

FROM CULTURAL LIBERATION TO CREATIVE AND CULTURAL INDUSTRIES: CABRAL'S LEGACY AND ECONOMIC AUTONOMY IN LUSOPHONE AFRICA

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Abstract

This research reconceptualizes Amílcar Cabral's theory of "cultural liberation" by situating it within the contemporary emergence of Creative and Cultural Industries (CCI) in Lusophone Africa. Cabral argued that culture constitutes not only the foundation of collective identity but also a driving force for political liberation. This proposition provides a critical theoretical starting point for understanding how culture can be transformed from a resource of resistance into a strategic pillar of post-colonial state building. Drawing on Frantz Fanon's decolonial theory, George Yúdice's framework of the instrumentalization of culture, and Carlos Lopes' discussions on Africa's creative economy, this article conceptualizes culture as a field where legitimacy, autonomy, and development intersect. Building on this perspective, the article proposes an analytical framework that connects cultural identity, CCI, and economic autonomy, extending Cabral's concept of cultural liberation into contemporary post-colonial development practices. Drawing on UNESCO, UNCTAD, ILO, Brookings, and country-level evidence, the study examines Guinea-Bissau, Cabo Verde, São Tomé and Príncipe, Mozambique and Angola to analyse how CCI function simultaneously as instruments of economic diversification, platforms of identity consolidation, and arenas of geopolitical positioning through language, media, music, and digital creativity. The paper argues that CCI hold potential to contribute to economic autonomy by generating employment, strengthening domestic value chains, expanding exportable symbolic capital, and reducing structural aid dependency. However, adopting Cabral's critical lens, the paper also interrogates whether CCI genuinely advance decolonial transformation or risk integrating African cultural production into new hierarchies of global cultural capitalism. Issues of commodification, dependency on external markets, cultural homogenization, and unequal power dynamics are critically assessed. The study concludes that the legacy of Cabral remains profoundly relevant: cultural sovereignty is inseparable from economic sovereignty. When framed as part of an unfinished liberation project rather than merely an industrial sector, CCI can support long-term autonomy and nation-building in Lusophone Africa. Yet their emancipatory capacity depends on governance choices, equitable infrastructure, and policy frameworks grounded in cultural rights, social justice, and developmental sovereignty.



Keywords

Amílcar Cabral; Cultural Liberation; Creative and Cultural Industries; Lusophone Africa; Cultural Sovereignty.

Resumo

Este estudo reconceptualiza a teoria da “libertação cultural” de Amílcar Cabral, situando-a no contexto da emergência contemporânea das Indústrias Culturais e Criativas (ICC) na África Lusófona. Cabral defendeu que a cultura constitui não apenas a base da identidade coletiva, mas também uma força motriz da libertação política. Esta perspectiva oferece um ponto de partida teórico fundamental para compreender como a cultura pode ser transformada de um recurso de resistência num pilar estratégico da construção do Estado pós-colonial. Recorrendo à teoria decolonial de Frantz Fanon, ao quadro conceptual da instrumentalização da cultura desenvolvido por George Yúdice, e às reflexões de Carlos Lopes sobre a economia criativa africana, este artigo conceptualiza a cultura como um espaço onde se cruzam legitimidade, autonomia e desenvolvimento. Com base nesta perspectiva, o artigo propõe um quadro analítico que estabelece uma ligação entre identidade cultural, Indústrias Culturais e Criativas e autonomia económica, prolongando o conceito de libertação cultural de Cabral para as práticas contemporâneas de desenvolvimento pós-colonial. Com base em dados da UNESCO, UNCTAD, OIT, Brookings e em evidências a nível nacional, este estudo analisa a Guiné-Bissau, Cabo Verde, São Tomé e Príncipe, Moçambique e Angola, procurando compreender como as Indústrias Culturais e Criativas funcionam simultaneamente como instrumentos de diversificação económica, plataformas de consolidação identitária e espaços de posicionamento geopolítico através da língua, dos media, da música e da criatividade digital. O artigo argumenta que as ICC possuem potencial para contribuir para a autonomia económica através da criação de emprego, do reforço das cadeias de valor internas, da expansão do capital simbólico exportável e da redução da dependência estrutural da ajuda externa. Contudo, adotando uma perspectiva crítica inspirada em Cabral, o artigo questiona igualmente se as ICC promovem efetivamente uma transformação decolonial ou se correm o risco de integrar a produção cultural africana em novas hierarquias do capitalismo cultural global. Questões como a mercantilização da cultura, a dependência dos mercados externos, a homogeneização cultural e as dinâmicas desiguais de poder são analisadas criticamente. O estudo conclui que o legado de Cabral permanece profundamente atual: a soberania cultural é inseparável da soberania económica. Quando enquadradas como parte de um projeto de libertação ainda inacabado, e não apenas como um setor industrial, as ICC podem contribuir para a autonomia de longo prazo e para a construção nacional na África Lusófona. Contudo, o seu potencial emancipatório depende das escolhas de governação, da construção de infraestruturas equitativas e de quadros políticos fundamentados nos direitos culturais, na justiça social e na soberania do desenvolvimento.

Palavras-chave

Amílcar Cabral; Libertação Cultural; Indústrias Criativas e Culturais; África Lusófona; Soberania Cultural.

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Introduction: Cultural Liberation, Creative and Cultural Industries, and Economic Autonomy in Lusophone Africa

The year 2025 marks fifty years since the formal independence of the Lusophone African states, providing a historical vantage point from which to reassess the intellectual, political, and cultural foundations of their liberation struggles and post-independence trajectories. Among the leading figures of these processes, Amílcar Cabral remains one of the most profound thinkers of anti-colonial liberation and nation-building in Africa. More than a military strategist, Cabral was a theorist of decolonization who framed liberation not simply as the departure of colonial rulers, but as the restoration of cultural subjectivity, dignity, and agency (Cabral, 1970/1979; Chabal et al., 2002). His writings consistently argued that culture represented both the evidence of a people's existence and the essential resource enabling collective resistance. For Cabral, colonial domination functioned not only through administrative control or economic exploitation, but fundamentally through the attempted destruction, distortion, or subordination of indigenous cultural systems. It is in this sense that he famously linked "cultural resistance" to "political resistance," establishing a conceptual bridge between cultural vitality and political emancipation.

This insight places Cabral firmly within broader currents of decolonial thought. Frantz Fanon similarly emphasized colonialism as a system that produces alienation, self-denial, and dependency, thus requiring a profound cultural and psychological reconstitution as part of the liberation process (Fanon, 1963). More contemporarily, Yúdice (2003) conceptualizes culture as a strategic resource in governance, development, and international relations, rather than a merely symbolic or aesthetic sphere. The

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convergence between these perspectives situates culture not as a marginal domain, but as a central terrain on which power, sovereignty, and autonomy are negotiated.

In the Lusophone African world, where language, identity, and political struggle have long been deeply intertwined, Cabral's vision has left a lasting influence on debates concerning postcolonial nation-building, legitimacy, and development trajectories. As Fernando Arenas (2011) argues, Lusophone Africa is not merely a geographic region connected by a shared colonial history, but a transnational cultural space continuously reconfigured through language, media, music, diaspora networks, and cultural flows.

At the same time, the twenty-first century has witnessed a growing international recognition of the economic, social, and geopolitical significance of Creative and Cultural Industries (CCI). International institutions such as UNESCO and UNCTAD have played a central role in articulating culture as both a human right and a strategic pillar of sustainable development. UNESCO's policy frameworks emphasize that creativity is fundamental not only for identity and social cohesion, but also for inclusive growth, innovation, and democratic participation (UNESCO, 2019/2022). UNCTAD's Creative Economy Reports similarly demonstrate that creative industries constitute one of the most dynamic sectors of global trade, contributing to employment, export expansion, and technological capacities, with increasing participation from Global South economies (UNCTAD, 2018/2024). Complementing these perspectives, reports by the International Labour Organization (ILO) increasingly emphasize both the employment-generating potential of the creative economy and the precarious conditions faced by cultural workers, particularly within informal and platform-based sectors (Joffe & Wangusa, 2022). At the same time, Brookings research underscores the strategic implications of cultural production for development planning, soft power, and global influence (Signé, 2025).

Within African scholarship and policy thinking, Carlos Lopes has emerged as one of the most influential voices advocating for the creative economy as a pathway toward structural transformation and economic autonomy. Lopes argues that the creative sector is not a peripheral luxury but a core development asset capable of driving diversification, technological innovation, regional integration, and reduced aid dependency (Lopes, 2014/2015/2024). He highlights the success of sectors such as Nollywood, Afrobeat, digital media, and visual arts as evidence that African creativity is already shaping global cultural flows, while still remaining constrained by weak infrastructure, uneven regulation, and external market asymmetries. In his work, Lopes explicitly links creative capacity to sovereignty, suggesting that economic independence requires control not only over material resources but also over symbolic production, narratives, and imaginaries.

This study situates Lusophone Africa within this nexus between Cabral's intellectual legacy and contemporary debates on culture, economy, and development. It asks how Cabral's theory of cultural liberation may be reinterpreted in light of the current rise of CCI in countries such as Guinea-Bissau, Cabo Verde, São Tomé and Príncipe, Mozambique and Angola. Rather than treating CCI merely as economic sectors, the paper approaches them as spaces in which cultural subjectivity, political autonomy, and economic strategy intersect. The central argument is that Cabral's insistence on culture as the foundation of liberation provides a powerful analytical lens for understanding how CCI can contribute



not only to growth, but to broader agendas of sovereignty, identity consolidation, and postcolonial emancipation.

However, following Cabral's critical spirit, the paper also maintains a cautious and interrogative stance. While CCI hold the potential to generate employment, strengthen domestic value chains, expand exportable symbolic capital, and enhance soft power, they also risk being absorbed into global hierarchies of cultural capitalism. Issues such as unequal market access, dependency on foreign platforms, commodification of identity, and the dominance of external gatekeepers raise important questions regarding whether CCI truly advance decolonial transformation or reproduce new forms of dependency. These tensions echo Cabral's warning that independence without structural transformation risks reproducing colonial logic under new forms.

Framed within the context of the fiftieth anniversary of Lusophone African independence, this paper therefore seeks to contribute to the ongoing reassessment of liberation legacies and development futures. By bringing Cabral into conversation with UNESCO and UNCTAD frameworks, contemporary African policy debates, and empirical developments within Lusophone African creative sectors, it proposes that culture remains not only a memory of struggle, but a decisive arena for twenty-first century sovereignty. In this sense, CCI are approached as potential instruments of what Cabral might have considered the "unfinished project" of liberation: the pursuit of cultural dignity, economic autonomy, and a more equitable position within the global order.

Research Design and Methodology

This article adopts a qualitative comparative research design to examine how Amílcar Cabral's concept of cultural liberation can be reinterpreted in relation to the contemporary development of CCI in Lusophone Africa. Rather than measuring the economic performance of the cultural sector through quantitative indicators, the study seeks to understand how culture functions simultaneously as a source of political legitimacy, economic strategy and postcolonial state-building. The research therefore combines conceptual analysis with comparative case studies in order to explore the relationship between cultural sovereignty, creative industries and economic autonomy across different national contexts.

The study employs a comparative case study approach because the five Portuguese-speaking African countries - share a common historical experience of Portuguese colonialism and anti-colonial struggles, while displaying significantly different political, economic and institutional trajectories after independence. This combination of historical similarity and developmental diversity provides an appropriate basis for comparative analysis. Instead of treating these countries as isolated cases, the article considers them as members of a common Lusophone postcolonial space whose contemporary development reflects both shared historical legacies and divergent national strategies.

The selection of these five countries is guided by three criteria. First, all belong to the group commonly referred to as the Portuguese-speaking African Countries (PALOP), whose political and cultural identities were profoundly shaped by Portuguese colonial rule and subsequent independence movements. Second, Amílcar Cabral's political thought



has exercised varying degrees of influence across these countries, making them particularly suitable for examining the continuing relevance of his theory of cultural liberation. Third, the five countries represent different models of cultural and creative development. Cabo Verde has achieved relatively high international visibility through music and cultural diplomacy; Angola has developed a more capital-intensive creative economy supported by state investment and media industries; Mozambique illustrates the importance of language politics and literary production; Guinea-Bissau highlights the persistence of community-based cultural practices despite institutional fragility; and São Tomé and Príncipe represents the structural constraints commonly experienced by small island developing states. These differences make it possible to identify broader patterns as well as contrasting pathways of cultural development.

The empirical evidence is derived primarily from documentary analysis and secondary sources. The study draws upon policy reports, international institutional publications, academic literature, and publicly available statistical information. Major sources include UNESCO reports on culture and sustainable development, UNCTAD Creative Economy Reports, publications of the International Labour Organization (ILO), Brookings Institution policy papers, as well as national cultural policy documents and official government publications where available. These materials are complemented by scholarly studies on Lusophone Africa, postcolonial theory, creative economy, and cultural policy. Rather than treating institutional reports as objective representations of reality, the article interprets them critically alongside academic debates concerning cultural sovereignty, postcolonial development, and the political economy of creative industries.

The comparative analysis is organised around several analytical dimensions that emerge from both Cabral's theoretical framework and contemporary discussions of creative economy. These dimensions include: (1) the relationship between cultural identity and nation-building; (2) the institutional development of cultural and creative industries; (3) the contribution of CCIs to economic diversification and employment; (4) the role of language, media and cultural diplomacy in international positioning; and (5) the structural limitations affecting cultural autonomy, including market dependence, unequal global cultural circulation and institutional capacity. Examining each country through these common dimensions allows the article to move beyond descriptive national narratives and develop a systematic comparison of different trajectories of postcolonial cultural development.

Finally, this study does not seek to establish causal relationships in a positivist sense. Instead, it adopts an interpretive comparative perspective that aims to explain how Cabral's concept of cultural liberation can illuminate contemporary debates on CCI in Lusophone Africa. By integrating political thought, cultural policy and comparative analysis, the article proposes a conceptual framework for understanding CCIs not merely as economic sectors but as contested arenas in which questions of cultural sovereignty, development and postcolonial autonomy continue to be negotiated.



Three major contributions to the existing literature

First, it contributes to a renewed interpretation of Amílcar Cabral's intellectual legacy by extending his concept of cultural liberation beyond the traditional domains of anti-colonial struggle and political identity. While Cabral's emphasis on culture as a foundation of national consciousness and liberation has been widely recognized, its implications for contemporary cultural production and economic development remain underexplored. This article argues that cultural liberation should not be understood only as a symbolic process of recovering identity, but also as a productive capacity that enables societies to generate knowledge, creativity, and cultural value.

Second, this article develops a conceptual framework linking Cultural Liberation, Cultural and Creative Industries, and Economic Autonomy. It proposes that cultural production can function as a bridge between historical identity formation and contemporary economic strategies. Through this perspective, CCI are not merely market-oriented sectors or instruments of cultural diplomacy; they represent institutional spaces where cultural knowledge, creative labour, and economic opportunities intersect. This framework provides a new analytical pathway for understanding how post-colonial societies can transform cultural resources into forms of sustainable autonomy.

Third, this article contributes to comparative research on Portuguese-speaking African countries by establishing a cross-national analytical framework for examining the relationship between cultural policies, creative industries, and development trajectories. Rather than treating Lusophone Africa as a homogeneous cultural space, the article highlights the diversity of institutional arrangements, historical experiences, and policy approaches shaping CCI development across different national contexts. By bringing together Cabralian thought, cultural policy studies, and creative economy research, this article offers a theoretical framework that connects historical liberation projects with contemporary debates on cultural sustainability and economic sovereignty.

Part I. Theoretical Foundations: From Cultural Liberation to Cultural Development

Amílcar Cabral's conceptualization of liberation as fundamentally rooted in culture constitutes one of the most original and influential intellectual contributions to African decolonization thought. Unlike approaches that framed national liberation primarily through military struggle or political sovereignty, Cabral articulated a deeper ontological argument: a nation exists first and foremost through culture, and therefore any struggle for independence must begin with the restoration of cultural agency and dignity. As he famously noted, "national liberation is necessarily an act of culture" (Cabral, 1970/1979). For Cabral, culture is not an accessory to politics; it is the foundation upon which political consciousness, collective mobilization, and national legitimacy are constructed. This perspective positioned culture as both epistemological grounding and strategic resource for liberation.

Cabral's analysis of colonialism was thus not limited to economic exploitation or administrative domination. He argued that colonial rule sought to "negate the historical personality of the dominated people," undermining their self-worth, fragmenting their



identities, and eroding the symbolic systems through which communities generate meaning and cohesion (Cabral, 1970/1979; Chabal et al., 2002). Colonial power functioned through an attempt to render colonized societies culturally dependent, psychologically subordinate, and epistemologically disoriented. It is precisely against this process that Cabral placed culture as resistance: the continued production, preservation, and reinvention of indigenous cultural forms constituted a vital terrain of struggle, enabling societies to withstand domination and imagine political alternatives.

In this sense, Cabral's thinking resonates strongly with Frantz Fanon's theorization of colonialism as a system that penetrates the psyche, reshaping subjectivity and internalizing hierarchies of inferiority (Fanon, 1963). For both thinkers, political liberation is inseparable from cultural and psychological transformation. Where Fanon emphasized the violence of colonial dehumanization and the necessity of reclaiming selfhood, Cabral systematized this into a political strategy, making culture not only a site of identity recovery but a foundation for organized collective action. Their shared insight is clear: without cultural reconstitution, formal sovereignty risks remaining hollow, vulnerable to dependency and internal fragmentation.

More contemporary scholarship has further developed this intellectual lineage by demonstrating that culture is not merely symbolic but strategic. Yúdice (2003), for instance, advances the notion of culture as a "resource," integral to governance, development policy, and global diplomacy. Culture, in his framework, becomes instrumental in shaping participation, legitimizing state power, enabling economic innovation, and projecting international presence. This view challenges any dichotomy between the "cultural" and the "economic," emphasizing their mutual embeddedness. It also complements Cabral's position by providing an analytical vocabulary to understand how culture operates institutionally and economically in modern governance systems.

This conceptual trajectory also intersects powerfully with contemporary policy discourse on CCI. International frameworks developed by UNESCO and UNCTAD echo, albeit in technocratic form, many of Cabral's insights about culture's centrality. UNESCO explicitly frames culture as a pillar of sustainable development, human rights, social cohesion, and democratic participation, highlighting its transformative potential in both symbolic and material dimensions (UNESCO, 2019/2022). UNCTAD's Creative Economy Reports similarly demonstrate that creativity has become a key domain of global trade dynamics, generating employment, economic diversification, innovation capabilities, and export advantages, particularly within Global South contexts (UNCTAD, 2018/2024). Together, these frameworks institutionalize the argument that culture is not marginal but structural within development paradigms.

Within African intellectual and policy debates, Carlos Lopes provides an essential bridge between Cabral's decolonial cultural theory and contemporary economic strategy. Lopes (2014, 2015, 2024) insists that African economic transformation requires moving beyond extractive models and aid dependency toward endogenous capacity-building grounded in African knowledge, creativity, and innovation. For Lopes, creative and cultural sectors represent not "luxury industries" but fundamental developmental assets. They foster technological adaptation, stimulate urban economies, enable youth employment, promote regional integration, and reposition African societies within global symbolic



hierarchies. Crucially, Lopes echoes Cabral in linking culture to sovereignty: to control one's future requires controlling not only material resources but also meaning, representation, and narrative.

Bringing these strands together allows for the development of a coherent theoretical framework for this study. Cabral offers the normative and political foundation: culture as the core of liberation, subjectivity, and legitimacy. Fanon and subsequent decolonial thinkers deepen the understanding of cultural emancipation as psychological and epistemological reconstruction. Yúdice provides the conceptual apparatus to understand culture's operational role in governance and development. UNESCO and UNCTAD institutionalize culture within contemporary global development paradigms. Lopes situates these debates within African political economy, transforming culture from symbolic resistance into an economic strategy for autonomy.

This layered framework permits a crucial analytical shift: from understanding culture primarily as resistance to understanding it as development. For Cabral, culture was what allowed societies to resist domination and imagine independence. Today, within Lusophone Africa, culture also becomes what allows societies to consolidate identity, legitimize the state, generate employment, diversify economies, and negotiate their position within the international order. In other words, the trajectory moves from cultural resistance to cultural sovereignty and to cultural development.

Yet, this framework also invites critical reflection. Cabral warned explicitly that political independence without structural transformation risks reproducing colonial hierarchies under new forms (Cabral, 1970/1979). This warning remains pertinent in discussions of the creative economy. While CCI may provide opportunities for autonomy, they may equally be integrated into global market hierarchies characterized by unequal power, external dependency, and commodified identity. Thus, any engagement with CCI through Cabral's legacy must remain attentive to these tensions: whether creative industries advance decolonial empowerment or whether they risk becoming merely another insertion into global capitalist structures. This tension will shape the analytical approach of the subsequent sections.

Part II. Translating Theory into Policy

Building on Amílcar Cabral's foundational insight that "national liberation is necessarily an act of culture" (Cabral, 1970/1979), this section examines how cultural resistance and the assertion of cultural subjectivity have been institutionalized and operationalized in post-independence Lusophone Africa. The transition from cultural liberation to structured cultural development represents a crucial axis along which the ambitions of political sovereignty intersect with economic strategy, social cohesion, and international engagement.

Building upon the theoretical discussion presented in the previous section, this part examines how Cabral's vision of cultural liberation was translated into post-independence policy agendas. As Fernandes (2023) argues, the construction of postcolonial states in Lusophone Africa required mechanisms capable of restoring cultural agency and fostering collective participation in political and economic life. Rather than revisiting Cabral's



theory, the discussion focuses on how cultural sovereignty became institutionalised through education, language planning, cultural governance and, more recently, CCI.

International policy frameworks developed by UNESCO and UNCTAD have provided important reference points for this transition, recognising culture not only as heritage but also as a driver of innovation, employment and sustainable development. Although developed within a different historical context, these frameworks resonate with Cabral's broader emphasis on cultural sovereignty and endogenous development. Carlos Lopes further extends this perspective by arguing that investment in Africa's creative industries can contribute to economic diversification, youth employment and technological innovation, thereby linking cultural production directly to broader development strategies (Lopes, 2014, 2015, 2024).

Davis, Straubhaar, and Ferin Cunha (2016) further argue that a transnational Lusophone media space has gradually emerged among Portuguese-speaking countries. The circulation of television, radio, and digital media has strengthened postcolonial cultural ties while also reshaping the position of Lusophone African countries within global cultural flows. The translation from cultural liberation to cultural development can be understood through several policy dimensions:

1. **Institutionalization of Culture:** Post-independence Lusophone states established ministries or departments of culture tasked with overseeing artistic production, heritage conservation, and public education. These institutions operationalize Cabral's notion of culture as foundational to national consciousness, enabling states to craft narratives of sovereignty and nationhood (Fernandes, 2023; Mazrui, 1990).
2. **Education and Language Policy:** Language planning, literacy campaigns, and bilingual education initiatives in countries like Guinea-Bissau, Cabo Verde, and Mozambique illustrate the integration of cultural policy into broader social development. By valorising indigenous languages alongside Portuguese, states attempt to restore cultural dignity while facilitating socio-economic participation (Senghor, 1964; Cabral, 1970).
3. **Cultural Industries as Economic Strategy:** The development of formal creative sectors represents the economic operationalization of cultural liberation. By recognizing culture as an economic asset, Lusophone African states align with UNESCO and UNCTAD's prescriptions, creating spaces for entrepreneurial activity, innovation, and global market participation (UNESCO, 2019; UNCTAD, 2018). The emphasis on local content production and exportable creative goods ensures that culture is not merely symbolic but also materialized as income, employment, and trade opportunities.
4. **Cultural Diplomacy and Regional Integration:** Engagement in cultural diplomacy—through festivals, exhibitions, and transnational partnerships—allows Lusophone African countries to project soft power, strengthen regional networks, and negotiate a presence in global knowledge economies. These efforts reflect Cabral's enduring emphasis on culture as both a domestic anchor and an international lever (Cabral, 1979; Lopes, 2015).



Despite these policy advances, the institutionalisation of CCI also introduces new tensions concerning market dependence, cultural commodification and unequal participation in global creative industries. These issues are examined in greater detail in Part Four.

Overall, this section has shown how Cabral's philosophy of cultural liberation gradually evolved into concrete policy instruments across education, language planning, cultural governance and creative industries. The following section examines how these policy orientations have been implemented in five Lusophone African countries, revealing both shared trajectories and significant national differences.

Part III. Lusophone Africa Case Studies: Cultural Liberation and Creative & Cultural Industries

In the postcolonial development of Lusophone Africa, cultural expression is no longer confined to processes of national identity formation within individual states, but is increasingly embedded in transnational networks of circulation. Beyond music, broadcasting, and digital media, literature also constitutes a key dimension of cultural connectivity across the Lusophone world. As Helgesson and Stella (2023) argue, Lusophone African literature forms a dynamic postcolonial literary field shaped by circulation, translation, and symbolic recognition across Africa, Portugal, Brazil, and global publishing markets. This transnational cultural space demonstrates that the CCI in Lusophone Africa are not merely products of domestic cultural policy, but are also shaped by the interaction of global cultural capital, linguistic systems, and postcolonial regimes of circulation.

Guinea-Bissau

To understand how Cabral's conception of culture as a form of political resistance evolved within the postcolonial trajectories of Lusophone Africa, it is necessary to begin with Guinea-Bissau, where his anti-colonial thought emerged most directly through the liberation struggle led by the PAIGC (African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cabo Verde). The case of Guinea-Bissau represents not only the revolutionary origins of cultural liberation, but also reveals the enduring tensions between postcolonial sovereignty, fragile state structures, and the uneven institutional development of CCI.

The fragility of the post-independence state has profoundly shaped the trajectory of cultural development in Guinea-Bissau. The liberation struggle was not only a military confrontation, but also a deeply cultural project, relying on oral traditions, poetry, and songs of resistance to construct political consciousness and collective identity (Chabal et al., 2002). In the immediate post-independence period, culture was envisioned as a unifying force and a foundational pillar of national belonging, closely aligned with Cabral's argument that liberation struggles are, at their core, cultural struggles.

However, Guinea-Bissau has long been characterized by political instability and weak institutional capacity, which have significantly constrained the development of formal cultural infrastructure (Chabal & Daloz, 1999; World Bank, 2024). In the context of limited state provision, economic and cultural life is widely embedded in informal systems



of exchange and social networks, which in many instances function as forms of substitute governance (Lourenço-Lindell, 2002; Lundy, 2015).

Within this structural condition, cultural practices such as gumbe music and ritual performance are sustained primarily through community relations and localized practices. Their significance lies not only in aesthetic or artistic expression, but also in their role as embedded mechanisms of collective communication and social reproduction, rather than as components of a formalized or industrialized cultural production system.

In this sense, Guinea-Bissau demonstrates a form of cultural agency that remains deeply embedded in everyday social life: even under structural constraints, cultural vitality continues to be remarkably resilient. However, such cultural agency does not automatically translate into economic autonomy. Due to the lack of sustained investment, coherent cultural policies, and institutional support, these cultural practices have struggled to develop into structured CCI capable of generating large-scale employment, promoting economic diversification, or supporting cultural diplomacy. Therefore, the case of Guinea-Bissau reveals an important distinction between cultural resources and creative industry capacity: rich cultural heritage alone is insufficient to generate economic value; its transformation depends on institutional capacity, infrastructure development, and mechanisms that enable local creators to retain and capture value from cultural production.

This creates a structural paradox: a society with rich and resilient cultural forms lacks the capacity to transform these cultural assets into an institutionalized creative economy and therefore faces difficulties in achieving broader economic autonomy through cultural production in the sense envisioned by Cabral.

Cabo Verde

While Guinea-Bissau reflects the revolutionary foundations of Cabral's cultural liberation project, Cabo Verde demonstrates how postcolonial cultural identity can be transformed into a globally recognized model of cultural export and creative economy development. The international success of Cesária Évora and the globalization of Cabo Verdean music illustrate how cultural expression rooted in creole identity, memory, and saudade entered transnational circuits of cultural consumption, symbolic recognition, and market circulation.

Within the Lusophone African context, Cabo Verde represents one of the clearest cases in which the legacy of cultural liberation has been translated into a structured creative economy. Unlike many resource-rich African states, Cabo Verde's geopolitical condition and limited natural endowments have made culture itself a strategic development resource. In the post-independence nation-building process, national identity was articulated through a fusion of creole consciousness, the affective memory of saudade, and musical expression as a marker of autonomy. From the 1990s onward, Cesária Évora became the symbolic figure of this transformation, as her global recognition elevated morna and coladeira from local expressive forms into internationally recognized cultural exports endowed with both symbolic legitimacy and economic value (Baker, 2024; Curington, 2017; dos Santos, 2023). From a Cabralian perspective, this musical



production can be read as a continuation of cultural resistance in the post-independence era, asserting Cabo Verdean subjectivity within global cultural circulation and challenging epistemic marginalization rooted in colonial histories.

Building on this cultural foundation, the Cabo Verdean state has progressively integrated cultural capacity into formal development policy. Music festivals, diaspora-oriented strategies, and cultural diplomacy have become simultaneously instruments of soft power and economic development. Events such as Baía das Gatas and the Atlantic Music Expo demonstrate how cultural production has been linked to tourism, service-sector employment, and foreign cultural investment. Empirical studies indicate that music tourism contributes measurably to GDP while also supporting employment in hospitality and creative sectors.

At the same time, diplomatic initiatives have mobilized culture to strengthen diaspora ties, attract remittances, and encourage cultural investment. From the perspective of Cabral's intellectual legacy, this incorporation of culture into development strategy can be interpreted as an attempt to reclaim cultural production from purely neo-colonial market logic and to re-anchor it within projects of national autonomy.

However, this cultural development model also generates new forms of structural dependency. Although Cabo Verde is often presented as a successful cultural economy case, its reliance on tourism and international cultural markets creates significant vulnerability to external demand, global consumption patterns, and fluctuations in transnational cultural flows.

Despite its small territorial scale, Cabo Verde has developed a disproportionate cultural presence within the Lusophone world through music and other creative industries. Its youth-oriented creative economy—where approximately 60% of practitioners are under the age of 25—spans music, fashion, design, and crafts, with influence extending into diasporic communities. The Ministry of Culture and Creative Industries has implemented the *National and International Policy for Circulation and Export of Cabo Verdean Creative Industries*, strategically promoting branding initiatives in crafts, fashion, and design to strengthen both domestic and international market visibility (Franco & Njogu, 2020; UNCTAD, 2018).

However, this model remains deeply ambivalent. As critics have noted, the commodification of culture can reshape artistic production in accordance with global market preferences, privileging exportable forms while marginalizing locally embedded practices. Cultural elites and institutional curators also gain disproportionate power in determining which cultural expressions are recognized as nationally representative in international arenas. This tension echoes Yúdice's warning that when culture becomes development infrastructure, it risks being absorbed into capitalist branding regimes and detached from its social and historical foundations (Yúdice, 2003). Consequently, the Cabo Verdean case illustrates both the emancipatory potential and the structural fragility of CCI as a postcolonial development strategy.



São Tomé and Príncipe

In contrast to Cabo Verde's global cultural export model, São Tomé and Príncipe represents a micro-scale cultural economy characterized by small-island dependency, fragile infrastructure, and sustained reliance on transnational cooperation networks.

Within the broader Lusophone African context, São Tomé and Príncipe shares similarities with Cabo Verde in terms of its small territorial scale and limited resource base. However, unlike Cabo Verde's early consolidation of an internationally visible cultural brand, São Tomé and Príncipe's CCI remain at a more fragile stage of development, where cultural production is continuously negotiated between local identity formation and transnational Lusophone connectivity. As Arenas (2011) argues, Lusophone African cultural space should not be understood as a closed national system, but rather as a transnational network continuously reconfigured through colonial history, diasporic circulation, media flows, and Atlantic cultural linkages. In São Tomé and Príncipe, this transnational condition is particularly pronounced: music, oral traditions, festivals, and Creole cultural expressions constitute key components of national identity, while increasingly relying on Lusophone cultural circulation channels, multilateral platforms, and international cooperation frameworks to achieve external visibility.

Building on this dynamic, Leandro, Beja, and Lu (2022) highlight that São Tomé and Príncipe has, in the postcolonial period, increasingly shifted from fragmented bilateral cultural exchanges toward more institutionalized forms of multilateral cooperation, particularly through the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP) and partnerships with external actors such as China. In this sense, culture functions not only as a marker of national identity, but also as a strategic medium through which small island states connect to global networks, access development resources, and enhance international presence.

At the same time, São Tomé and Príncipe also exemplifies the structural vulnerabilities of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in the field of CCI. Limited domestic markets, weak cultural infrastructure, talent outmigration, and dependence on external funding mechanisms significantly constrain the formation of a sustainable cultural economy.

However, cultural recognition alone has not been sufficient to generate sustainable economic opportunities, as the country's small scale and limited institutional capacity continue to constrain the institutionalization of creative industries. As Leandro, Martínez-Galán, and Gonçalves (2019) note that Portuguese-speaking SIDS, including Cabo Verde, São Tomé and Príncipe, and Timor-Leste, commonly face structural dependence on international cooperation frameworks and tourism-driven economic models.

Furthermore, Davis, Straubhaar, and Ferin Cunha (2016) show that the emergence of a transnational Lusophone media space, while strengthening cultural connectivity across Portuguese-speaking countries, also risks reinforcing center-periphery hierarchies, whereby smaller African Lusophone states become increasingly dependent on external media platforms and institutional infrastructures. As Moyo (2024) further argues, when cultural policy is progressively embedded within market-oriented development paradigms, creative industries may generate visibility, symbolic capital, and economic



opportunities, yet they simultaneously risk becoming constrained by external funding regimes, global tourism markets, and transnational cultural consumption structures.

From this perspective, São Tomé and Príncipe reveals a fundamental tension at the heart of postcolonial cultural development in Lusophone Africa: while CCI offer pathways for economic diversification and international recognition, they also reproduce structural dependencies that limit cultural sovereignty. In Cabral's theoretical framework, this condition reflects both the ongoing pursuit of post-independence cultural autonomy and the persistent inequalities embedded within the global cultural economy.

Mozambique

In contrast to the small-scale and dependency-oriented cultural economy of São Tomé and Príncipe, the case of Mozambique foregrounds the central role of language politics in shaping literary circulation, where Portuguese operates simultaneously as a postcolonial medium of communication and a gatekeeping structure for cultural visibility, as exemplified in the work of Mia Couto (Bucaioni, 2023).

Mozambique offers a salient example of how language politics is deeply entangled with the development of postcolonial CCI. Although the country is characterized by significant linguistic diversity, including Makhuwa, Tsonga, and Sena, Portuguese remains the official language and continues to function as the dominant medium in education, media, and cultural institutions (Benson, 2000). Post-independence language policies have sought to elevate indigenous languages and cultural traditions as part of broader anti-colonial nation-building efforts. However, as Cabral cautioned, when the colonial language persists as the primary vehicle of knowledge production and public culture, epistemic hierarchies remain intact even after formal political liberation.

Within this context, cultural producers in Mozambique operate within a complex linguistic field. Film, music, and theatre productions frequently rely on Portuguese in order to access regional and Lusophone markets (Davis, Straubhaar, & Ferin Cunha, 2016), while artistic expressions rooted in local languages often gain strong domestic legitimacy but encounter significant barriers in transnational circulation, where Portuguese and other global languages continue to dominate. This tension reflects a broader structural dilemma facing creative industries in postcolonial contexts: whether to prioritize cultural authenticity grounded in linguistic plurality or to pursue market visibility shaped by inherited colonial language economies.

This linguistic configuration not only structures cultural production internally but also determines the visibility and translatability of cultural outputs within transnational circulation systems. In this sense, language functions as a form of "entry structure," shaping which narratives are translated, circulated, and ultimately converted into international cultural capital. Accordingly, language politics extends beyond communication into the broader distribution of symbolic capital and the production of cultural value.

This logic of linguistic circulation is particularly evident in the international reception of Lusophone African literature. Writers such as Mia Couto and José Eduardo Agualusa have



achieved global recognition, with their works translated into multiple languages and incorporated into world literary circuits. However, as Bucaioni (2023) argues, such circulation is also shaped by external publishing markets, processes of canon formation, and transnational gatekeeping structures, raising critical questions about who defines “representative” African literature in Portuguese.

From this perspective, literature is not an autonomous field outside language politics, but rather its institutionalized expression within the global cultural system. Linguistic hierarchies are continuously reproduced and re-encoded through publishing mechanisms, translation regimes, and processes of literary canonization, thereby shaping which cultural voices gain international recognition and which remain marginalized.

Mozambique’s efforts to institutionalize cultural production further highlight the challenges involved in transforming cultural vitality into sustainable economic autonomy. Although Mozambique possesses significant cultural resources in music, crafts, and performing arts, this sector remains shaped by international development agendas and external funding structures, raising important questions about the possibilities for long-term cultural autonomy. The country has undertaken policy reforms in cultural governance and intellectual property frameworks to support creators and promote the formalization of artistic production. However, implementation capacity remains highly uneven, particularly affecting cultural practitioners operating within the informal economy, including musicians, artisans, and performers (UNESCO, 2013; Joffe & Wangusa, 2022).

International organizations, including UNESCO, emphasize that in the absence of robust legal and institutional frameworks, creative sectors risk reproducing inequality, disproportionately benefiting established actors with international networks while marginalizing grassroots producers. Consequently, in Mozambique’s postcolonial cultural economy, language systems, literary circulation, legal structures, and market dynamics are not isolated domains but interdependent mechanisms that jointly determine the possibility of cultural sovereignty.

Ultimately, Mozambique demonstrates how language, law, and economic structures intersect to shape a fundamental question: whether cultural expression can serve as a foundation for creative sovereignty, or whether it risks remaining an ambiguous extension of colonial cultural economies.

Angola

While Mozambique highlights how language politics and literary circulation structure cultural visibility in Lusophone Africa, the case of Angola shifts the analytical focus toward a more capital-intensive cultural economy, where media industries, audiovisual production, and co-production networks are increasingly shaped by oil-based wealth, state investment, and transnational media circuits. In this context, cultural production becomes deeply intertwined with economic capital, positioning Angola as a key site for understanding the dynamics of a fully capitalized model of CCI in the region.



Emerging from a prolonged civil war (1975–2002), Angola's postwar cultural reconstruction has involved not only the rebuilding of physical infrastructure but also the reconstitution of symbolic frameworks of national belonging. Within a state-led cultural governance system dominated by the MPLA, musical forms such as Semba and Kizomba have been actively mobilized as national cultural symbols. Disseminated through powerful state media infrastructures, these genres are embedded within narratives of unity, resilience, and postwar national rebirth. From a Cabralian perspective, these culturally grounded forms—originally shaped in contexts of struggle—retain traces of resistance, while being reconfigured in the post-independence period as instruments for constructing collective identity and challenging residual colonial hierarchies of cultural value.

At the same time, Angola's economic liberalization in the early 2000s facilitated the rapid expansion of television and creative media industries, opening space for private broadcasters and new media producers. Locally produced soap operas, entertainment programming, and music television have generated new forms of cultural capital that are deeply embedded in market logic. This evolution resonates with Carlos Lopes's argument that African creative industries, when supported by adequate training systems, intellectual property regimes, and distribution infrastructures, can contribute meaningfully to economic diversification and employment creation (Lopes, 2015). However, Ferreira (2012) underscores the ambivalent transnationality of post-independence Luso-African co-productions, which, while enhancing visibility and funding opportunities, often remain dependent on Portuguese institutional frameworks and European cultural financing systems.

Nevertheless, Angola's creative economy remains affected by its continued dependence on extractive industries and unequal access to cultural infrastructure. The expansion of cultural markets has not necessarily translated into broader participation or a more equitable distribution of creative value. Rather, the growth of cultural sectors has often coexisted with persistent economic concentration and uneven opportunities for cultural producers.

Angola thus exemplifies a dual dynamic in which cultural policy is simultaneously part of state-building projects and embedded within capitalist systems that both enable cultural production and reproduce concentrated economic power.

Despite these structural constraints, Angola has developed one of the most institutionally structured creative sectors in Lusophone Africa. Music industries built around Kizomba, Kuduro, and Semba have achieved regional and diasporic influence, particularly in Europe. Institutions such as the Angola Music Awards have contributed to the formalization and professionalization of the sector. In 2017, the Ministry of Culture advanced new strategic objectives aimed at reorganizing the national cultural and creative industries, while biennial cultural events have promoted a broader pan-African discourse of "culture of peace." Angola has also benefited from international capacity-building initiatives, including the EU–UNCTAD *Train for Trade II* programme, which supports training, market access, and institutional development (Franco & Njogu, 2020; UNCTAD, 2018).



Recent UN mapping further indicates that Angola's creative economy spans expanding sectors such as music, audiovisual production, fashion, and digital entrepreneurship, although persistent challenges remain in infrastructure, financing, and institutional coordination (Figueira et al., 2023). Taken together, these dynamics illustrate how Angola's cultural economy is simultaneously driven by state power, oil capital, and transnational media integration, while remaining structurally constrained by uneven development and dependency relations.

Comparative Discussion

The five case studies demonstrate that the evolution of CCI in Lusophone Africa cannot be understood simply through individual national experiences. Although each country has followed a distinct postcolonial trajectory, a cross-case comparison reveals several common patterns as well as important differences in the ways culture has been mobilised as a political, economic and developmental resource. Examining these similarities and divergences makes it possible to move beyond descriptive country narratives and to identify broader implications for understanding the continuing relevance of Amílcar Cabral's theory of cultural liberation.

Culture as a Shared Foundation of Nation-building

The first common pattern concerns the central role of culture in postcolonial nation-building. Across all five countries, cultural policy has extended beyond artistic production to become an instrument for constructing political legitimacy, reinforcing collective identity and consolidating national sovereignty. This finding strongly echoes Cabral's argument that national liberation is fundamentally a cultural act rather than merely the achievement of political independence (Cabral, 1970/1979).

Despite considerable differences in institutional capacity, each country has attempted to transform cultural heritage into a source of national cohesion. Guinea-Bissau continues to preserve the symbolic legacy of the liberation struggle through community-based cultural practices and collective memory. Cabo Verde has institutionalised Creole identity through music, cultural diplomacy and diaspora engagement. Mozambique has emphasised language and literature as mechanisms for negotiating postcolonial identity, while Angola has employed state-supported media, music and audiovisual industries to reinforce narratives of national unity after civil war. São Tomé and Príncipe, although constrained by its small domestic market, has similarly relied on cultural heritage and Lusophone networks to strengthen its international visibility.

Taken together, these experiences demonstrate that Cabral's concept of cultural liberation remains highly relevant. Culture continues to function as an essential source of legitimacy, identity and political cohesion throughout Lusophone Africa, even though the institutional mechanisms through which these objectives are pursued differ considerably.



Creative Industries as a Development Strategy

A second common pattern is the increasing institutional recognition of CCI as instruments of economic development. None of the five countries now approaches culture solely as symbolic heritage. Instead, all have progressively incorporated creative industries into broader national development strategies, reflecting the growing influence of UNESCO, UNCTAD and other international policy frameworks promoting the creative economy.

Nevertheless, the degree of institutionalisation varies substantially. Cabo Verde has developed perhaps the most coherent strategy by integrating music, tourism, cultural diplomacy and diaspora networks into a relatively diversified creative economy. Angola has invested heavily in media industries, audiovisual production and cultural infrastructure, supported by comparatively stronger state capacity and financial resources. Mozambique has focused more selectively on literature, language policy and cultural governance, while São Tomé and Príncipe continues to rely largely on externally supported cultural initiatives. Guinea-Bissau remains characterised by vibrant cultural production but comparatively weak institutional structures capable of transforming cultural activity into a sustainable creative economy.

The comparison therefore suggests that the transition from cultural liberation to cultural development is not automatic. Rather, successful institutionalisation depends upon governance capacity, long-term policy commitment, investment in cultural infrastructure and the ability to integrate cultural production into broader development strategies.

Divergent Models of Creative Economy

Beyond these shared aspirations, the five countries exhibit markedly different models of creative economy development. Cabo Verde represents an export-oriented model in which music, festivals and cultural tourism generate international visibility while simultaneously reinforcing national branding and diaspora connections. Cultural production has become an internationally recognised economic asset.

Angola illustrates a more state-supported and capital-intensive model. Strong public investment, expanding audiovisual industries and commercial media have created a relatively institutionalised cultural sector. However, this model also reflects the broader political economy of an oil-dependent state, where cultural development remains closely linked to government priorities and patterns of capital concentration.

Mozambique represents a language-mediated model in which literature, publishing and linguistic politics occupy a central position. Here, the principal challenge is less the absence of creativity than the unequal linguistic structures governing access to international cultural circulation. Portuguese simultaneously facilitates global visibility while reproducing postcolonial hierarchies that marginalise many local languages.

São Tomé and Príncipe illustrates an aid-dependent small-island model. Cultural production is shaped by international cooperation, Lusophone cultural networks and external development programmes. Although these partnerships expand international visibility, they also expose the country to structural dependence upon foreign funding and institutional support.



Finally, Guinea-Bissau represents a community-based model in which cultural vitality survives largely through local traditions, informal social networks and collective memory rather than through institutionalised creative industries. Cultural resilience remains remarkably strong, yet the absence of sustained policy support has limited the emergence of a formal creative economy.

These contrasting trajectories demonstrate that there is no single pathway through which postcolonial societies transform cultural resources into economic development. Instead, different historical legacies, governance capacities and institutional arrangements have generated multiple models of creative economy across Lusophone Africa.

Unequal Integration into Global Cultural Markets

A further dimension of comparison concerns the relationship between national creative sectors and global cultural circulation. The five countries differ considerably in their capacity to participate in international markets. Cabo Verde has achieved the highest degree of cultural export through globally recognised music and diaspora networks. Angola has expanded its regional influence through commercial media, music industries and audiovisual production, although much of this expansion remains connected to domestic political economy and Portuguese-speaking markets.

Mozambique participates internationally primarily through literature and publishing, where global visibility is strongly mediated by translation, language and external publishing institutions. São Tomé and Príncipe remains highly dependent upon international cultural cooperation and development partnerships to access wider audiences, while Guinea-Bissau has experienced comparatively limited integration into global creative markets despite the richness of its cultural traditions.

These differences illustrate that participation in the global creative economy is shaped not only by cultural resources but also by unequal access to finance, distribution systems, intellectual property regimes, international networks and digital infrastructure. Consequently, cultural sovereignty continues to operate within asymmetrical global structures that reproduce significant disparities between countries.

Broader Theoretical Implications

The comparative analysis offers several broader implications for both Cabral studies and contemporary debates on CCI. First, the findings suggest that Cabral's concept of cultural liberation should not be interpreted solely as a theory of anti-colonial resistance. Rather, it provides a valuable framework for understanding how culture continues to shape economic strategy, institutional development and national sovereignty in the postcolonial era. The transition from cultural resistance to cultural development represents not a departure from Cabral's thought but one possible contemporary extension of it.

Second, the comparison demonstrates that CCI cannot be understood simply as engines of economic growth. Their developmental potential depends upon institutional capacity, governance quality, cultural policy, legal protection and equitable participation in global



cultural markets. Countries with stronger institutions have generally been more successful in transforming cultural assets into sustainable creative industries, whereas countries with weaker institutional structures continue to face significant barriers despite rich cultural resources.

Finally, the comparison reinforces the central tension running throughout this article. Creative industries undoubtedly provide important opportunities for employment, economic diversification and international visibility. At the same time, they remain embedded within unequal global systems of cultural production, market exchange and symbolic recognition. Consequently, the expansion of CCI does not automatically fulfil Cabral's emancipatory vision. Instead, it raises a continuing question that lies at the heart of postcolonial development: can culture become a genuine foundation for economic autonomy and cultural sovereignty, or will it be increasingly incorporated into new forms of global cultural capitalism?

This unresolved tension links the comparative findings presented in this section to the broader critical discussion developed in the following part of the article, where the political and conceptual boundaries of CCI are examined through Cabral's continuing legacy.

Part IV. Critique and Reflection from a Cabralian Perspective

Can Creative and Cultural Industries Truly Continue the Emancipatory Project Envisioned by Cabral? Moyo (2024) argues that cultural policy in Africa is increasingly oscillating between two orientations: treating culture as a commodity and understanding culture as a form of social praxis. This tension is central to evaluating whether the creative industries in Lusophone Africa continue Cabral's emancipatory vision or are gradually being absorbed into global market rationalities and capitalist cultural systems.

The significance of this issue lies in the increasingly prominent role that CCI occupy within contemporary development strategies in Lusophone Africa. Although creative and cultural industries are increasingly regarded in Lusophone African countries as potential drivers of economic growth, employment creation, and international cultural visibility, their expansion does not necessarily imply the realization of the cultural liberation or economic autonomy emphasized by Cabral. Cabral stressed that culture is not merely a symbolic instrument of resistance, but also a source of political subjectivity and a fundamental basis for overcoming colonial domination (Cabral, 1970). However, contemporary creative economy structures often operate within global capitalist logics and market value systems, and these logics are not always compatible with projects of decolonization (Yúdice, 2003; Lopes, 2015).

In Lusophone Africa and across the continent more broadly, the rapid conceptual elevation of CCI within national and international development discourse warrants critical interrogation. The core promise of cultural and creative industries is that they offer a pathway to sustainable employment, innovation, and economic diversification while enhancing cultural identity and global presence (UNCTAD, 2018/2024). Yet, as Carlos Lopes has argued both in *How Can Africa Profit from Its Creative Industries?* and in



Creativity Is the New Money, there exists a risk that these very frameworks may inadvertently reproduce structural inequalities unless grounded in deliberate policy and institutional capacity building. In his 2015 piece *How Can Africa Profit from Its Creative Industries?* Lopes foregrounds the untapped talent and potential across creative sectors, urging that Africa must strengthen ecosystems of training, intellectual property protection, and distribution infrastructure to fully convert creativity into economic value (Lopes, 2014/2015). This argument aligns with broader UNCTAD analysis that CCI can contribute to local development pathways but requires strategic policy integration rather than mere rhetorical celebration (UNCTAD, 2018/2024).

From a Cabralian standpoint, however, the integration of culture into development policy cannot be assessed solely in terms of economic outputs. Cabral's framework conceptualized culture as a foundational force of liberation, a source of collective subjectivity and political legitimacy that must be nurtured beyond market metrics. This poses a central question: in the push to operationalize culture as an economic sector, does the prevailing CCI discourse remain true to the emancipatory potential envisioned in anti-colonial thought, or does it risk folding culture into global capital markets in ways that replicate neo-colonial logic?

This concern is underscored in Lopes' more recent work *The Self-Deception Trap*, in which he critiques longstanding development paradigms, including aid dependency and attendant power asymmetries that undercut African agency and structural transformation. Lopes argues that entrenched narratives—framed in benevolence and charity—obscure deeper systemic issues that perpetuate economic dependency while failing to build endogenous capacity for autonomous development (Lopes, 2024). Although *The Self-Deception Trap* focuses on Africa–Europe relations and aid paradigms, the ethos of this critique extends to the cultural economy: if cultural policies merely mimic global development prescriptions without aligning with locally grounded goals of self-determination and structural empowerment, then CCI may inadvertently reinforce patterns of dependency that Cabral and Fanon contested. Indeed, Fanon's critique of cultural colonization warns against the absorption of colonized cultures into the value systems of a global order that privileges commodification and external validation over internal coherence and autonomy (Fanon, 1963; Cabral, 1970/1979).

One salient feature of the contemporary CCI policy landscape is its alignment with global market logics. International organizations and development agencies increasingly quantify creative industries through contribution to GDP, export revenues, or employment statistics—measures that reflect global economic priorities more readily than social justice or historical redress (UNESCO, 2018/2024). Scholars like Throsby and Cunningham remind us that cultural policy cannot be equated with industrial policy without careful reflection on value systems, cultural rights, and the risk of cultural homogenization under market pressures. Without protections for cultural diversity and equitable access to creative participation, there is potential for CCI growth to concentrate benefits among already advantaged groups, reproducing inequalities that contradict the purported ethos of inclusive cultural development.

In Lusophone contexts, this critique is concrete. The cases examined in Part III reveal varied capacities to harness cultural capital meaningfully. Cabo Verde's integration of



creative sectors into tourism and diaspora engagements offers a promising example of how cultural policy can align with national vision; nevertheless, even here the localization of industry has not fully insulated creative actors from global market demands that shape aesthetic and commercial priorities. Angola's emergent media and entertainment sectors similarly highlight the tensions between political symbolism and market orientation, where cultural production can articulate post-conflict identity while still being embedded within extractive economic structures. Mozambique and Guinea-Bissau underscore the fragility of institutional ecosystems necessary for creative autonomy, where language politics, regulatory gaps, and state capacity deeply shape creative trajectories.

This unevenness cautions against universal prescriptions. A Cabralian critique does not reject the economic utility of CCI; instead, it insists that cultural industries must be framed within a broader analytical field of decolonial strategy, one that prioritizes structural transformation over mere integration into global commodity circuits. Culture's translation into economic agency cannot be a "market first" endeavour; it must simultaneously safeguard cultural sovereignty, address historical imbalances, and create indigenous pathways of innovation that resist extraction and dependency (Lopes, 2014/2015; UNECA, 2018). In this regard, *The Self-Deception Trap* contributes to the critique by challenging Africa's intellectual dependency on external framings and urging a recalibration of both policy discourse and power relations in development practice (Lopes, 2024; UNCTAD, 2024).

In sum, Part IV articulates a dual critique: CCI can be a catalyst for economic and cultural renewal, but without a Cabral-informed critical lens, there is a risk that creative industries will be subsumed under global market logics that valorise output over agency, consumption over meaning, and growth over equity. The challenge for policymakers, scholars, and cultural practitioners in Lusophone Africa is to craft cultural frameworks that leverage creative potential without replicating structures of commodification and dependency that Cabral's legacy sought to dismantle.

This concern is not merely theoretical. Empirical mapping of cultural cooperation programmes demonstrates that many creative industry initiatives in Africa remain shaped by external institutional frameworks. As Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen research indicates, European-led programmes continue to dominate funding structures, application procedures, and evaluative criteria, often privileging actors with access to European languages and networks (Franco & Njogu, 2020). Such asymmetries raise critical questions about local ownership and cultural sovereignty, suggesting that creative industries may, under certain conditions, reproduce rather than dismantle neo-colonial cultural dependencies.

Part V. Conclusion: Reinterpreting Creative and Cultural Industries through Cabral's Legacy — Culture as an Unfinished Liberation Project

Returning to Cabral's intellectual legacy, culture has never been merely an expressive domain or aesthetic dimension of social life; it constitutes the core of political legitimacy, national subjectivity, and historical continuity (Cabral, 1970). In Cabral's framework, liberation is not completed with the achievement of political independence. Rather, it is



a prolonged historical process aimed at restructuring power, reclaiming epistemic agency, and redefining social relations (Cabral, 1979). When this perspective is extended to contemporary Lusophone Africa, the development of CCI emerges not only as an economic strategy, but as the continuation of a much deeper political project.

From a developmental standpoint, creative industries undeniably open new possibilities for African states. They generate employment, foster innovation, and strengthen global visibility, thereby functioning simultaneously as economic capital, symbolic capital, and knowledge capital (UNCTAD, 2024). UNESCO emphasizes that cultural production contributes not only to economic diversification but also to social cohesion and democratic participation (UNESCO, 2022). Similarly, Carlos Lopes argues that creative economies can provide Africa with a “new development narrative,” helping it to move beyond structural dependence on commodity exports and vulnerability to external shocks (Lopes, 2014/2015). In this sense, creative industries are not peripheral; they represent a potential pillar in the reconstruction of African economic sovereignty.

Yet, drawing on Cabral’s thinking, it is clear that CCI do not automatically advance decolonization. Cabral warns that liberation requires conscious, politically grounded cultural agency rather than passive participation in inherited systems of power (Cabral, 1970). Whether creative industries can sustain this emancipatory role depends on several decisive conditions.

First, culture must remain a foundation of political subjectivity rather than merely an economic commodity. This tension has been clearly articulated by Lorenzo Moyo (2024), who argues that African cultural policy is increasingly caught between “culture as praxis” and “culture as commodity.” This implies that CCI policies should not be driven exclusively by GDP metrics, export performance, or investor attractiveness. They must instead address questions of meaning, ownership, and representation: whose culture is being produced, for what audiences, and under which power conditions (UNESCO, 2022; Yúdice, 2003). If culture is reduced to an economic tool, it risks losing the transformative political force Cabral envisioned. If instead it is recognized as a site of agency and identity formation, CCI remain aligned with liberation logics.

Second, creative economies must contribute to reducing inequality and advancing epistemic decolonization. Empirical evidence from African cultural industries further confirms that structural dependency remains a defining feature of the sector. Paulo Alexandre Ivo Franco and Njogu (2020) demonstrate that many cultural initiatives in Sub-Saharan Africa continue to rely heavily on externally funded institutional ecosystems, often shaped by donor priorities and transnational gatekeeping structures. Lopes cautions that Africa faces a “self-deception trap” when development narratives celebrate potential while ignoring structural constraints and power asymmetries (Lopes, 2024). Thus, CCI must be supported by institutional reforms encompassing labor protections, fair remuneration, intellectual property enforcement, and inclusive participation mechanisms, particularly for marginalized cultural communities (UNESCO, 2019/2022). Success in creative industries should therefore be evaluated not only through economic indicators, but through their capacity to promote social justice, redistribute opportunity, and democratize cultural knowledge.



Third, creative industries must cultivate historical consciousness and strategic autonomy. For Cabral, the ultimate goal of liberation is not merely replacing colonial actors with national elites, but constructing social systems that break with colonial logic (Cabral, 1979). In the Lusophone African context, this challenge is further complicated by transnational cultural circulation. As Fernando Arenas (2011) shows, post-independence Lusophone African cultural production is deeply embedded in transnational circuits that simultaneously expand visibility and reinforce asymmetrical relations of recognition and access. Following this line of thought, African creative economies must resist becoming simple extensions of global cultural markets. Instead, they should aspire to articulate alternative cultural modernities, build endogenous ecosystems of production and knowledge, and assert interpretive control over African narratives (Lopes, 2015; UNCTAD, 2024).

The trajectories of Lusophone Africa demonstrate both the promise and profound ambivalence embedded in CCI. On the one hand, they offer pathways toward diversification, agency, and global visibility. On the other hand, when inadequately regulated or captured by market-centric paradigms, they risk becoming new channels through which global capitalism reshapes local identities and reproduces hierarchies of value (Lopes, 2024; UNESCO, 2022). The central question, therefore, is not whether African states should pursue creative economy strategies, but how they do so, and under whose terms.

Finally, when interpreted through Cabral's lens, creative and cultural industries should not be viewed as marginal "post-independence sectors," but as a contemporary arena where the unfinished project of liberation continues to unfold (Cabral, 1970; Lopes, 2015; UNCTAD, 2024). If creatively governed, they can strengthen sovereignty, expand agency, and sustain cultural dignity. If left to the logics of commodification alone, they risk binding postcolonial societies into renewed cycles of dependency and symbolic subordination. The enduring urgency of Cabral's legacy lies precisely here: culture persists not as ornament or entertainment, but as a decisive terrain upon which freedom, autonomy, and future African development will be determined.

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