

# Beyond the Propaganda: A Critique of the 2016 Manifestos of the NDC and the NPP Towards the Creative Arts in Ghana

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## *Abstract*

Political parties in Ghana have been presenting their vision, aims, and policies in their manifestos in recent years. In the run-off to the 2016 general elections in Ghana, political parties launched their manifestos which contained promises covering various economic sectors. In this paper, I critique the 2016 manifestos of the two leading political parties in Ghana, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP), towards the creative arts. I employ a qualitative content analysis to examine the parties' cultural policy promises. The findings reveal a mixture of both explicit and implicit policies. Even though these political parties have great promises for the creative arts, they fail to enumerate when and how they are going to implement and finance such promises leaving them, ultimately, unfulfilled. I conclude that governments must give explicit explanations and provide concrete timelines to indicate when and how such political promises will be implemented.

Politische Parteien in Ghana haben in den letzten Jahren ihre Visionen, Ziele und Strategien in Manifesten präsentiert, die bei der Stichwahl zu den Parlamentswahlen 2016 veröffentlicht wurden und Versprechen für verschiedene Wirtschaftsbereiche enthielten. In diesem Beitrag analysiere ich die Manifeste der beiden führenden politischen Parteien, des National Democratic Congress (NDC) und der New Patriotic Party (NPP), in Bezug auf die kreativen Künste. Mit Hilfe einer qualitativen Inhaltsanalyse werden die kulturpolitischen Versprechen der Parteien untersucht. Im Ergebnis zeigt sich eine Mischung aus expliziten und impliziten politischen Maßnahmen, bei denen unklar bleibt, wann und wie diese umgesetzt und finanziert werden.

## *Keywords/ Schlagworte*

government / Regierung, cultural policy / Kulturpolitik, creative industries / Kreativindustrien, financing the arts / Kulturfinanzierung, culture / Kultur

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## Introduction

It is without a doubt that the creative arts play a major role in the political dispensation of many countries including Ghana (SCHAUERT 2015, COE 2005). Plageman (2013), for example, wrote extensively about how political authority engaged popular musical performances in Ghana (Gold Coast). The performing arts, for example, have been appropriated by various governments in Ghana for their political gains (BOTWE-ASAMOAH 2005). Shipley (2013) gave accounts of how president Rawlings was seen as a soul singer that influenced the Ghanaian youth towards rap music. Hardly is a political party's activity organized without the involvement of the arts in one way or the other (COLLINS 2009). This shows the importance of the creative arts in the political discourses in Ghana. Through the various arts agencies, state governments are supposed to see to the development of the creative arts as they contribute to the general economy by creating wealth and jobs (UNCTAD/UNDP 2008). Until recently, the various manifestos of the political parties in Ghana were silent on their plans towards the development of the creative arts industry in Ghana. In light of this silence, various governments rolled out intervention programs to support the growth of the creative arts or the creative industries.

In Ghana, the government provides minimal support to the creative arts or the creative industries (ARTWATCH 2017). The reason is partly attributed to the political changes that took place after the colonial rule (see AUSTIN 1964; RATHBONE 1979). After its independence in 1957, Ghana has gone through series of military rules (DARTEY-BAAH 2015; SCHAUERT 2015). Nkrumah, the president of the first republic (1960-1966), was overthrown by the Ghana armed forces led by Lt. General Joseph Arthur Ankrah. In 1969, Dr. Kofi Abrefa Busia became the prime minister of the second republic. Another military takeover took place in 1972 that ushered in General Ignatius Kutu Acheampong as the Head of State. Acheampong was replaced by F. W. K. Akuffo in a palace coup in 1978. The third republic was led by Dr. Hilla Limann as the president. Again, Limann was overthrown by the military junta led by Flt. Lt. Jerry John Rawlings in 1981. Rawlings became the first president of the fourth republic and occupied the office as president for almost twenty years (1981-2000) (see SCHAUERT 2015: 171-177).

With the institutionalization of a multiparty democratic system, fashioned within the framework of the 1992 constitution, Ghana has had

eight successful elections. Since 1992, there has been the possibility of a change in government, at least, every four years. The major political parties include the New Patriotic Party (NPP), the National Democratic Congress (NDC), the Progressive People's Party (PPP), the Convention People's Party (CPP), the People's National Convention (PNC), Ghana Union Movement, and the National Democratic Party (NDP). As far as elections within the fourth republic are concerned, the NDC and the NPP have emerged as dominant political parties, occupying power in turn (MORRISON 2004). Each government, however, assumes power with its own set of ideologies and policies with which they run the economy. These policies are mostly enshrined in the manifestos of the various political parties.

The NDC is a social-democratic party formed under the leadership of Jerry John Rawlings. The party was initially set up by Jerry John Rawlings as the Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC) in 1981 when he overthrew the government. Consequently, the PNDC banned and suspended all political party engagements. In 1992, the name of the party was changed to the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and won the multi-party elections in the same year under the new constitution. The party encourages equal treatment of the people of Ghana irrespective of their social, cultural, educational, political, religious and economic status. The NDC aims to promote participatory and inclusive democratic practices and responsible government in Ghana. On the other hand, the NPP is an offshoot of the United Gold Coast Convention (UGCC), the first political party that is said to have been dominated by rich individuals. These individuals sought to defile colonial practices that treated the local people unfairly economically. The UGCC became the United Party in 1950 and later in late 1960 as the Progress Party. In 1970, it became the Popular Front Party. According to the NPP, "the party's policy is to liberate the energies of the people for the growth of a property-owning democracy in this land, with the right to life, freedom and justice, as the principles to which the Government and laws of the land should be dedicated in order specifically to enrich life, property and liberty of each and every citizen" (THE CONSTITUTION OF THE NEW PATRIOTIC PARTY 2017). The party is described as a conservative political party. It is important to state that both the NDC and the NPP operate with similar structures. These political parties formulate policies to attract support, particularly votes, from the populace. According to Aryee (2009), political parties are not significantly funded by the state.

In this paper, I analyze the 2016 manifestos of the NDC and the NPP with a critical look at their political promises towards the development of the creative arts. I also examine previous political promises of these two political parties for the creative arts and how they were implemented. I do so intending to highlight the explicit and implicit cultural policy (AHEARNE 2009) of Ghana as inscribed in party political manifestos. I adopted a qualitative content analysis approach in my critique of the manifestos of the NDC and the NPP and what they promised to offer the creative arts. I also employed a qualitative policy analysis approach for the analysis of the 2016 manifesto documents focusing on the parts related to the creative arts.

I also selected and studied two creative arts institutions, namely, the National Theatre of Ghana and the Musicians Union of Ghana (MUSIGA). One policy institution was also included in the study, thus the National Commission on Culture (NCC). The National Theatre of Ghana is a public institution that is mandated to promote, preserve and educate Ghanaians through the creative arts. MUSIGA is a private association made up of musicians. The NCC is a governmental cultural agency that oversees arts and cultural activities in Ghana mostly through their regional Centres for National Culture (CNC). I used expert interviews to gather information from selected politicians and cultural policy experts as well as stakeholders within the creative arts sector in Ghana. The data were triangulated based on the analysis of expert interviews and the assessment of the qualitative documents against the delivery of the manifesto promises of both parties. I attempt to answer the question: What are the political promises of these parties towards the creative arts and their level of implementation?

In answering the question, I first conceptualize the creative/cultural arts industries and look at the historical trends of past governments and their contributions towards the promotion of the creative arts and its industry in Ghana. I, then, look at the components of the creative arts as enshrined in the manifestos of the NPP and the NDC. I finally discuss and analyze the 2016 manifestos and the promises towards the creative arts using the concept of explicit and implicit cultural policy. According to Ahearne, “a modern government’s explicit cultural policy [...] proclaims what it is doing for culture through its official cultural administration” whereas the implicit cultural policy is the “effective impact on the nation’s culture of its action as a whole, including educational, media, industrial, foreign policy etc.” (AHEARNE 2009: 144) Finally, I present

my conclusions and recommendations for the political parties in Ghana regarding the delivery of their manifestos.

### **Conceptualizing the Creative/Cultural Industries**

At the heart of the creative economy are concepts such as creative industries and cultural industries. According to De Beukelaer, “the cultural and creative potential of people and countries could be harnessed through the creative economy” (2014: 246). However, in a country like Ghana, transferring the rich cultural experiences into viable cultural industries is lurking making the use of the term potential simplistic. There are constraints to realizing the so-called potential in Ghana, for example, the limited budgetary allocation available to the cultural ministry (DE BEUKELAER 2015). The creative trident methodology by Higgs, Cunning, and Bakhshi (2008) suggests three areas or divisions of creative labor. These are the specialist mode, support mode and embedded mode. The specialist mode deals with “workers within a creative profession (determined by occupations) within a creative sector (determined by industries)” while the specialist mode deals with “workers in a non-creative profession within a creative sector” and the embedded mode dealing with “workers in a creative occupation outside the creative industries” (DE BEUKELAER 2014: 235-236). This means context-specific examples are important when dealing with the creative/culture industries dichotomy. It is important to state that the data presented by the Creative Economy Reports on the creative industries’ potential to generate wealth and create employment largely lacks reliability (DE BEUKELAER 2014). However, using the term culture covers several artistic and pro-cultural initiatives and attracts donors (STUPPLES 2014). That notwithstanding, the arts are seen as one of the most important means through which culture is understood and appreciated. Consequently,

in Ghana, a general appreciation of the term is slightly more positive, for example, in Africa, where the claim is made that there are creative industries in the city and country, this is usually followed by the clarification that they are not functioning properly. The effort to critically translate policy into practice and practice into policy is insufficient (DE BEUKELAER 2015: 72).

De Beukelaer and Spence (2019) have proposed a new term, the cultural economy that rather expands and contrasts the understanding of the cultural and creative industries. The cultural economy expands the

understanding of the cultural industries through cultural creation, dissemination and engagement. It contrasts the creative industries by contextualizing them as a cultural affair. The cultural economy is, therefore, defined as “the intersection of cultural and economic values across the full range of practices and institutions involved in cultural production” (O’CONNOR 2016: 5). I conceptualize the creative and cultural industries in Ghana within the framework of the cultural economy because these industries are influenced by several factors and cannot survive on their own. There are policy and stakeholder influences that either shape or distort cultural production, distribution and consumption. Therefore, like De Beukelaer and Spence, I argue that the term “cultural economy better equips us to analyze the political economy of cultural production, distribution, and consumption across the world” (2019: 7). It is important to define the creative arts in Ghana. They include the visual arts, performing arts and some technical crafts. Areas in the visual arts include sculpture, painting, furniture art, basketry art, graphic design, textiles, photography, publishing, fashion design and architecture. The performing arts deal with music, film, dance and theatre arts. The technical crafts include painting and decorating, carpentry, building construction and draftsmanship (see ARTWATCH 2017).

### **Past Governments’ Contributions Towards the Creative Arts Industry in Ghana**

After Ghana’s independence in 1957, various governments have contributed in diverse ways to the economy. One paramount area, however, has been the promotion of Ghanaian arts and culture. Kwame Nkrumah used the arts to project his ‘African personality’ concept. He encouraged the inclusion of traditional arts and craft in the Ghanaian education system. Nkrumah sought to revive the Ghanaian identity using the arts and culture (HAGAN 1985). This initiative by Nkrumah created a good foundation for the cultural economy in Ghana to thrive (SCHAUERT 2015). Nkrumah established arts and cultural institutions that impacted the cultural life of Ghanaians. The National Theatre Movement, the Arts Council of Ghana, and the Institute of Arts and Culture were some of the key institutions he established (BOTWE-ASAMOAH 2005) to promote Ghanaian culture (SCHAUERT 2015). Craft centers such as the handicraft school at Asanti Mampong, Ghana Textile Printing Company, Juapong Textiles, Kumasi Shoe Factory, the

National Art Centre and the Saltpond Ceramics were also established (ARTWATCH 2017).

Kwame Nkrumah initiated the idea of every community promoting its arts. This led to the development and the building of regional Centres for National Culture (CNC) where arts and cultural activities are promoted. However, he did not fashion out an explicit cultural policy despite his numerous cultural intervention programs (SCHAUERT 2015).

As stated earlier, the political instability in Ghana, mostly through coup d'états, led to several military regimes after Nkrumah until the fourth republic. With Jerry John Rawlings taking over as elected president in 1993 on the tenants of the Ghanaian constitution, he also contributed his quota towards the development of the creative arts. Rawlings saw the need to fall on arts and culture as a powerful tool for national development. For the first time in the history of Ghana, a detailed cultural policy was drafted during Rawlings' time (SCHAUERT 2015). In line with Nkrumah's vision, Rawlings' cultural policy agenda was predominantly showcased and championed through the use of the creative arts (COE 2005). To promote his cultural policy agenda, Rawlings established the National Commission on Culture (NCC) in 1989 and later the National Theatre of Ghana. In an online news item on <[www.myjoyonline.com](http://www.myjoyonline.com)>, a renowned music producer in Ghana, Mark Okraku Mantey (now Deputy Minister for the cultural ministry), remarked that "Rawlings' performance in the area of infrastructural development to support the creative arts in Ghana surpasses that of all the presidents who have ruled the nation in the Fourth republic" (KUMI 2016). He made this statement with the reason that Rawlings, as a president, saw the building of the National Theatre of Ghana, which is said to be the only structure dedicated to promoting the creative arts, at the national level, in Ghana. A similar news article on <[www.citifmonline.com](http://www.citifmonline.com)> read that "the National Theatre which was built by Flt. Lt. J. J. Rawlings' administration has since its establishment been the only auditorium for the creative arts. No government has been able to build another auditorium for entertainment programs [...]" (DADZIE 2017).

John Agyekum Kufour of the New Patriotic Party took over from Rawlings (National Democratic Congress) in the 2000 general elections and also contributed to the creative arts. As part of the Kufour administration to promote made-in-Ghana goods and to develop the local clothing or fabric industries, they rolled out the 'National Friday Wear' program to set aside Fridays for the wearing of locally designed fabrics produced and manufactured in Ghana. This was also "aimed at

projecting a unique Ghanaian identity through the extensive use of local fabric and designs as business wear” (GHANA NEWS AGENCY 2004). It was also during Kufour’s tenure that the Culture Policy document of Ghana was developed and fully published in 2004. The culture policy highlights the importance of the Arts and Culture Industry and how the state could support the industry in Ghana (NCC, 2004). In effect, a Culture Trust Fund was established by Kufour to aid in the promotion of culture in Ghana (SCHAUERT 2015).

In John Evans Attah Mills’ (NDC) term as president, he promised to institute art galleries, exhibitions and even to put up museums in every region in Ghana to redeem the country’s culture. According to Mills, “these institutions would be used for the collection of arts and artefacts for preservation and also constitute important complementing centers of education for the acquisition of knowledge on arts and crafts for historical purposes” (GHANA NEWS AGENCY 2010). This assurance was given during the National Festival of Arts and Culture (NAFAC) celebration that took place in Tamale in 2010. However, this political promise by the NDC since 2010 has not been fulfilled.

In the 2012 elections, John Dramani Mahama (NDC) became the president of Ghana and served a four-year term. Mahama is reported to be the first-ever president of Ghana to have set up creative arts funds towards the welfare of aging or aged artists in Ghana (GHANAPOLITICSONLINE.COM 2016). During his time as a president, he also supported creative arts practitioners with GHC 1 million, a fund that was given to the ministry of Tourism, Culture and Creative Arts and disbursed through the Ghana Cultural Forum (GHANA CULTURE FORUM 2012). The Ghana Cultural Forum is a network of cultural practitioners, activists and organizations whose aim is to affirm the cultural foundations of development in Ghana. It was initiated by the UNESCO-organized Consultative Forum on the power of culture in development.

The NPP under the leadership of Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo Addo took over as president in the 2016 elections. In the run-off to the 2016 elections, the NPP outlined major policies for the creative arts. These policies were enshrined in the party’s manifesto. It is important to note that the NPP was in power from 2000 to 2008 and the NDC from December 2008 to 2016. Currently, the NPP has been in power from December 2016 to date.



## The Manifestos of the NDC and the NPP in Perspective

The table below presents a summary of the NDCs' political promises from 2008–2012 (NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC CONGRESS 2012: 45–46).

<b>NDC Manifesto (2008)</b>	<b>NDC Manifesto (2012)</b>
Development of a working culture policy to situate arts and culture in Ghana's socio-economic development agenda	Rehabilitation of the ten regional CNCs
A legal and regulatory framework for the creative industry	Education: Enforcement of cultural festivals in basic and second cycle institutions
Provision and/or enforcement of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)	Enforcement of Intellectual Property Rights

Table 1: Manifesto promises of the NDC in 2008 and 2012 respectively  
*Source: The 2008 and 2012 manifestos of the NDC. (Own illustration)*

The political promises of the NDC summarized above clearly indicate that in 2008, the NDC sought not only to develop a dynamic and robust culture policy, but also a working one. This is quite revealing and only suggests that even though in 2004, the NPP launched the cultural policy document, its implementation has been a problem. Even in 2021, Ghana is still struggling with the implementation of its cultural policy (ASARE 2020). In Ghana, one of the major challenges faced by the creative industry is the protection of intellectual property rights. Copyright and patent issues continue to be major problems in Ghana. No efforts have been made by any government to see to the solution of this problem. Surprisingly it keeps appearing in the manifestos of political parties. A high-ranking government official who wants to remain anonymous argued in an interview with the author that,

the government established the copyright office and we have resource persons working there yet the creative industry players like the artists themselves do not register their works so there is no strategy for monitoring piracy. The point is the government can only do a little, but the greater part remains with those in the industry and how they want to work to push the government into helping them. (High ranking government official, personal communication)

One would have thought that in 2012 when the NDC was in power, they would have fulfilled some of these policies. But that was not the case. Creative artists continue to face a lack of support for their creative works. The promise of the rehabilitation of the regional CNCs has not taken place since 2012. Cultural festivals in basic and secondary schools currently in Ghana are yet to be improved. Its level of intensity keeps going down. It is surprising how the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, and Creative Arts is not collaborating with the Ministry of Education in Ghana, yet expects educational policies to take the creative arts into serious consideration. The Intellectual Propriety Rights have not been enforced.

The table below highlights the political promises of the NPP in 2008 and in 2012 and how they played out in their implementation. The NPP took over power from the NDC in 2000. They run the country from 2000 until the 2008 elections. It is, however, surprising that in their 2008 manifesto, they stated that they wanted to develop policies and plans towards the preservation and promotion of the arts and culture especially against the background that they had already developed the cultural policy document in 2004 that captured these aims. This clearly shows that the existing policy had implementation issues. Again, on the tenets of education as one of the pillars for the promotion and development of arts and culture, Ghana is still struggling as a country to have a policy that connects the two so they can work hand in hand. This was confirmed by a past Executive Director of the NCC who, in an interview with the author, stated that,

the NCC in collaboration with the basic and secondary schools started with what we call the school arts festival which is all about trying to create audiences for the next generation through arts education. These initiatives have been taken off and hardly do we see school arts and cultural festivals these days. The most critical is the fact that the creative arts subjects in the curriculum are minimal. Teachers spend less time engaging students in creative arts-related activities. (Past Executive Director of the NCC, personal communication)

<b>NPP Manifesto (2008)</b>	<b>NPP Manifesto (2012)</b>
Formulation and development of policies, plans, and projects towards the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage and arts and culture institutions	Support to creative artists and their practices towards wealth creation
The development of a national creative development plan	Provide infrastructure and institutions for the development of culture
Integration of Arts and culture in all school curriculums	Build a theatre in Kumasi for the northern sector
	Formulate a unified plan for Arts development
	Encourage the registration of works by Ghanaian artists and enforce anti-piracy laws for the industry to protect their works

Table 2: Manifesto promises of the NPP in 2008 and 2012 respectively. *Source: The 2008 and 2012 manifestos of the NPP. (Own illustration)*

It is interesting how the 2012 political promises of the NPP overlap with that of the NDC. The NPP promised to build a theatre in Kumasi, the second-largest city in Ghana, for the northern sector. To date, Ghana has only one National Theatre that was built by Jerry John Rawlings in Accra, the capital. A research expert at the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture postulated that,

arts and cultural infrastructure may be the priority of one political party but not of another. This retards the progress of arts and culture in this country because one government can begin with the building of a theatre but as soon as they are voted out of power, the new government that comes in does not continue with the projects of the previous government. This has been the problem with the arts and cultural sector. (Research Expert, MoTAC, personal communication)

In 2008 when the NPP was in power, they could not implement the political promise of fashioning out developmental policies towards the creative arts. The promise of formulating plans for arts development in 2012 was not implemented either. Again, the issue of intellectual property rights, copyright and patency keeps reoccurring but with

no solutions coming from political leaders despite highlighting this particular problem in their promises.

One of the factors attributed to the failure in the development of the creative arts and its industry has been the level of inaction on the part of the various political parties that assume power. However, in the build-up to the 2016 general elections in Ghana, arts practitioners were delighted to see that the manifestos of the two leading political parties in Ghana have sections allocated for the creative arts regarding how these political parties are ready to promote, develop and sustain the industry.

### **The 2016 Political Promises of the NDC**

The 2016 manifesto of the NDC is entitled ‘Changing Lives, Transforming Ghana’. The NDCs vision was to have “a peaceful, secure & prosperous nation, providing sustainable jobs through industrialization for transformation” (3). The manifesto was thematically grouped into four main headings:

1. Putting people first
2. Strong Economy for Jobs and Transformation
3. Infrastructure for Accelerated Development
4. Transparent and Accountable Governance

The second theme deals with the creative arts and culture in general. It should be stated that in the manifesto, the creative arts are not dealt with in isolation but rather tied to tourism and culture. I focus on the aspects related to culture and the creative arts as they resonate more with the issues I discuss. As a government in power, the NDCs 2016 manifesto highlighted the following achievements towards the creative arts:

1. The release of the GHC 1 million to creative arts practitioners and mandated the Ghana Culture Forum to disburse the same
2. Ratified seven UNESCO Conventions to ensure that the sector receives international recognition and support for its development
3. Encouraged the use of everyday local wear to promote our culture, create employment and market opportunities for producers and entrepreneurs (NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC CONGRESS 2016: 48–49).

The NDC stated several commitments in their manifesto that they sought to implement in the 2017–2021 term. The first of the NDCs promises was an implicit one that sought to increase the contribution of the creative arts to the GDP and to place the sector in a position capable of providing

sustainable jobs and wealth. The second was an explicit policy that aimed at completing the building of a National Science and Technology Museum. Moreover, they gave an explicit promise to reposition and rebrand the Pan African Festival (PANAFEST) and Emancipation Day celebrations as well as other festivals that attract international attention. The NDCs 2016 manifesto also promised to strengthen the NAFAC in Ghana and tighten the loose ends of both regional and national drama festivals for schools. Furthermore, they sought to complete the rehabilitation of all the ten regional CNCs. Again, they planned to create a conducive atmosphere for international collaborations between creative arts practitioners. One of the key promises of the NDC was to establish a Creative Arts Council that would see to the development of the arts. Moreover, they sought to make the funding of the creative arts even better as they already did so by providing GHC 1 million to support artists through the Ghana Cultural Forum and also promised to secure the future of aging artists by establishing a fund for them. Finally, the NDC promised to see to the establishment of a 'Film Village' by partnering with the private sector (NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC CONGRESS 2016: 49).

### **The 2016 Political Promises of the NPP**

The 2016 NPP manifesto is titled 'Change, an Agenda for Jobs: Creating Prosperity & Equal Opportunity for All'. The document has eighteen chapters with chapter seventeen dedicated to 'tourism, culture, and creative arts'. Even though the authors of the manifesto sought to address issues of tourism, culture, and creative arts together, they subdivided the chapter focusing on each of the three areas separately. My focus here is on culture and the creative arts rather than the tourism section. The NPP stated in the manifesto that Ghana has a rich culture and that is where the country's strength lies. They underscored in the manifesto that "our foods, our languages, our music, our fabrics, the rich colorful kente cloth, the smock, and the Adinkra symbols" give the Ghanaian a unique identity (NEW PATRIOTIC PARTY 2016: 170). The NPP, as part of its explicit cultural policies, promised to enforce the Copyright Act 2005 that sees to the protection of these symbols and designs and to tighten the loose ends of Intellectual Property Rights by creating a Division of the High Court in collaboration with the Chief Justice (NEW PATRIOTIC PARTY 2016: 172). They also planned to establish another

Copyright Office in Tamale to complement the efforts of the already existing ones in Kumasi and Accra.

The NPP's 2016 manifesto promised to make arts and culture more viable by promoting made-in-Ghana goods and services. In the manifesto, they also promised to establish a Creative Arts Fund to develop the sector. According to the manifesto, the NPP also wants to establish a Creative Arts Council to bridge the gap between the government and other stakeholders. The NPP stated in their manifesto that, they want to champion arts education by making it more effective than before. According to the manifesto, they want to achieve this by promoting regional and district-level competitions among schools and colleges in such areas as music, dance, drama, and literature. Lastly, the NPP's 2016 manifesto promised the construction of theatres in the other regional capitals except for Accra which already has the National Theatre.

### **Critiquing the Manifestos**

Dwelling on the policy cycle framework (JANN/WEGRICH 2007) as the analytical lens for this critique becomes necessary. The policy cycle is the study of both public policy (including cultural policy) creation and the corresponding government actions and inactions (JANN/WEGRICH 2007; RAMESH/PEARL 2003). The policy cycle framework proposes four interrelated stages, namely, emergence, formulation, implementation, and evaluation. Focusing on the emergence or agenda-setting stage, both political parties claim they have dialogued with stakeholders before coming out with their manifestos. The manifestos are, therefore, people-centered and the issues captured need to be addressed. A critical look at both manifestos shows that there are repetitions of political promises towards the arts. Indeed, this could suggest that such contents are to be revised and restructured. However, when little is done to deal with the repeated promises then it becomes problematic. This is what Artswatch (2017) describes as political parties and governments in power paying 'lips services' to the creative arts in Ghana. This is where the formulation stage becomes important. With the formulation of the promises, the best approaches towards the accomplishment of the goals are needed. The strategies needed to achieve the goals of the promises are missing in both parties' manifestos. Within the Ghanaian context, these political parties assume the leading role in the policy formulation process rather than experts. However, as argued above, these political parties have

stated that putting the manifesto promises together involved active citizen participation.

One important thing to note is the application of both the explicit and implicit notions of cultural policy and how they have been employed in the development of these political promises. Policies such as those of the NDC and the NPP that are enshrined in manifestos are meant to be “strategic courses of action designed to prescribe and shape cultural practices” (AHEARNE 2009: 144). This is where McGuigan (2004) draws the difference between ‘cultural policy as display’ against ‘cultural policy proper’. Cultural Policy as a display is the instrumentalization of cultural resources to champion political and economic agendas. The ‘cultural policy proper’ is that which facilitates the “democratic practices of art, culture and media” (MCGUIGAN 2004: 63). Therefore, explicit cultural policies are fashioned out by the state and the implicit cultural policies dealing with political strategies (MALTZAHN: 2017). I conceive these political promises as visions for culture which highlight certain frameworks into practices. These political promises are rather a display of the instrumentalization of the arts and cultural resources to facilitate the political agenda of these two political parties.

In as much as the explicit and implicit dichotomy in cultural policy is important, I argue that cultural policy in Ghana (whether explicit or implicit) should offer the citizens the cultural space to develop themselves. It must be stated that the two manifestos (NDC and NPP) overlapped in many ways though they had specific points of divergence. It is very clear from the analysis of both manifestos that the political parties acknowledged that there is a great potential of the creative arts for job and wealth creation in Ghana. Indeed, this has been the major issue that the NPP and the NDC sought to address. The titles and the contents of the manifestos centered on job creation for the people of Ghana. Similar to what the Creative Economy reports claim that Africa has a great potential for the creative arts, these manifestos also see this potential but present it more simplistically. If these political parties see this potential, then they should make the cultural sector investment-friendly to “turn the ‘rich cultural resources’ into flourishing cultural industries [...]” (DE BEUKELAER 2014: 246). This is where the implementation stage is required. At the implementation stage, diverse institutions and stakeholders are needed to plan how resources will be allocated and their joint decision-making drives the realization of the policy (JANN/WEGRICH 2015). Channeling a potential into reality takes the intervention of various actors, however, these political parties failed

to adopt this implementation strategy towards their promises. When it comes to the implementation of the political promises, the government of the day decides what to do, at what period and with specific budgets. Stakeholders are in most cases not involved in the final decision making.

Both the NDC's and the NPP's manifestos suggested that arts education is of paramount importance in Ghana. The two political parties recognized that arts education has not received much attention in terms of policy and even curriculum development. In the 1980s, for example, music was taken out of the school curricula because of an imposition from the IMF for Ghana to restructure and make adjustments to its programs (DE BEUKELAER 2014: 246). The NPP promised to arouse the interest of the youth, in particular, and promote arts competitions among schools and colleges in the areas of music, drama, dance, and literature at the regional and district levels. On the part of the NDC, they promised to rather focus on the regional and national drama festivals for schools and colleges. The NDC, however, sees the NAFAC as a tool for educating the populace and sought to strengthen such festivals including cultural programs related to youth and children.

Education, indeed, is the backbone of every country, therefore, this was a good plan from both the NPP and the NDC. However, in such policies, collaborations are crucial. Ahearne (2009) talks about the need for collaborations in the arts and cultural sector. The NDC failed to highlight the plans as to how they were going to fulfill such promises. Looking at the nature of the formal Ghanaian educational system and how arts and culture, particularly the performing arts are positioned, ideally there should be some form of collaboration between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Creative Arts to champion arts education. Most especially, collaborations between these two ministries and the private creative arts educational institutions to revamp and also strengthen their expertise will be paramount as Ahearne (2009) and Maltzahn (2017) argued. The manifestos were silent on such important initiatives and offered no practical approaches to solving the very problems they sought to address.

In terms of infrastructure, the NPP promised to construct theatres in all regional capitals. There is extensive literature on the need for adequate infrastructure for the arts and cultural sector (UNCTAD/UNDP 2010; MALTZAHN 2017). This will ease the pressure on the only National Theatre in Accra. The Accra International Conference Centre has now become a theatre though it was not built for such a purpose. The NDC, on the other hand, decided to build a National Science and



Technology Museum, which is long overdue, and also rehabilitate all the Centres for National Culture in all the ten regions of Ghana. This is also a step in the right direction as they will help promote grassroots arts and cultural participation. However, stakeholders within the arts and cultural sector have questioned the government's ability to fulfill such promises. In an interview with the author, a policy expert argued that,

the National Theatre is the only theatre in Ghana. We have tried to argue for regional theatres at the various CNCs. Some of them have not been completed and for me, that should tell you also about the philosophy of some Ghanaian governments on the issue of arts and cultural infrastructure. I have worked with different politicians and I can say for a fact that in the minds of some of them, culture is at times only an afterthought. (Policy Expert, personal communication)

In as much as these proposals are good, again, I think there is something important these political parties are missing out on. I believe such proposals should come with clearly defined timeframes that outline the realization of the suggested goals. Again, it would have been better if they had stated how such projects would be executed, how the project will be funded, or perhaps a partnership with private individuals and industry players. Such information would have helped determine the direction into which they would want to go and the seriousness which they will attach to the realization of such projects. As it stands now, no one can hold them accountable since they had not stated the timeframe within which they wanted to accomplish these aims and since they have not provided any action plan to that effect. In an interview with a top government official, he claimed that,

in our part of the world, the only way to hold our politicians accountable is for them to at least add timelines to the promises they give. Otherwise, the citizens cannot take them on. At least they need to state that certain arts and cultural infrastructure will be completed within this or that timeframe. Ghanaians have been taken for granted too much with politicians promising and doing nothing about it. (Government official, personal communication)

This assertion is corroborated with the claims made by Artswatch that politicians pay lip service to the promises they make towards the arts and cultural sector (ARTSWATCH 2017).

Both political parties were keen on the establishment of a Creative Arts Council. Of course, it is a step in the right direction as many developed countries have Arts Councils that see to the development of the arts and to foster a good relationship with governments (CHONG 2002). The general belief in Ghana is that having an Arts Council will serve as a platform to promote artists through funding and giving them

performance platforms. The president of MUSIGA posited that “having an Arts Council will not only benefit artists but will help preserve community culture, put up events for community artists and create awareness” (President, MUSIGA, personal communication). It is against this background that I argue for an Arts Council in Ghana. The NPP’s idea of the creation of the council was for the various art associations to fight for a common course, thus, arts development, and to see to the interests of their members. The NDC did not state any reason why they want to establish a Creative Arts Council. The NDC only stated that they wanted to establish the council and provide it with a secretariat. The reason for the need to create such a council was missing in their manifesto.

The need for the establishment of the Creative Arts Fund becomes necessary. For the NPP, the need to establish such a fund is to develop the sector into a modern standard while the NDC, having established the fund already in 2015 sought to enhance it and even establish another fund, “Provident Fund,” for aging artists. This I believe will go a long way to help various artists if it is implemented. The lack of funds available to artists is a source of disincentive to creative arts practitioners in Ghana. Both political parties, again, failed to state how and where such funds will be generated. The NDC did well by providing a million cedis in 2015 towards the fund but this was not enough looking at the size of the industry. As to whether it was sustained until they left power, is still a question that needs to be answered. The NPP gave such a promise without addressing it in their budgetary allocation. The amount allocated in the budget for the arts and cultural ministry continues to be inadequate (ARTWATCH 2017).

In Ghana, one important thing that has often not been enforced is the issue of copyright and intellectual property rights. Piracy is on its ascendancy in Ghana. Over the years, artists “have taken to the streets seeking redress for the failures of their countries’ legal systems to support creative activity effectively [...] resorting to noisy street protests and personal confrontations with pirates in Ghana [...]” (SCHULTZ/GELDER 2008: 79). They continue to argue, for example, that, “musicians contend that their livelihoods are being destroyed by rampant piracy, corruption and non-collection or diversion of royalties” (ibid). The NPP government wants to tackle the issues revolving around Intellectual Property Rights by creating a High Court Division with an enforcement unit that will see to that. The enforcement of the copyright laws by the NPP is very laudable. They promised to educate the public on copyright laws and collaborate with stakeholders to put in proper mechanisms for

the payment of royalties for creative artists and their works. I saw this manifesto promise as brilliant however there was no public education to that effect. The NPP has been in power since December 2016 and such issues have not been tackled yet. Indeed, “it would be more effective to concentrate on making the legal system, particularly copyright law, function more effectively...” (SCHULTZ/GELDER 2008: 80).

The NDC also promised to see to it that there are international collaborations for Creative Arts practitioners. This would not only enhance their capacity but also give artists a lot of exposure and experience. Finally, the NDC also promised to establish a film village in partnership with the private sector. With the local film industry booming in Ghana in recent years (MEYER 2010), this would have been a very good initiative on the part of the NDC. The desire for Ghanaians to see their own culture showcased through cinemas and films and telecasted on national television have been a major boost in the local film industry (MEYER 1999). In Ghana, the film industry is made up of two major streams – the English version known as the ‘Ghallywood’ and the Akan version known as ‘Kumawood’ (where they speak only the Twi or Fante dialect). It is argued that ‘Kumawood’ commands a greater number of followers who emplaces it as popular culture (YAMOAH 2014). That notwithstanding, I am yet to see a policy from the government that will seek to bring ‘Kumawood’ (local filmmakers) together with those in the mainstream ‘Ghallywood’ film industry. This will help boost the local market. The locals are able to relate more to the ‘Kumawood’ movies because they are shown everywhere. Therefore, issues about royalties are a big concern for the local filmmakers. Moreover, having a policy from the government will help with the passing of the film bill which has remained with parliament for over a decade.

The final stage, policy evaluation, is very important, because it is the stage where the policy is assessed by stakeholders. Here, aside from the usual formal evaluation process, “cultural policies are often subjected to informal evaluation through the analysis and appreciation of multiple stakeholders from the cultural community” (PAQUETTE/REDAELLI 2015: 64) and “cultural policy is also evaluated by the population, the media, and the artistic and cultural community” (PAQUETTE/REDAELLI 2015: 68). Policy evaluations help in ascertaining whether the objectives, impacts, and targets of the policy were achieved or otherwise. It is important to state that the evaluation stage should not necessarily occur as the last stage of the policy cycle. It should, instead, be applied to the entire policy-making process from several different

perspectives. It is within this evaluation framework that the critique of the manifestos of the NDC and NPP were situated.

### **A Look into the 2020 Manifesto of the NPP**

In 2016, the NPP was in power, and therefore, it becomes important to ascertain the level at which they were able to implement the policies they have enshrined in their 2020 manifesto. First, the NPP had promised, in 2016, to deal with copyright issues in Ghana by establishing another copyright office. Currently, the National Folklore Board of Ghana is in operation and they have to register all Kente and Adinkra Designs and Symbols. In as much as this is done, the performing arts are left out of copyright protection. Piracy of music and the performing arts, in general, is still a big problem for artists in the performing arts business. Secondly, the Creative Arts Council that the NPP had promised to establish in 2016, is fully in operation currently. Creative individuals have seen this implemented promise as helpful for the industry. Thirdly, the establishment of large theatres in all regional capitals has not been implemented. It is only one theatre in one of the regions that were renovated and not a newly constructed modern theatre as promised in the manifesto. On the whole, none of the promises on the Creative Arts Fund, Intellectual Property Rights and Arts Education have been implemented. However, governments in Ghana assume the position that once they have started something or done a bit of what they promised, it is a clear indication of their commitment, which I see as problematic.

### **Conclusions**

In this paper, I have looked at the historical trends of past governments and how they have contributed to the cultural economy in Ghana where there is an interplay of cultural and economic practices. It is within the cultural economy that the factors of cultural production, distribution, and consumption are manifested. I have critically analyzed the manifesto promises of the NDC and the NPP towards the creative arts since 2008, 2012 and 2016. I have brought out the political promises in my analysis and have critiqued the promises as enshrined in the 2016 manifestos of the NPP and the NDC. The analysis showed that there are explicit and implicit cultural policies and they all come to play in promoting the arts

and cultural sector. The analysis suggested that from 2008 through to 2016, these two political parties have been repeating political promises concerning the creative arts in their various manifestos. A situation that postulates that most of the political promises towards the creative arts are eventually not fulfilled and subsequently pushed or presented differently in the next manifestos. Even though there are both private and public stakeholders within the arts and cultural sector, the public (government) assumes the highest body in charge of the sector. Major decisions are taken by the government in power. Resource allocation, infrastructural development and funding become the responsibility of the government. Artwatch, for example, is an arts-based think-tank whose aim is to advocate for the better positioning of Ghanaian arts through various seminars, conferences and workshops. However, it is up to the government of the day to accept or decline whichever propositions stakeholders offer them. Once it is in line with their political ideology, the political parties may accept them into their policies. Once it does not follow through with its ideas, no matter how beneficial it might be to the sector, the sitting government may not engage with it at all.

From the above discussions, I conclude that, if governments will go by their manifesto promises and will not only be paying lip service to such promises, then the creative arts industry will thrive in Ghana. If such promises are to be fulfilled, it will give artists the hope and confidence to even do better by producing more. Unfortunately, over the years we have witnessed various governments giving a lot of promises without implementing the majority of such promises. It is also important that political parties give feasible promises within the tenure of office of their government. As argued by Aryee (2016: 95), “there is little time spent on how the policies and programmes in the manifestos would be financed, for instance, making each of them a wish list instead of a properly researched set of policy alternatives”. In a country like Ghana where corruption is on the ascendency and there is total distrust for political leaders, we can only see how feasible such promises are when they are given time frames in the manifestos within which they can be achieved. The NPP, for example, established, by an Act of Parliament, an office of the Special Prosecutor to independently investigate and prosecute corrupt practices involving public procurement issues implicating political officeholders and politicians (NEW PATRIOTIC PARTY 2016). The office of the Special Prosecutor was established in January 2018 under Act, 2017 (Act 959) of Ghana. For this reason, some scholars have argued that political

promises and engagements should target at making governments more transparent and accountable (ARTHUR 2009; DADDIEH 2009).

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