



Report

AI IN THE CREATIVE INDUSTRY:

Innovation, Ownership, and the
Future of African Creativity report

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1. Executive Summary

On August 6, 2025, YouthConnekt Africa (YCA) hosted an X Space conversation titled "**AI in the Creative Industry: Innovation, Ownership, and the Future of African Creativity**". The discussion explored how to ensure African ownership, protection, and innovation within an AI-driven creative economy, while also safeguarding the continent's rich creative heritage. The core objective was to center African creativity in the evolving AI landscape.

As part of YouthConnekt Africa's strategic engagement with youth and partners in the lead-up to the 2025 YouthConnekt Africa Summit, the discussion convened creative experts from diverse sectors. It was designed to educate, share experiences, and guide young Africans and entrepreneurs in the creative industries.

The discussion highlighted the urgent need to address existing gaps in policy frameworks, digital infrastructure, and ethical protections. The X Space brought together African youth, creatives, tech thinkers, and cultural advocates to ignite a dialogue that puts African voices at the center of innovation, policy, and digital rights. It aimed to empower young artists to become shapers of a creative economy that is their own, rather than simply spectators of AI's development.

2. Introduction and Background

The creative sector is a powerful engine for digital innovation and youth employment, with the potential to generate over \$20 billion annually by 2030. However, it is on the verge of a significant transformation driven by AI.

In 2024, according to BBC Tech, AI tools were used in the production of over 47% of new music globally, meaning nearly two out of every five songs were influenced by artificial intelligence. In visual media, CNN reports that over 60% of film studios rely on AI for pre-visualization workflows. While these tools accelerate creativity, they also challenge long-held ideas about authorship, originality, and cultural ownership.

The session featured a panel of experts: Hon. Minister Sandrine Umutoni, Minister of State for Youth & Arts in Rwanda, Mr. Samuel Sangwa, the Regional Director for Africa at CISAC, and Mr. Kenneth Gyang, a Nigerian filmmaker, writer, and co-founder of Cinema Kpatapata.

The conversation was about who gets to tell the stories, who owns the creative work, and how we protect the cultural richness that defines Africa. It examined the opportunities and challenges, while also exploring the threats that AI poses to creators' livelihoods, intellectual property rights, and the essence of human expression.

3. Key Discussion Points and Findings

Dual Nature of AI: A Tool for Progress, but with Necessary Safety Rail

The panel discussion emphasized AI being a potential tool to revolutionize the creative industry, but its benefits are not guaranteed. Its impact, whether positive or negative, depends on how we use it and the policies in place to govern it.

Honorable Minister of State Sandrine Umutoni's remarks reinforced this point, highlighting that AI's positive outcomes are directly tied to human oversight and regulation. She noted that AI offers great potential for the creative sector by reducing production costs and enhancing workflows, and decentralizing access to creative tools. However, she cautioned that these benefits can only be achieved if we understand how to use the technology effectively and have policies in place to protect the economic rights of creatives. This perspective highlights the urgent need for robust ethical and legal frameworks to ensure the rights and livelihoods of human creators are not compromised by technological advancements.

The AI and Intellectual Property Paradox: Innovation vs. Employment

The panel discussion highlighted a significant paradox at the intersection of AI, intellectual property, and employment. Mr. Samuel Sangwa's remarks illuminated the tension between AI's capacity to foster new forms of creation and its potential to disrupt traditional career paths within the same creative sector.

Mr. Sangwa described this as a paradox by noting that as some young people embrace AI to create new art, and at the same time, they may simultaneously be eliminating employment opportunities for others. He offered a clear example: companies that previously hired artists are now using AI to create their own content. This shift empowers non-creatives to produce the art they need, removing a crucial source of income and professional growth for young creatives.

This highlights the need to rethink intellectual property rights, fair compensation, and the future of work in the creative economy.

The Role of AI in Bridging Gaps in Creative Education

The panel discussion highlighted a unique and powerful role for AI in addressing the historical lack of formal creative education across many parts of Africa. This trend positions AI not merely as a replacement for human skill, but as an essential tool for decentralising knowledge and the creative process itself.

Mr. Kenneth Gyang's remarks described the current moment as an exciting time to have AI as a creative. He pointed out that in most parts of Africa, there has been a gap in education of creatives, a barrier that has long hindered aspiring artists. He further explained that AI is helping to fill this void, noting that some AI tools help people to understand the process of production.

This suggests that AI tools can serve as a type of virtual mentor, breaking down complex production processes into more manageable and understandable steps. For an individual who lacks access to a formal art or film school, a generative AI tool can provide a hands-on way to learn the digital skills required for production.

Developing a Foundational Position Paper

To proactively guide AI integration in the creative sector, Mr. Sangwa recommended commissioning a position paper. This paper outlines a strategic approach for African policymakers, ensuring AI's role is not detrimental to creativity but rather a tool for its advancement. By analyzing the current landscape and future trends, the paper would advocate for specific policy interventions and targeted funding. Ultimately, this foundational document would lead to a model legislative framework. This framework would provide African governments with a clear, actionable blueprint for regulating AI, addressing intellectual property rights, data usage, and the protection of artists.

Key Barriers to AI Integration in the Creative Industry

Inadequate Legal and Ethical Frameworks

A significant concern raised by the panel was the unsupervised integration of generative AI by young creators.

Honorable Minister of State Sandrine Umutoni directly articulated this barrier, stating that young creatives are "increasingly experimenting with Artificial Intelligence without adequate guidance, regulation, or legal protection."

This lack of clear guidance leaves young creators vulnerable. Their work may not be adequately protected under existing intellectual property laws, offering them little to no recourse if their creations are used without permission or compensation. The absence of established legal precedents and regulatory oversight creates an unsafe environment for individual artists and the broader creative ecosystem.

The Threat to Cultural Authenticity

The panel discussion highlighted the potential for AI to erode cultural authenticity. This concern goes beyond simple productivity and touches on the very core of identity and heritage. While AI is a powerful tool, it risks creating a disconnect from the unique cultural variation that defines African art.

Mr. Kenneth Gyang articulated this concern, stating that even if AI is effective in terms of productivity and outputs, it also creates a disconnect with the authenticity of Africans. This highlights how AI models are often trained on global or Western-centric datasets, which may not contain the depth or visual vocabulary necessary to produce culturally authentic African works.

As AI tools become more universal, they could lead to the integration of creative output, where the rich diversity of African art is flattened into a generic, digitally produced aesthetic. This poses a threat not only to the integrity of the art itself but also to the cultural heritage and storytelling traditions passed down for generations.

The Challenge of Policy Enforcement

The panel discussion highlighted a gap between established policies and their practical enforcement. While many countries have created legal frameworks to support the creative sector, their implementation is often limited.

Honorable Minister of State Sandrine Umutoni brought this issue to light. She explained that even when governments enact policies to protect the creative economy, there is an issue of enforcement. As an example of this broader trend, she pointed specifically to the challenges of intellectual property (IP) enforcement. This means that creators, despite having legal rights, face significant challenges in protecting their work from unauthorized use, plagiarism, and piracy.

Without consistent prosecution of violations, the legal system's ability to deter misconduct is weakened, creating a sense of impunity for those who violate copyrights and other IP rights. For creators, this makes it difficult to earn fair compensation from their work, which is easily reproduced and distributed without permission. Ultimately, this barrier undermines the economic viability of the creative

sector, discouraging investment and hindering its potential to become a sustainable source of income.

Recommendations

Establishment of Creative Hubs

Kenneth Gyang recommended creating multi-functional creative hubs. These spaces would serve as a central point for filmmakers, tech companies, and other creatives to gather, learn, and collaborate.

By providing a curated collection of AI tools, resources, and educational materials, these hubs would empower artists to understand and apply new technologies. Crucially, they would facilitate direct interaction between developers and artists, fostering a new culture of co-creation and ensuring that human creativity remains at the forefront of technological innovation.

Strengthen Legal and Policy Frameworks

To ensure the creative industry's long-term sustainability and protect artists' rights, governments must establish and effectively enforce clear policies. This recommendation involves two approaches: policy creation and on-the-ground enforcement.

Governments should develop specific policies addressing the unique challenges posed by AI, particularly concerning intellectual property and data usage. This means crafting regulations that clearly define the legal status of AI-generated works and fair use of copyrighted material for training AI models.

These policies must be supported by enforcement mechanisms. A lack of effective implementation on a ground level undermines even the most well-intentioned laws. Governments should invest in systems and resources to monitor and address copyright infringement, data privacy violations, and other forms of exploitation. This will create a secure environment where creators feel confident their work is protected, encouraging them to innovate without fear of their rights being violated.

Conclusion

AI presents a dual reality for Africa's creative industry, offering immense opportunities for progress while also posing significant challenges. It can democratize

creative tools, reduce production costs, and bridge educational gaps, but this progress comes with a paradox: AI can create new forms of art while simultaneously threatening traditional creative careers.

The discussion identified several key barriers, including the risk of AI eroding cultural authenticity due to its training on Western-centric data, weak legal frameworks, and, most importantly, the limited enforcement of existing policies.

To harness AI's full potential, stakeholders must proactively address these issues. This requires strengthening and enforcing legal and ethical frameworks while also empowering young creators through new collaborative hubs. This approach will ensure technology serves to amplify, not undermine, the continent's rich creative heritage.