and culture within Kigali, most of the advocacy is led by private institutions and non-governmental organisations, though key government agencies involved in addressing culture in Kigali include the Rwanda Convention Bureau, Rwanda Governmental Bureau, Rwanda Cultural Heritage Academy, Rwanda Development Board, City of Kigali, and national Ministry of Youth and Culture.
Lagos, Nigeria

Geographical area: 1,007 square kilometres

Total population: 15.9 million (2023 estimate)

GDP per capita: USD 2,174 (2018); national is USD 2,513 (2023 estimate)

Main industries: Lagos State is Nigeria’s economic and financial nerve, with industry primarily led by manufacturing, financial institutions, and ICT (Information, Communications and Telecommunications). Lagos is also Nigeria’s aviation hub.

Languages spoken: English is the official language of Nigeria, and Hausa, Yoruba, Igbo and English Creole are also widely used. Lagos is dominated by the Niger-Congo linguistic group, comprising Kwa; Ijoid; Atlantic (Fula); Benue-Congo (Tiv, Jukun, Edo, Igbo, Igala, Idoma, Nupe, Gwari, Yoruba,
Culture and creative industries in the city:

An abundance of tourist attractions, coupled with the sheer volume of sub-nationalities, make Lagos an interesting and eclectic city where creative and cultural industries are given the chance to flourish. Lagos is the centre of the Nigerian movie industry, often referred to as “Nollywood,” and is also home to the country’s growing music industry. Nigeria’s creative and cultural sector is predominantly driven by tourism, and a number of tourist sites and pieces of cultural infrastructure are found within Lagos, ranging from historical sites, monuments and shrines pertinent to Nigerian heritage and culture; to theatres, museums, galleries, artistic and cultural spaces, centres, hubs and platforms, to sports arenas and environmental centres. These include, but are not limited to, the National Theatre, Iga Idunganran, Enu Owa Mosque, Seaside Cottage Theatre, Art Twenty One, Bloom Art Lagos, Jelosimi Art Center, Nike Art Gallery, Omenka Gallery, Revolving Art Incubator, Terra Kulture, Centre for Contemporary Art Lagos, Kona Hub, and The Tree House. Lagos also hosts a number of international fairs, exhibitions and events, such as ART X Lagos, Lagos Biennial, Lagos Photo Festival, Ake Arts and Book Festival, Lagos Fashion Week, and Eko Theatre Carnival.

Given that the creative sector is fairly young with regards to being recognised as an economic contributor in Lagos, there is still much growth to be had. Areas for development include greater recognition of the importance of culture to better prioritise the sector, better allocation of resources (including more space and funding), embracing digital transformation, fostering collaborative partnerships, and promoting socially engaging art. International agencies such as Alliance Française, British Council, and Goethe-Institut contribute to cultural developments within the city.

Lagos ranked third overall in Africa’s Creative Vibrancy Index, fourth for cultural vibrancy, ninth for enabling environment, and first for creative economy.

UNESCO connections: The UNESCO Read and Earn Federation (UNESCO REF) was founded in 2008 and is based in Lagos, and Nigerian properties on the World Heritage List are Osun-Osogbo Sacred Grove, and Sukur Cultural Landscape.

Efik, Ibibio, Anang and Ekoj; and Adamawa-Ubangi (Awak, Waja, Waka and Tula).
State of cultural policy and positive indicators for culture in the city:

The Lagos State Council for Arts and Culture is responsible for advising government on technical aspects of the National Cultural Policy, initiating principles for the development of institutional infrastructure, implementing international and governmental cultural agreements, and acting as a channel between the arts agencies of the cultural sector and the State Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture on professional matters relating to culture and the implementation of the National Cultural Policy. The policy aims to promote and present culture, preserve cultural heritage, establish an administrative structure, and facilitate provision of funds for its implementation, with a focus on design arts; cultural industries and heritage; performing arts; and research, publications, and documentation.

The Lagos State Film and Video Censors Board was established in 2004 to control and determine film content as conforming to the moral standards of people of the state. Since establishment, the Board has played a key role in maintaining the required standard and creating a conducive environment for the movie industry. Public-private partnerships have given rise to initiatives like Lagos Creative Academy.

Given the abundance of private entities within the creative and cultural industries, government support for the sector, and a fostering of public-private partnerships, the city’s creative sector is growing. With further prioritisation of culture, a greater understanding of the role and potential of culture, and addressing resource and skills gaps, the creative sector in Lagos has tremendous potential to make a substantial economic impact.
Nairobi, Kenya

Geographical area: 703.9 square kilometres

Total population: 5.3 million (2023 estimate)

GDP per capita: USD 6,561 (2017); national is USD 2,099 (2022)

Main industries: Kenya’s economy is mainly driven by the finance, tourism, construction and agriculture sectors, with the services industries establishing themselves as another key driver of growth. Nairobi city and its metropolitan region are at the heart of these developments, serving as a major regional commercial and service hub, with the regional headquarters of several African and international companies and organisations headquartered in Nairobi.
Culture and creative industries in the city:

Nairobi boasts a thriving and diverse creative and cultural sector, with important industries including film and television, radio, gaming, and publishing, and emerging sectors being graphic design and fashion - fashion is believed to be a major growth driver, and the textile industry is a part of transnational supply chains.

Nairobi’s cultural infrastructure is dominated by a few large national institutions (such as the Kenya Cultural Centre, Nairobi National Museum, and Kenya National Archives), and the city is also home to a number of other key institutions and organisations (mainly museums, galleries, venues for live music and multi-purpose auditoriums that are also used for theatre performances), as well as hubs, clusters and networks supporting the creative and cultural industries and implementing projects in the sector. Some notable examples include Sarakasi Trust, Railway Museum, Karen Blixen Museum, Bomas of Kenya (a cultural site including several auditoria and performance spaces, as well as a cultural village), Book Bunk and the McMillan Library, One Off Contemporary Art Gallery, Kuona Trust Visual Arts Centre, Nairobi Gallery, Circle Art Gallery, Nairobi Contemporary Art Institute, The GoDown Arts Centre, The Nest Collective, Pawa254, Nairobi Garage, IHUB, The Alchemist, Creative Economy Working Group, Association of Visual Artists and Collectives, and Placemaking Network Nairobi. The city also hosts several festivals such as the Nairobi Festival (Battle of the Choirs), East African Community Arts and Culture Festival (Jumuiya ya Afrika Mashariki Utamaduni Festival - JAMAFEST), Nairobi International Cultural Festival, and Africa Nouveau Festival.

In terms of international cultural cooperation, several key international cultural organisations are active and have their regional offices in Nairobi: Goethe-Institut, British Council, Pro Helvetia, Alliance Française, and UNESCO.

Languages spoken: There are two official languages, English and Kiswahili, though Nairobi is a multilingual city with residents usually speaking their mother tongues (such as Kikuyu or Maa) within their communities.

UNESCO connections: Kenya has several World Heritage properties (such as Fort Jesus, Mombasa, and Lamu Old Town) and elements on the UNESCO Lists of Intangible Cultural Heritage (such as Rituals and practices associated with Kit Mikayi shrine and Isukuti dance of Isukha and Idakho communities of Western Kenya).
Existing (though somewhat out-dated) data estimates the creative economy’s contribution to the national GDP will reach 10% by 2025, highlighting its potential to become a key catalyst for economic growth and development in Kenya. However, there is a need for more data about the activities, impact and value of the creative and cultural industries in Kenya, particularly related to their contribution to GDP, audience figures and cultural consumer profiles, cultural expenditure, cultural infrastructure statistics, etc. By creating links between urban development, the creative economy, technology and tourism, culture can be reactivated in the contemporary space, stimulating accessibility and transmission of culture and heritage. There is also a need for better legal regulation and representation, especially in contract and copyright law.

Nairobi ranked ninth overall in Africa’s Creative Vibrancy Index, sixth for cultural vibrancy, third for enabling environment, and eleventh for creative economy.

**State of cultural policy and positive indicators for culture in the city:**

Kenya has a National Policy on Culture and Heritage, and the Kenyan Constitution commits to recognising culture as the foundation of the nation, affirming that the state shall promote all forms of cultural expression, as well as the role of indigenous practices in the development of the nation. The Nairobi City County Cultural Heritage Act was passed to regulate, promote and protect cultural sites and activities, safeguard the culture of individuals and communities in the county and promote cultural diversity in the county.

Support for the creative and cultural industries by both national and municipal government and international organisations in Nairobi is often linked to tourism and the sustainable development agenda, focusing mainly on culture as an industry to achieve economic objectives, such as job creation and poverty reduction. There seems to be increasing political will and private sector awareness of the value and potential of arts and culture, especially in terms of economic development, job creation, the revitalisation of spaces and communities, and diversifying tourism. There is an opportunity to also link culture to the development of more cross-sectoral strategies and policies (including health and well-being, urban planning and development, placemaking and inclusive growth).

Experts argue that the current legislation at both national and local level and its implementation needs to be more responsive to changing local and international circumstances and better meet sector interest. Challenges around Intellectual Property rights, including indigenous peoples’ ownership, need to be addressed; existing laws need to be harmonised; the demand for creative goods and services needs to be sustained with more dedicated city development strategies and industrial policies; and documentation and data collection on the sectors’ activities, resources and impact is needed. National, regional and international collaboration and investments, as well as stakeholder engagement and public participation, could play a positive role in these developments.
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Artillery Gallery: attendee at an exhibition opening in March 2023 Image by Tami Zizhou (Opus Fotografi).