

DIGITIZED GHANAIAN MUSIC:
EMPOWERING OR IMPERIAL?

by

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THESIS ABSTRACT

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In the wake of the digital revolution, the Musicians' Union of Ghana has begun a massive campaign to re-establish its membership base, advocate for enforceable copyright policy changes, and introduce the technology necessary to make its members' music available for sale to digital consumers. However, despite the excitement behind this project, the vision of a professional class of musicians, enabled by the digitization and digital sale of Ghana's new and existing music, is problematic. Recent revenue reports collected from musicians based in the United States suggest that revenue collected from digital sales may not be the silver bullet Ghanaian musicians hope it will be.

Analyzing corporate, government, development, and news documents, this study examines the history and the political economy of the current digitization efforts in Ghana to determine who claims to benefit from the project and who stands to bear the costs. Overall, this study recommends the introduction of new forms of cultural protectionism alongside existing copyright protections to avoid the potential exploitation associated with musical success. The empowering and imperial effects of the project are also debated.

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This study is dedicated to the musicians of Ghana.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Downtown Accra, one hundred yards from the public square where Kwame Nkrumah announced Ghana's independence to the world, Ghana's musicians have established their union's national headquarters in a dilapidated building once home to the nation's passport office. Since the early 1970s, the Musicians' Union of Ghana (MUSIGA) has been advocating for the collective rights of its musicians. In large part, their advocacy has revolved around the rates its musicians are paid for private performances. In the wake of the digital revolution, however, MUSIGA has been busy advocating for a new set of rights involving copyright, royalties, and digital sales. In Ghana, musicians are rarely able to make a living from their art; many musicians claim this is due in large part to the lack of enforceable copyright policy in the young country. Musicians, they argue, unable to sell their music or collect royalties, lose the ability to earn a living once they lose the ability to perform. Even those musicians who perform late in life remain unable to support themselves if their music becomes unfashionable.

The proliferation of digital communication technologies, however, has presented Ghana's musicians with a new opportunity to make a living from their craft. Around the world, where more stable digital infrastructure and copyright policy coexist, musicians have been able, at least in theory, to generate additional revenue through the initial sale and subsequent royalty generation of their creations. The Musicians' Union of Ghana, recognizing this potential for its members, has begun a massive campaign to re-establish its membership base, advocate for enforceable copyright policy changes, and introduce

the technology necessary to make its members' music available for sale to digital consumers.

Despite the excitement behind this project currently underway in Ghana, the vision of a professional class of musicians, enabled by the digitization and digital sale of Ghana's new and existing music, is problematic. Recent revenue reports collected from musicians based in the United States suggest that revenue from digital sales and digital royalty collection may not be the silver bullet MUSIGA hopes it will be; after more than 10 years in the digital marketplace, the annual revenue from digital sales and digital royalty collection among average musicians in the United States amounts to just a fraction of musicians' overall revenue.

Another concern stems from the process of digitization itself. Although some segments of the Ghanaian population, like those living in diaspora, will now have access to their country's music digitally, many Ghanaians in the country, without access to the Internet, will be excluded from the new process of music consumption. Similarly, while enforcement of copyright protection has the ability to generate revenue for Ghana's musicians, it could also isolate segments of the population who currently enjoy recorded music where music royalties may be unaffordable.

Finally, from a development communication perspective, this project is theoretically complex as well. Digitization projects like the one in Ghana are garnering support from development organizations operating within what has been called the "modernization paradigm" as well as from organizations that explicitly operate within alternative development paradigms developed, usually, in direct oppositional response to modernization. Proponents of digitization operating within the modernization paradigm

lend their support believing that the revenue generated from the sale of music will be both an ideal source of funds for national development campaigns and an important part of achieving the eighth Millennium Development Goal outlined by the United Nations Programme for Development – “to develop a global partnership for development.” Other, organizations, normally opposed to modernizing efforts, champion digitization efforts as well, viewing them as an effective method to empower local populations.

This study, therefore, seeks to begin a discussion regarding the implications of the digitization of culture. Using the music digitization project currently underway in Ghana as a frame of reference, relying centrally on the nation’s political and economic history, and employing the related governmental, press, and corporate documents as its texts, this study asks:

1. What is the political economic history of the Ghanaian music industry?
2. From this history, who claims to benefit from the digitization of Ghanaian music and how long will they continue to receive those benefits?
3. If any, who will bear the costs?
4. How might any potentially conflicting benefit claims be resolved?

This study will begin by offering a brief history of the role of music in Ghanaian culture, moving to a more detailed account of the current digitization efforts being spearheaded by the Musicians’ Union of Ghana (MUSIGA). Following will be a brief review of literature related to the political economy of communications and international development. Next, this study will address the methods needed to address the above questions. Finally, results will be presented and discussed.

CHAPTER II

BACKGROUND

This chapter is intended to outlay the essential background information related to the digitization project in Ghana. The first section will review the history of Ghana and its Music. This will be followed by an overview of Ghana's musicians' union from its founding, through its recent political history, to its most recent venture into digitization.

GHANA

The Republic of Ghana is a sovereign state located in West Africa on the Gulf of Guinea (Figure 1). Ghana achieved its independence in 1957 after several centuries of colonial rule. The name of the nation is derived from the ancient West African Ghana Empire wherein "the Ghana" was the name for the society's empire. Today, Ghana is home to more than 25 million Ghanaians of various tribal associations; after intense political and economic upheaval in the 1980s, the country now enjoys relative political and economic stability. English is the primary language in the country with over 80% of the population fluent; other major languages include Akan, Ewe, Ga, Dagbani, Nzema, and Hausa ("About ghana," 2013).

Figure 1: Map of Ghana



(The World Factbook, Ghana)

MUSIC IN GHANA

Prior to the westernization of West Africa, traditional Ghanaian music was a vibrant and communicative element of native life with variations in language, purpose,

and even intonation. The Ga people, for example, inhabiting southern Ghana developed a style of music that featured their own language, Ga, and was traditionally sung in both pentatonic and heptatonic modes where just five notes and seven notes are used, respectively. Conversely, the Akan people in the Northern Region developed a style of music that was sung only in the seven-note mode and added movement to their vocal performances such as the kete, which is comprised of eight distinct, communicative movements (Aning, 1968).

Regardless of regional differences, however, all music in Ghana was socially organized. As Aning (1968) explained,

...there is music for infants, for youth and for adults. Men may not participate in the music for women, and vice versa. There is music for different kinds of associations-occupational, warrior or voluntary associations. Then there is the music for political and quasi-political organizations. This system of organizing music predates the colonial era and has persisted through the hundred years of colonial rule; it continues to be the predominant basis of musical organization in contemporary Ghana (p.2).

According to Aning, this organization has made Ghanaian music heavily resistant to westernization and popular influence.

Ghana's first western musical development originated during the colonial period in its port towns, following World War I, as a result of contact with the Liberian Kru Diaspora. The Kru, a maritime community, was famous for the music the Kru people began creating in the late 1800s. Utilizing portable instruments such as the Spanish guitar and the mandolin, they made music that combined traditional Liberian rhythms with

modern European tonal patterns. Following World War II, this musical style developed into what is known today as highlife, or “palm wine music,” – a guitar and brass, big-band influenced genre of Ghanaian music (Boyce, 2008).

By the 1950s, two primary forms of highlife had emerged. The highlife played by orchestras for members of Ghana’s elite had become distinct from the guitar-based highlife played by the rural poor (Collins, 1976). Over time, the guitar-based version of highlife began to overshadow highlife’s dance orchestras and, for the next several decades, guitar-based highlife came to be associated with Ghana’s independence, incorporating swing, jazz, and rock with traditional African rhythms.

Two of Ghana’s most popular and lucrative forms of music today, Christian gospel music and hiplife, developed directly from this guitar-based Ghanaian highlife. First, in the early 1980s, from within a milieu of political instability, economic frailty, and a spike in western religious influence, Christian Gospel music became the most popular music of the decade, typified by bands like the Genesis Gospel Singers. In the decade following, musicians like Reggie Rockstone, VIP, and Obrafour blended Ghanaian highlife with American hip-hop to form Ghana’s newest genre, hiplife. Throughout the early 2000s, and still today, hiplife has become a way for modern Ghanaian musicians to reconcile the influence of westernized music with their traditional musical roots (Akwagyiram, 2007). In the second decade of the 21st century, hiplife continues its accent toward mainstream acceptance. In fact, confirming this trend, famous hiplife personality, Bice “Obour” Kuffour, was recently elected MUSIGA’s newest and youngest-ever president.

Despite the tremendous success of the recorded Gospel cassette and CD market, the popularity of hiplife, and the lavish success of a select few musicians in western markets,

the preponderance of revenue generated by Ghanaian musicians has historically been through live performance (Mallet, 2012). For a variety of reasons, this is still the predominant reality today. Among the strongest factors influencing this reality have been Ghana's antiquated and ineffective copyright laws.

Between the fret and fray of establishing Ghana as Africa's first independent nation, the copyright law has been less than ideal. The sale of music was placed into the same royalty collection mechanism as the sale of books, or plays, or film – where it was then divided equally among all of the members of Ghana's creative industry and distributed. As Ghanaian copyright advocate and musician, Rex Omar (2012), explains, this usually resulted in the distribution of checks in the amount of a few cents. Although it may seem obvious, another important reason for musicians' inability to produce revenue through royalty collection was simply the physical production and distribution of recorded music. When the popularity of Ghanaian music sank in the early 1980s, all but one of the existing vinyl record presses went out of business. The restrictions on Internet-based commerce in Ghana in the new millennium has had a similarly chilling effect.

MUSIGA - HISTORY

Faced with these barriers, leading musicians like Jerry Hansen, Faisal Helwani, and Samuel Odoh, and several other prominent Ghanaian musicians at the time, organized themselves into the Musicians' Union of Ghana (MUSIGA). The union was officially founded in 1974 and its goal was to protect the rights and working conditions of Ghana's many musicians. Hansen himself was the organization's first president and,

together with his first cabinet, he laid out the map for the future of MUSIGA including presidential term limits, quadrennial congresses, regional elections, etc. In those early days, reflective of the music scene in Ghana, MUSIGA was a vibrant organization. Navigating the difficulties of any young organization, MUSIGA was seen as a welcome addition to the cultural and economic development toolkit of a young African nation. MUSIGA's short history is essential to fully understanding the digitization project currently taking place in Ghana, as the union plays a necessary and highly influential role. During an interview in July 2012, veteran radio disc jockey and current MUSIGA administrator, Ahuma "Daddy" Bosco Ocansey, provided a brief overview of the history of the union that I have, here, supplemented with external sources where relevant:

The first few years MUSIGA's existence were exciting and productive, organizing hundreds of Ghanaian musicians under one banner. The political instability of the late 1970's and early 1980s, however, disrupted both the Ghanaian economy and its budding music industry. As early as 1979, nearly one-quarter of MUSIGA's new members had left the country and musical production dropped by 75% (Cho, 2010). The decline only continued when Jerry John Rawlings came to power in December 1981 and by 1982, the coup attempts against him had become so frequent that his administration instigated a 6:00pm curfew that ultimately lasted for five years, stretching through 1987.

Compounding the political calamity, Ghana's government began participating in the IMF/World Bank led structural adjustments of the late 1980s. Designed to drive overall growth and foreign investment through wide-spread privatization and increased taxation, the policies had the reverse effect on the struggling Ghanaian music industry. Ultimately, the structural adjustments made it too expensive to produce the big-band

highlife for which Ghana was formerly known. The stall in production rippled through Ghana's creative industries; the other sections of the Ghanaian media economy that thrived during the evening hours, the activities of Ghana's music scene, along with its musicians and their new music union, dimmed close to obscurity (Amoakohene, 2012). For five years, Ghana's ambitious musicians were forced to continue their careers outside of Ghana, scraping by on performance revenue earned on trips to Europe and America.

Those musicians who returned after the curfew was lifted changed the Ghanaian music landscape drastically. As mentioned above, some musicians brought back a faster, more energetic, more western sounding, guitar-driven highlife. Others brought back variations of highlife that could not even be called highlife. Coinciding with Ghana's political instability, the hip hop movement in the United States began to form in the South Bronx neighborhood of New York during the early to mid-1970s in response to its own period of social and economic volatility. Shortly after Ghana's music scene began to redevelop, Ghanaian hiplife emerged as a combination of United States hip-hop and Ghanaian highlife (Chang, 2006).

But perhaps even more significant to the legacy of Ghana's musicians' union were the allegations of fraud and corruption among struggling Ghanaian musicians. Allegedly, some musicians padded their slim revenues by arranging unsanctioned tours to their musical destinations wherein undocumented Ghanaian tourists posed as official members of the musicians' entourages. Unfortunately, for a time, this unsavory but lucrative form of Visa fraud became synonymous with Ghanaian music and MUSIGA in particular.

All of this political upheaval, cultural blending, and organizational controversy

coalesced to create a highly disaffected population of musicians, so that toward the end of the first decade of the 21st century, Ghana and its union were primed for a change in direction. In mid to late 2011, members of MUSIGA began preparing for their fifth quadrennial congress during which MUSIGA delegates from across Ghana elected their organization's leaders. As outlined by its founders, the organization's president can serve up to two terms of four years each after which he or she becomes ineligible for further service. Among those running for election were Gyedu Blay Ambolley, a veteran Ghanaian musician, Nana Tuffour a musician from Kumasi, and Bice Osei Kuffour, also known as 'Obour.' According to Ocansey, Nana Tuffour's second place finish was a complete surprise to the MUSIGA community. Just as surprising was Gyedu Ambolley's 3rd place finish; many considered the veteran musician to be the favorite. However, when the candidates were required to present their cases, Obour – the young hiplife musician – made the strongest impression, listing clear and specific goals and demonstrating his capacity to organize and mobilize Ghana's musicians. Perhaps most importantly, Obour promised to fulfill one of the union's original 1974 goals – to change the way musicians had been earning their living.

RECENT HISTORY

Shortly after his inauguration as MUSIGA's president, Obour arranged the union's first National Executive Council during which representatives from all ten regions met to agree on the new vision and a plan of action. New positions were created as well, designed to distribute labor among the union and to ensure equal representation among all the known musical genres. Understanding of the importance of administration

to the success of any goal, Obour also hired several administrators, experienced in the media industry.

Within the first 100 days of his presidency, Obour, together with his cabinet of experts and regional directors, began an ambitious plan to re-brand Ghana's musicians' union, in order to counteract its marred reputation and achieve a higher level of cooperation with the nation's government and the para-governmental development agencies operating in Ghana's capitol. From the beginning, each of the union's projects were guided by a central statement of vision crafted by Obour's team: "The vision of MUSIGA under the leadership of President Obour is to ensure that musicians in Ghana receive the same treatment by their patrons and by the law as their contemporaries do around the world" (Simmons, 2012).

Armed with a new vision and a new organizational structure, Obour instigated several initiatives to begin rebuilding the Union's tarnished reputation and stagnant membership base. One of the first programs put in place was a nationwide membership drive, aimed at reorganizing and re-documenting union members. According to the President's First 100 Days Report, the launch took place at the National Theatre in Accra and was attended by nearly a quarter of a million members (Selah, 2012).

Additionally, in an attempt to improve the Union's relationship with both UNESCO and UNDP – major partners with creative industry organizations – Obour launched a Tolerance Campaign on the 16th of November - the International Day for Tolerance. As a part of the initiative, the President pledged that the activities of the Union would be especially focused on promoting peace, unity, and tolerance. Interestingly, MUSIGA's campaign launch also marked the first time Ghana had ever

officially celebrated the international holiday. The day of the launch, the Union, stakeholders and their partners presented a petition to the legislature to adopt the celebration of the day on the National calendar. A similar petition was also sent to Ghana's Vice-President to further facilitate the adoption of the holiday.

Two other activities stand out among the new Union's first steps toward achieving its vision. First among them was the MUSIGA Grand Ball, organized with the aim of "building relationships" and "improving the corporate image of the Union," according to the First 100 Days Report. The Union targeted primarily corporate executives and political leaders, and the Vice President of the Republic of Ghana was in attendance. And also of note, are the numerous courtesy calls, paid by the President and Union Executives on Policy makers, event organizers, prospective financing institutions, and funding agencies. Like the Ball, these visits were an attempt to introduce the new Union, its leadership, and its intentions to foster working relationships for the growth of both the country's Union and the overall Music industry in Ghana (Selah, 2012).

This list of activities serves to demonstrate the intensity with which MUSIGA and its new leadership sought to change their industry and their working environment. Alongside efforts to improve the union's image, Obour and his cabinet also successfully lobbied the Ghanaian government and, in December of 2011, the first industry specific royalty collection legislation in Ghana was passed, legally dismantling the arcane royalty collection methods of the previous 50 years.

DIGITIZATION

In early 2010, as Obour was launching his campaign for election, and organizing

the Union's rebranding strategy, members of the Norwegian Copyright Development Organization, NORCODE, had begun working with numerous developing nations to help bolster their digital intellectual property assets through the process of digitizing previously recorded music. Ghana and their musicians' union were among the recipients of such funding. By late 2011, when Ghana had passed its first copyright legislation into law, MUSIGA, with the help of NORCODE, had already digitized over 5000 previously recorded songs – ranging from traditional, to gospel, to highlife genres of music (“MUSIGA provides digital,” 2012). It is unclear from NORCODE or MUSIGA documents whether or not this aid represents a form of “tied-aid” in which MUSIGA will be required to perform specific actions, directed by NORCODE or their partners, in return for the financial assistance.

Armed with new copyright legislation, and a growing library of digitized music, MUSIGA executives immediately began looking for funding to make their newly available, newly protected music available online. And after just six months, in July 2012, MUSIGA held a press conference to announce the launching of their new website; standing alongside the Union's president and leadership team were representatives from The World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme, and Ecobank, a pan-African banking conglomerate. As the speakers revealed during the conference, these organizations had funded the development of the website and continue to fund its maintenance. They had also funded the development of a “music buying portal” that the website would be used to host. When the portal became operational in late 2012, “MUSIBUY” represented the first opportunity for Ghana's citizens to purchase music online (ICT for Accelerated Development, 2011).

CHAPTER III

LITERATURE REVIEW

As has been implied throughout the background and in the introduction to this study, the digitization of music in Ghana is dually significant. The initiation of MUSIBUY, Ghana's new digital music buying portal, signaled the re-entry of Ghanaian music into the digital marketplace after spending numerous years available in non-commodity form through peer-2-peer sharing. As a commodity that can be made scarce, and as form of communication often consumed through communication technologies, Ghana's digital music project falls under the purview of the political economy of communication (PEC) which studies of the allocation of scarce communication resources.

The project in Ghana, however, is also receiving funding from several international development organizations and being billed as an international development project in the popular press. While these phenomena may be seen, as well, through the lens of political economy, it will be helpful to analyze them from the perspective of development communication. In addition to narrowing the focus of study to communication phenomenon in relation to international development, much of the development literature also considers culture – something generally regarded as neighboring but outside of political economy. Employing development communication literature will enable this study to comment, briefly, on the cultural ramifications – if any – of the digitization and sale of Ghanaian music.

What follows is a brief review of the history of political economy and the political economy of communication, with special attention to the political economy of digital music. This literature will help develop and explore questions related to the beneficiaries and cost-bearers of the digitization project. Then, relevant literature from the development communication field will be reviewed in order to justify the previously proposed research questions related to the cultural and political impacts of this project. As a reminder this study seeks to determine who might benefit and who might incur costs from the digitization of Ghanaian music as revealed through the history of Ghana's music industry and the related documents.

POLITICAL ECONOMY OF COMMUNICATION

The political economy of communication is a field of research dedicated to understanding the total social role of communication as both a tool of commodification and a commodity itself. As a relatively young, 20th century discipline, its roots in the work of Adam Smith and Karl Marx are still heavily influential. Therefore, in order to obtain a full understand the political economy of communication, this introduction will first survey the history of political economy in general before focusing on the field's principal investigators and current directions. The review will conclude by offering a rounded definition of the field and exploring its applicability to a specific form of communication: music.

In his *Genealogy of Political Economy*, Babe (2009) traces the term "political economy" to the 18th century Scottish Enlightenment and the work of Adam Smith. In *The Wealth of Nations*, Smith uses the term to define his discipline – a branch of science

intended to help governments generate economic growth. Notable attributes of Smith's political economy include a focus on competition, free international trade, and something Smith called "self-love."

To many, these themes will recall the foci of traditional economics. Smith's initial conception of political economy, in fact, would develop into the present day discipline of economics. This transition, however, was aided by a theory developed in part by Smith but also by David Ricardo and Karl Marx – the labor theory of value (Babe, 2009).

Many of Marx's theories – historical materialism, dominant ideology, etc... – are central to present-day conceptions of political economy. However, Marx's belief that labor was the primary source of value – the labor theory of value – led some early 20th century political economists to search for a new theory of value that was less directly challenging to the systems of wealth accumulation already well described by Smith and being practiced by the governments he had advised (Babe, 2009). Isolating Smith's attention to self-interest from his concurrent interests in history, the social totality, and moral philosophy, neoclassical economists began operating under the premise that labor, land, and capital are only as important insofar as they enhance market value of goods or services (Mosco, 2009). Today, neoclassical economics (or, simply, economics) has become "a mathematical-deductive system – in stark contrast to classical political economy which was fully engaged with the cultural/political" (Babe, 2009, p. 14).

Some scholars, however, were not satisfied with economics' mathematical reductionism. Around the turn of the 20th century, the Chicago school sought to continue exploring Smith's focus on "self-love" but without the strict mathematical emphasis of

neoclassical economics. Known as positive or Chicago political economics, scholars in this field began applying neoclassical methods of analysis to a wider range of social issues. Importantly, however, like their neoclassical counterparts, positive political economists refused to employ subjective interpretation to their analyses.

The resurgence of political economy continued in the Frankfurt School. The Institute of Social Research at the University of Frankfurt began using the term critical, to refer to its use of Marxism toward the analysis of society. In the 1930s, however, researchers at Frankfurt began shifting their commitment to Marx's economic determinism and his exclusive focus on the economic base, to the cultural superstructure, which they believed was necessary in order to fully understand power relations within society. In addition to this, differing from the Chicago school, the Frankfurt theorists held that no theoretical position was value-free and, thus, began employing interpretation in their studies of society.

Critical political economy developed directly from this use of Marxist theory, and applies a Marxist lens to Smith's original interests in history and moral philosophy as well as self-interest. The political economy of communication would develop directly from the broader field of critical political economy. Not all political economy, though, is critical political economy. Therefore, before further explicating the development of the political economy of communication and the media, it is important to review the multiple and varied political economies that have emerged since Adam Smith.

Winseck and Jin (2012) identify at least four strands of political economy, relevant to the study of communication which are "(1) conservative and liberal neoclassical economics; (2) radical media political economy... (3) Schumpeterian

institutional political economy...and lastly (4) the cultural industries school” (p. 3).

Garnham (1979) adds the Austrian approach of Mises and Hayek and the Public Choice school that focuses on public policy formation.

Vincent Mosco’s (2009) lineage of political economy, echoes these categories, but synthesizes the development of political economy into two groups based on how they interact with Adam Smith’s early ideas. Those who attempted to develop Smith’s concept of self-interest into a scientific field, populate the first group. These are the neoclassical economists and economists of the present day mentioned previously. The second group, according to Mosco, are political economists; they are a vast and varied group of conservative and liberal scholars alike, distinguished by their collective commitment to “retain the concern for history, the social whole, moral philosophy, and praxis, even if that [means] giving up the goal of creating the science of economics” (p. 5). This second group includes neo-conservative political economists who employ the methodology of economics, but to all of social life; institutional political economists who focus on the way institutions and technology affect markets; a variety of neo-Marxian political economists who place class at the center of their investigations; and, finally, political economists who operate within specific social movements such as the feminist political economists or environmental political economy (Mosco, 2009).

As mentioned, political economists, while diverse, largely agree on certain guiding concepts. The significance of historical events, for example, is critical to the work of political economists. As opposed to the neo-classical economists, whose goal it is to reduce human behavior to static, mathematical models, political economists employ

historical processes of social change – from one mode of production to another – in their analyses of present day economic problems.

When analyzing history, political economists also typically focus their inquiries on something called the social totality: commodities, institutions, social relations, and hegemony. Traditionally, commodity goods produced by wage labor are “valued for what they bring in the marketplace” (Meehan, Mosco, & Wasko, 1993, p. 350). Institutions, in political economy, refer to capital, labor, and the state. Social relations usually refer to questions of class, gender, and race and their role in the social distribution of power. Finally, hegemony, as developed by Gramsci, indicates the “common sense” dominant ideology that the ruling class of a given society uses to subordinate the working classes through their active consent (source?). Together, these elements comprise the social whole that political economists take into consideration when studying a specific, historically rooted, social event.

Two additional concentrations distinguish political economy from its neo-classical counterparts: an interest in the role of morality or values in the process of social change, and a commitment to integrate political economic research into the social change process itself. As a moral philosopher and an economist, Adam Smith argued that values should be both the subject of social examination as well as guides for social participation. Contemporary political economists differ from traditional economists in their ability to grapple with moral as well as social questions (Meehan, Mosco, & Wasko, 1993).

During the early to mid 20th century, several thinkers began applying the theories and methods of political economy to the growing field of communication. Dallas Smythe was among the first communication scholars to attempt to synthesize the complex, multi-

faceted discipline of political economy with communications technology. Here, Smythe (1960), offers a general explanation of political economy before reconnecting it to the field of communication:

A seemingly universal condition of life has been the relative scarcity of certain services and things as compared to the quantities of them which are needed or desired...political economy is concerned with how mankind arranges to allocate these scarce resources with a view toward satisfying certain of the needs (and leaving certain other needs unsatisfied) (p. 564).

Just a few paragraphs later, Smythe clarifies further, suggesting that the practice of political economy is to ask, “who gets what scarce goods, when, how and where” and “who takes what actions in order to provide what scarce goods and services, when how and where.” Finally, Smythe connects these questions to communications: “The political economy of communications is the asking and answering of these questions with the services and goods we have described above as constituting communications” (p.564).

Drawing from his research and his own work as an institutional economist, Smythe taught the first course in the political economy of communication at the University of Illinois. Although political turmoil forced him to relocate shortly after beginning his career at Illinois, Smythe’s successor, Herbert Schiller, continued his work training political economists within the field of communication to analyze both the organizational integration of corporate communications as well as the imperial and class-related effects of media concentration. Roughly 15 years following his expatriation, working again in academia as a professor at the Communication Department at Simon Fraser University, Smythe reinvigorated his research in the political economy of

communication, publishing several important articles before his death in 1992 (Melody, 1994). His 1977 article revolutionized the political economy of communication, introducing the concept of the audience commodity in which communication plays the role of advertiser, organizing demand for industrial products, and the role of commoditizer, creating commodities out of the consumers of communication products (audiences).

Together, Schiller and Smythe represent the active and growing vein of North American political economy of communications which focuses on “power and social class relations...as well as committing to praxis by combining research and action” (Mosco, 2009, p. 7). As the political economy of communication has gained traction, it has continued along this trajectory – challenging the behaviorist and empiricist assumptions of neoclassical economics through research and policy advocacy. Working within this lineage are several important figures including Dan Schiller, Edward Herman, Dwayne Winseck, Eileen Meehan, Vincent Mosco, Janet Wasko and many, many others – even the late Herbert Schiller and Dallas Smythe themselves introduced key works in the last years of their lives (Mosco, 2009).

In Europe, though the academic lineage of the political economy of communication is less direct, several scholars have shaped the field considerably. Of note are Graham Murdock and Peter Golding who worked in concert from the Center for Mass Communication Research at the University of Leicester. Together they argued that the mass media are both industrialized commodities as well as tools used for the dissemination of ideas about economic and political systems (Golding and Murdock, 1997).

The present-day field of the political economy of communication is expanding exponentially – certainly too vast to address here, and too large even for Mosco’s (2009) widely circulated introductory text which calls for an encyclopedia of the field to cover it adequately (p.104). Yet, as this summary has attempted to demonstrate, the foundational elements of the political economy of communication – the templates guiding the present study – are clear. As forged by Smith and Marx and synthesized by Smythe and Mosco, “political economy is about survival – how societies organize themselves to produce what they need to reproduce themselves – and control – how societies maintain order to meet economic, political, social, and cultural goals” (Meehan, Mosco, & Wasko, 1993, p. 349). The political economy of communication has the additional challenge of answering these questions regarding a social process that is both commodity and advertisement (ideology), which collapses Marx’s base and superstructure (Golding & Murdock, 1997; Herman, 1996; Meehan, Mosco, & Wasko, 1993; Smythe, 1977). And the political economist of communication has the further obligation, not only to unveil the inner workings of those complex processes, but to employ her or his research as advocates for a more just society.

POLITICAL ECONOMY OF MUSIC

Following this model, several scholars have turned their analytical attention to the political economic relationships within the music industry. Although music has stood as a major form of communication throughout human history, its necessarily “live,” performative quality has kept its product and its practitioners largely outside the purview of political economists. The development of recording technology, however, enabled the

capture and coercion of music for the purpose of generating profit – the commodification of music. The digitization of the music industry currently taking place further facilitates this commodification process, reducing costs for intellectual property owners and distributors while simultaneously elevating costs for consumers. This section will briefly outline the historical role of pre-recorded music in society, the innovation of recording technology and the consequent commodification process, and review the recent scholarship regarding the political economy of digital music specifically.

The first comprehensive political economic analysis of music, pre and post recording technology, was offered in 1977 by French author Jacques Attali (1985). In his seminal text, *Noise*, Attali argues that the Western search for knowledge has been too sight-centric, “...the world is not for the beholding. It is for hearing. It is not legible, but audible” (p. 3). Rather, Attali suggests that music should be a primary tool for understanding the production and control of society.

Music is inscribed between noise and silence, in the space of the social codification it reveals. Every code of music is rooted in the ideologies and technologies of its age, and at the same time produces them...time traverses music and music gives meaning to time (p. 19).

Guided by this premise, Attali traces the history of music and musicians before and after capital to understand society. His theories of the foundational role of music help the contemporary political economist of music interpret the present-day role of music (and digital music) in society.

Attali’s history begins with the distinction between music and musician – arguably one of the first divisions of labor in society. In the first centuries of human

history, musicians were simultaneously relegated to low social classes while being elevated to priest-like positions for the powers music was deemed to have. This early pattern continued as castes of slave musicians were created by ancient religions to facilitate religious services and help establish systems of power; royalty had access to the healing powers of music otherwise unavailable to the people. These slave-classes of early musicians are evidenced by the Islamic laws prohibiting believers from eating with musicians at the same table, laws that remained in place through the 20th century. From early Grecian society to ancient Chinese power systems, musicians helped indicate and denote power. Those who had power had musicians at their service (Attali, 1985, p. 12-13).

Concurrent to the development of music as an indicator of power, music developed an unregulated thread that continued to accompany subversive practices and cultic rituals, i.e., rites of the social marginalities. This music was often brutally repressed by mainstream systems of religious and political power. As societies formed and developed, the importance of harnessing the ‘music of the masses’ became, for some, a way to legitimize power – as demonstrated by Charlemagne who would impose (by force) the adoption of the Gregorian chant. For others, music remained pagan, paranormal, and condemned (Attali, 1985, p. 14).

During the Middle Ages, musicians and their music became a more accepted element of life for members of every social class. Though still officially condemned by the Church, musicians were both entertainers and essential propagators of information for pre-capitalist society. Overall, however, musicians were *jongleurs* – members a class of entertainers that were inseparable from daily life in the middle ages.

As the fourteenth century developed, however, musicians became more skilled, music became more complicated, and the demand for skilled musicians increased. By the sixteenth century, the vagabond musicians from the Middle Ages had been banished and, in their place, the courts used trained, salaried musicians. The entertainer-class of musicians still existed, and the trained musicians often borrowed from their compositions. However, the music of the courts did not flow down into the popular music. As Attali (1985) concludes, “the musician, then, was from that day forward economically bound to a machine of power, political or commercial, which paid him a salary for creating what it needed to affirm its legitimacy” (p. 17).

For Attali (1985), music is always a tool and a reflection of power. Whether to help people forget the fear of violence in ritual society, or to create the illusion of order through harmony, or to silence those who oppose power through mass-produced repetition, music both serves and reveals its master, making audible the “rare noises that cultures, in their normalization of behavior, see fit to authorize” (p. 19-20).

This claim is well demonstrated as music becomes recorded and distributed through Thomas Edison’s 1878 invention of the phonograph that created the technological capacity for recording and replaying sound. Berliner’s 1894 lateral gramophone discs allowed the large-scale reproduction of recorded music, lowered production costs, and enabled the mass consumption of recorded music upon which today’s music industry is founded. Three decades later in 1918, over 166 distinct record companies had emerged, earning over \$150 million in profits from the sale of gramophone technologies. And, in spite of the development of electronic music, the great depression, and the invention of radio and television, record sales had topped \$1.2

billion by 1970. By the turn of the millennium, the global recorded music industry was valued at \$38.1 billion dollars (Sirois & Wasko, 2011).

What does this treatment of music reveal? While the physical forms and methods of distribution change, the value of the age appears unchanged, revealed and simultaneously co-created by the musical commodity:

After entering into commodity exchange, [music] participated in the growth and creation of capital and the spectacle. Fetishized as a commodity, music is illustrative of the evolution of our entire society: deritualize a social form, repress an activity of the body, specialize its practice, sell it as a spectacle, generalize its consumption, then see to it that it is stockpiled until it loses its meaning (Attali, 1985, p. 4-5).

Attali's critique places contemporary musicians and their music in much the same position as the court musicians of the 16th century – skilled, salaried servants of the powers of the age – not Kings but capital.

DIGITAL MUSIC

To some hopeful scholars, the invention of the Mp3 digital music file signaled a possible end to the centuries old relationship between music and power (Hsieh, 2002; Rogers, 2013). An essential step in the commodification of music is its fetishization; a commodity must be made scarce in order to generate demand and, ultimately, leverage a fee for its consumption. As Sirois and Wasko (2011) acknowledge, "the MP3 format has in many ways destroyed the recorded music industry's production and distribution models as very little is physically produced and thus made scarce" (p. 352). In the early

days of the 21st century, many hoped for a return to the direct, vagabond relationship with the musician from Attali's Middle Ages – one in which musician and listener had a direct, unmediated relationship.

The hope, however, was short lived, and the technical determinism revealed – that an innovation like the Mp3 would lead to a utopia in which the reduction of material requirements for production and distribution would lead to increased benefits for all parties involved. Instead, after a few years of reduced profits, record companies quickly rediscovered an old method of fetishization with a renewed applicability – copyright law.

Without the scarcity of a physical form, the only way to fetishize the musician's labor is via copyright law. As Burkart and McCourt (2006) remind us, in the digital age, copyrights are the only true musical commodities.

If media industries are to sell products on the Internet, they must be able to restrict access to those products. This lockdown [is] accomplished through code, as in DRM, and supported by laws such as the Digital Millennium Copyright Act and the Sonny Bono Term Extension Act—laws created at the behest of copyright holders in closed debates in which no consumer or citizen interests were represented (p. 117-118).

From the state of the digital music industry in 2006, Burkart and McCourt make several predictions for consumers and artists. Foremost, “fans of music will suffer. They lose rights to first sale and, forced to repurchase access rights at intervals, become tenants in the hands of rent-seeking cultural landlords” (p. 128). “Many consumers will add another utility bill (from a music-service provider or clearinghouse) to their monthly budget, and record labels will still be able to extract modest amounts of money from vast numbers of

people”. But perhaps more importantly, “it seems unlikely that [digital music] will change any structural relationships between label and artist... nor will it lead to an abundance of cultural pluralism and diversity (p.37).

Last year, Ostrove (2012) published a review of financially successful independent hip hop artists, that complicates the notion that large record industry corporations are the primary beneficiaries of the commodification and digitization of music. He does arrive at a similar conclusion regarding the relationship between scarcity and financial gain in the digital age, noting that “as more and more countries establish intellectual property rights protections and crackdown on websites that allow illegal file sharing, record labels’ profits from international sales improve” (p. 49). However, Ostrove’s overall conclusion is that independent – meaning artists who are unaffiliated with large corporations – achieve financial success through the same process. “In order to allow independent hip hop artists to be financially successful, an artist’s music and brand must become a fetishized commodity.”

From these studies, in regard to the digitization project currently taking place in Ghana, similar questions arise. Does the digitization and associated copyright protection lobbying benefit the average Ghanaian artists? If so, how long will they continue to receive the benefits before rent-seekers take advantage of the new digital infrastructure? More simply, based on historical examples from around the world and current events unfolding in Ghana, who is staged to benefit economically from the digitization of Ghanaian music? And who will pay the costs?

DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATION THEORY

As alluded to by Burkhart, McCourt, and others, many of the concerns related to the digitization project, are also development-related in nature. So, while the digitization project in Ghana can be analyzed from a political economic perspective, it is also an overtly development motivated project. As such, its benefits and potential detriments will be best illuminated by a review of the relevant international development theories, many of which, in fact, overlap with political economy theories. Development communication theories will also be discussed.

The first and most applicable development theory is the modernization theory of development. This paradigm arose following World War II as a strategy for recreating the increases in living standards in Western industrialized nations by applying Western technology, physical and theoretical, to the targeted nations. As Melkote and Steeves state:

The dominant paradigm [the modernization paradigm] was mainly concerned with economic growth as measured by gross national product (GNP) rates and encouragement of all factors and institutions that accelerated and maintained high growth in areas such as capital-intensive industrialization and technology with private ownership of factors of production, free trade, and the principle of *laissez-faire* (Melkote & Steeves, 2001).

From this perspective, it is easy to see the digitization project currently taking place in Ghana as a direct application of those principles. By making music available for purchase, locally produced cultural products are being brought under the influence of liberal economic policy in an attempt to, ultimately, increase Ghana's GNP. The

president of MUSIGA himself, Obour, effectively summarizes the benefits of the digitization project from a modernization perspective. When asked about the digitization project, including the union's new website and music buying portal, he responded that the new technology will help to "create wealth for music right owners, increase investor confidence to the sector, and also make our industry more responsive to modern trends" ("MUSIGA re-launches website," 2012).

Operating from within the modernization paradigm, the World Trade Organization (WTO) has come out in support of projects like the Ghana's digitization project. Like other large development organizations, the WTO creates trade related policy that exerts pressure on states to liberalize their markets. Recently they have begun urging the liberalization of audio-visual media markets, as well. In Ghana's case, the digitization process and the cultivation of the web-based sales portal do more than just liberalize an existing market. Rather, the new website and MUSIBUY actually create an open market where no market existed before. In doing so, as has been mentioned, MUSIGA executives hope to create a higher standard of living for their musicians. Those agencies funding the project hope that introducing Ghanaian music into the digital marketplace will allow Ghana access to some part of the 2.2 trillion dollar global music market ("MUSIGA provides digital," 2012).

Another development organization, the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) sees projects like the one in Ghana involving the commoditization of intellectual property as, "central for economic, social, and cultural development around the world." Established as a special UN agency in 1967, their mission has been to promote the "effective application and protection of IP" around the world. Recently, though, in 2007,

WIPO established the internal Committee on Development and Intellectual Property tasked with reducing the digital divide through:

1) Technical assistance and capacity building; 2) norm-setting along with public policy and public domain issues; 3) technology transfer, information and communication technology, as well as access to knowledge; 4) assessment and evaluation, and; 5) governance - (McPhail, 2009, p. 61).

These goals fit almost directly within the explicit goals of the Ghanaian music digitization project.

When addressing the benefits of the modernization paradigm in any formulation, however, one must also consider the potential detriments. In its roughly 70-year existence, the modernization paradigm has amassed a long list of critics and criticisms. In general, scholars have argued that classic modernization is inherently corrosive to local cultures because it assumes that Western industrialization is the ideal way to organize society (McPhail, 2009). Practically, this means that many of the “problems” within the under-developed nations are actually determined and solved outside of the target communities.

In 1966, author and economist Andre Gunder Frank raised one of the most powerful critiques of modernization to date. In his now seminal article, *The Development of Underdevelopment*, Frank argues that, “in contrast to development of the world metropolis which is no one’s satellite, the development of the national and subordinate metropolises is limited by their satellite status” (p.80). Essentially, Frank argues that underdevelopment is not a natural state, but rather a requisite condition of development in other (Western) nations.

Related to this notion of underdevelopment, Dependency theory – developed in the middle of the 20th century but popularized in the 1970s – argues that developed countries cultivate a state of dependence within underdeveloped nations by importing resources from the underdeveloped country, effectively requiring that country, whose resources are being used to produce goods for the developed nations, import many of its necessities from other more developed nations. The mechanisms can also include educational products, media, and culture.

When considering these critiques in relation to Ghana’s music digitization project, the concept of *media imperialism* becomes relevant. Media imperialism, and cultural imperialism more generally, were concepts first used in the late 1960s by development policymakers to explain the unidirectional flow of informational and entertainment media from Western countries to other underdeveloped nations. Influenced by dependency theorists and Galtung’s (1971) *structural imperialism*, critical scholars in the US and abroad began to employ the terms to describe the process by which dominant nations impose their beliefs, values, and norms upon other nations. Media was seen as central to this process and, thus, media imperialism came to be used alongside cultural imperialism.

Critics of the concepts disagreed with the accusations made by the theories for several reasons. They claimed that the overall thesis was inconsistently defined and, consequently, did not consistently explain the phenomenon it claimed to explain. Other critics of media imperialism claimed that the theory did not acknowledge the agency that audience members have to intelligently consume mediated messages. To these critics, media and cultural imperialism over-emphasize a “passive” audience without crediting the ‘resistance’ of many audiences against colonialism and imperialism. Lastly,

criticizing the methodology employed by cultural imperialism theorists, some have argued that the actual effects of media imperialism are too frequently *assumed* rather than explained in detail; to critics, the negative cultural impacts of one-way flow are too often presented as generally ‘bad’ without being delineated (Wasko, 2013).

The definition of media imperialism employed in this study is given by Boyd-Barrett (2010) who, in response to the above critiques, defines media imperialism as, “the process whereby the ownership, structure, distribution or content of the media in any one country are singly or together subject to substantial external pressures from the media interests of any other country or countries without proportionate reciprocation of influence by the country so affected” (p. 145). This use replaces the nation as the primary unit of force with the more appropriate “media interests” of a country or countries. In a highly globalized yet highly concentrated music industry, this adjustment to the original definition seems appropriate. It also acknowledges the lack of reciprocal input – the one-way flow – without necessitating the absence of resistance to external pressure. In addition to employing this definition, the current study will also attempt to explain the effects of “media interests” in as much detail as is available, avoiding generalizations.

Overall, the argument could be made that, rather than providing a service to the citizens of Ghana, improving the country’s GDP, etc., that the efforts of the digitization project – funded by the UNDP, under the influence of western nations – are making music *less* accessible for the average Ghanaian in order to both generate revenue for an elite few and, in the process, cultivate a reliance upon the digital technologies (created outside of Ghana) required to consume digitized forms of culture. This phenomenon is

articulated, as well, by McPhail's (2009) definition of imperialism in which "the process of empire...occurs when the dominant interests of one nation bring to bear their military and economic power upon another nation or region in order to expropriate its land, labor, capital, natural resources and markets" (McPhail, p. 26).

From one perspective, Ghana's music digitization project fits well within the modernization paradigm, and, thus, it is subject to the associated criticisms noted above. However, if the website and music portal work as MUSIGA leaders hope, Ghana will be able to support and sustain an even larger community of musicians, allowing more of Ghana's citizens to be represented culturally. Popular Ghanaian highlife and reggae musician, Samini, defines the role of music and the musician in Ghanaian society:

Not just in Ghanaian society – in this case we're talking about Ghana – music a very powerful tool. It's a means of communication. It's a means of expressing oneself or expressing the grievances of a group of people... Most of these people are not heard and don't have any means of bringing out their say or their grievance. When an artist hears different things from such areas and puts them all together into an art form, then that becomes what represents people like that so that when that song is played, people feel like they're apart of that song so that more than one person can connect to something larger, and they feel connected...that can actually be a song, the people's anthem... (Samini, 2012).

These words very clearly demonstrate the potential benefit of successful musical careers for their society. A digital music industry, therefore, combined with effective copyright policy has the potential to be a highly empowering combination.

During the early 1970s, in response to some of the criticisms of the modernization

paradigm, communication development scholars and policy-makers began to rethink development. Within what was then considered “the dominant paradigm,” any citizen participation – in a health education program or some improved agricultural practices, for example – were simply “participation-as-a-means.” Several scholars began asking, however, what development would look like using a “participation-as-an-end” perspective. Those scholars argued that participation or, “participation-as-end,” is a basic human right:

The need to think, express oneself, belong to a group, be recognized as a person, be appreciated and respected, and have some say in crucial decisions affecting one’s life are as essential to the development of an individual as eating, drinking, and sleeping (Melkote & Steeves, 2001).

One product of this re-prioritization of participation in development is the notion of empowerment. Empowerment is a term that has been used widely and broadly by critics of development and development practitioners alike. The World Bank defines empowerment as:

the process of increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes...Central to this process are actions which both build individual and collective assets, and improve the efficiency and fairness of the organizational and institutional context which govern the use of these assets (“Empowerment,” 2011).

Critics of the neoliberal policy reforms and structural adjustments enacted by development agencies (like the World Bank), however, argue that empowerment is actually an extension of the neoliberal worldview. Rowlands (1995) suggests that,

imprecisely defined, empowerment can actually exacerbate the oppression of ‘disempowered’ peoples.

This project employs the broad sense of empowerment wherein empowerment is a construct of core ideas that refers to the “manifestation of social power at individual, organizational, and community levels of analysis” (Melkote & Steeves, 2001). As Samini argues above, digitizing Ghana’s music would add to Ghana’s musicians’ ability to vocalize their own concerns – the individual level – but also the concerns of Ghanaian people generally. In other words, this project takes the position that increasing the agency of Ghana’s musicians is equivalent to increasing their level of empowerment. Though, as this study will go on to explore, the ways in which that agency is increased may need more detailed attention.

Just as within the modernization paradigm, there are several new development organizations employing this alternative paradigm. Among them, the Global Alliance for Cultural Diversity is a project that aims to turn creativity in developing countries into sustainable cultural industries. According to McPhail, this organization is “working to promote the international respect and enforcement of intellectual property rights without which artists and creators cannot protect their work or turn their creativity into viable businesses” (2009, p. 92). Unlike the modernization paradigm that emphasizes the adoption of western ideology and western technology as a means to achieve national development, the Global Alliance for Cultural Diversity’s goal is to use IP to empower the individual, both as an artist and as a businessperson.

Similarly, the International Network for Cultural Diversity (INCD) advocates for the digitization of local culture, like the project taking place in Ghana as a means to

achieve empowerment. Their goal, however, is in more direct opposition to what they see as the perils of the application of modernization theory principles in national development: “The INCD is a worldwide network of artists and cultural groups dedicated to countering the homogenizing effects of globalization on culture” (“About the INCD,” 2012), which also includes the “promotion of the international respect and enforcement of intellectual property rights without which artists and creators cannot protect their work or turn their creativity into viable businesses” (McPhail, 2009, p.92).

With these seeming contradictions in mind, questions about benefit arise again: Can both groups of organizations benefit equally from the same project? If not, where does the greater benefit lie? If so, what theoretical framework allows for the coexistence of such a mutual, and seemingly oppositional benefit?

...

The background information and relevant literature reviewed thus far has illuminated the various benefit claims being made regarding the digitization of music in Ghana. Some claim that the digitization project will generate revenue for both the state and its musicians – revenue that can be used to propel the country further into industrial development and higher up international quality of life measurements. Others claim that the project will help archive and protect the country’s culture for future generations. Yet, disagreeing with both groups, critics from the academic community argue that projects like the one taking place in Ghana usually achieve the opposite – lower overall revenue for artists, increased capital accumulation among the owners of the means of production, and a more homogenized cultural product.

Where, then, do the greatest benefits lie, and for whom? By outlining the various

benefit claims located in the relevant documents, situating them historically and comparing them to previous attempts at digitization internationally, this study will attempt to determine who is benefitting from the digitization of the Ghanaian music industry, economically, culturally, and politically. Using the political economy notion of social totality as the primary theoretical heuristic, a balanced conclusion will be sought – one that avoids a simple black and white argument and, instead, supports multiple realities simultaneously. And finally, in keeping with political economy, this study will conclude with positive suggestions for lawmakers and practitioners on the ground in Ghana.

CHAPTER IV

METHODOLOGY

In order to adequately address this study's primary research questions – determining who is benefiting economically, culturally, and politically from the digitization and commodification of music in Ghana – this study will utilize both document analysis and historical analysis. Through these methods, the goal will be to identify the beneficiaries – explicit and implicit – and to determine their motivations. The two analyses will then be combined to form a contextualized, narrative explanation of the situation.

DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

Material culture, of which documents are a part, has been an important source of data for nearly all the human sciences. Communication scholars, look to material culture for physical, referential elements of the communication process. Though often obscured by the human under-sensitivity to everyday objects, material culture can be “an unusually cunning and oblique device for the representation of fundamental cultural truths...[carrying] meaning that could not be put more explicitly without the danger of controversy, protest, or refusal” (Lindlof & Taylor, 2010, p. 222-223).

Documents, like material culture in general, constitute important informational windows into the work and pastimes of the people who use and create them. Documents can reveal the specialized practices of a group of people, they can document claims to power and legitimacy, and they can reliably preserve communication events. Lindlof and

Taylor (2010), distinguish between primary and secondary documents, defining the former as eyewitness accounts and the latter as indirect evidences such as news stories. They distinguish as well between records, which are commissioned by an organization, and personal documents, which are created more-or-less spontaneously in response to an event. Admittedly, documents' meanings can vary with time and place and the increasing digitization of documents will inevitably result in the selective survival of some texts and not others. However, in general, documents are informationally rich, readily available, nonreactive, and reliable source of data.

This study will use a variety of documents related to the digitization project in Ghana to determine who is benefiting from the process. Numerous news outlets in Ghana have followed the digitization project including the involvement of NORCODE, the UNDP, and the World Bank. The country's budget documents, and copyright policies, and cultural policies will also provide valuable verifications of the narratives being told in the news and in MUSIGA press releases. The MUSIGA website also offers important descriptions of the digitization project and of the context of the project in general. The final piece of data will be a list of the songs digitized through the digitization project as of July 2013.

In all cases, the sample size of primary documents will aim to be exhaustive: All of the websites of the corporations mentioned on the MUSIGA website in relation to the digitization project will be analyzed along with all of MUSIGAs digitally available annual reports and press releases concerning the digitization; all of the UNDP documents and transcripts referring to the project will be considered; and all of Ghana's cultural and budget documents that are digitally available will be considered; and all of the songs

currently digitized through the project will be analyzed for patterns and biases.

Supplementing these primary documents, the online news coverage that explicitly mentions the digitization project will help establish context for the project. These will be considered alongside mission statements and annual reports from the UNDP and NORCODE – the development organizations involved in the project. Finally, US and international music revenue reports and digital sales reports will be used to balance the benefit claims made in the primary documents.

HISTORICIZATION

Documents, while nonreactive, are not purely objective. In fact, the very benefit of using documents is their ability to encapsulate an array of cultural and historical perspectives, allowing a detailed glimpse into a specific moment in time. In order to determine their meaning, however, documents need to be placed in a broader historical context. This emphasis on the importance of the original context for determining the meaning of a given text is sometimes referred to as historicism.

Like many important terms in the social sciences, historicism has had multiple meanings and multiple usages since its early conceptualization. However, the overall emphasis on a text's original context and its meaning to that text's original audience has played an interesting and important role in the development of history, philosophy, and even media studies. Ernst Breisach, in his 2007 work, *Historiography*, places the roots of historicism among what he calls the period of "reassessment of historical order and truth" that took place during the 18th century. According to Breisach, by then the Christian view of history in which divine intervention was responsible for historical events and the

motivations behind them had begun to fade and, in its place, historians, philosophers, and scientists began to suggest alternative versions of history. One of the dominant suggestions was offered by philosopher and empiricist David Hume who interpreted history as a string of human causes and motivations with “no sympathy for theological interpretations of the past” (Little, 2011). In the philosophy of history, this strand of history of which Hume was a proponent is known as the Anglo-American tradition. In it, human causes and actions are treated like scientific facts analogous to atomic particles that can be known and analyzed empirically.

In the early 19th century, following this tradition, August Comte developed his own philosophical system of inquiry called positivism in which all forms of knowledge are subject to empiricist methods of data gathering. Treated like an empirical science, history served as a method of analyzing historical facts in order to arrive at generalizable laws using logic alone (Tosh, 1984). Philosophers Carl Hempel and Ernest Nagel are twentieth century followers of this general belief (Little, 2011).

Historicism, however, arose out of the alternative view that, unlike physics or chemistry, human actions were too complicated to be understood – let alone generalized into universal laws – by a simple collection of historical artifacts. Those who turned away from the scientific model in relation to history came to be known as idealists. Idealism holds that individuals in history can attain knowledge about history from “imaginative identification” with subjects from history. All knowledge, in fact, can be determined simply by thinking about the past as if you were a member of a different era (Tosh, 1984).

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel exemplifies both idealism and the historicism to

which it naturally led. Reacting to the scientific certainty of the Enlightenment, Hegel saw history as a dialectical process of development in which every period of history is unique and deserves individual recognition. In order to understand history, therefore, one must attempt to understand the events of a given period on their own terms. Historian R.G. Collingwood (1946) is an example of an idealist philosopher. He suggests that the historian's job is to re-enact, in his mind, the thoughts and intentions of individuals in the past.

As mentioned briefly, another of Hegel's most important contributions was his notion of dialectical development. Although this specific iteration of the Hegelian dialectic was not developed by Hegel himself, Hegel's view of historical development can be summed up in three stages: thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. To use a primitive example, thesis may stand for the human experience of extreme heat. The antithesis, which is a negation of the thesis, would be the human experience of extreme cold. The synthesis, according to Hegel, is a way of resolving the tension between the two experiences. In this example, extreme heat and extreme cold are resolved by placing both on a continuum like the Fahrenheit temperature scale. Hegel believed that human understanding required the polarization of the thesis and antithesis which was then resolved by a synthesis.

Coming after Hegel, philosopher Karl Marx refused to accept Hegel's mystified notion of the dialectic, preferring historical materialism. Table 1 shows the four historical modes of production (including one mode yet to come):

Table 1: Historical Modes of Production (Breisach, 2007, p. 296)

Primitive Communism (Asiatic Mode)	Ancient Slavery	Medieval Feudalism	Capitalism	(Yet to come) Socialism/Communism
No private property in means of production	Private property in means of production	Private property in means of production	Private property in means of production	No private property in means of production
--Communal property --Society organized in "gens" (large family groups) --Upper stage of barbarism, dawn of civilization -- Cooperative order	--Based on slavery -- Manufacture --Rise of merchant class --Dissolution of communal ties; stigma on labor	--Small handcraft and farming mode of production --Manor and guild --Gradually money economy erodes order	--Discoveries and impact of cities/industry/capital --Economy, with wage earners (labor a commodity); from it great antagonism between capitalist and proletariat	--The stage which harbors no contradictions within itself and hence will last forever

As illustrated in the chart, although Marx abandons notions of Hegel's Spirit, he certainly embraces Hegel's historicism. History, for Marx, is the process of progress, determined by the economic conditions of reproduction (Breisach, 2007).

Since Marx, three primary formulations and uses of historicism have emerged. The first, and the most prominent, of those formulations is derived from this overall view of history as progressional, directional, and intrinsically tied to the context in which it arises, developed by Hegel, Marx, and their followers. The second noteworthy conception of historicism generalizes Hegel's preoccupation with moments in history and applies it directly to the pursuit of a historical record. Tosh (1984) defines this version of

historicism, as the view that each historical age is a unique manifestation of the human spirit, with its own culture, norms, and values; any historian's attempt to understand a particular age must concede the potential changes in human nature that have occurred since that time which may have since alienated the historian from that age and historians, therefore, must always attempt to let go of their present day values so that they may see a culture from the inside – as if they were members of the age.

However, the desire to incorporate both perspectives – to ground historical findings in their original context while still providing an interpretation of those findings for contemporary readers – has led to a third formulation of historicism. In this formulation, historicism still asserts the importance of a text or event's first audience. However, the application of this importance is less specifically historical and more generally hermeneutical. As mentioned previously, following the swell of scientific development during the period of enlightenment, historians were tempted to apply the same cause and effect logic to their craft. Others saw this as a detriment. Scholars such as Wilhelm Dilthey believed that the study of human history and behavior was “inherently distinct from the natural sciences in that the former depend on the understanding of meaningful human actions, while the latter depend on causal explanation of non-intentional events”. Dilthey borrowed the hermeneutical tools used by Biblical scholars of his time – tools of interpretation – and applied them to the study of human history and human behavior (Little, 2011). His method, known by the German term *Verstehen* (understanding), attempted to “comprehend the complex intertwining of forces as dynamic wholes” (Tosh, 1984, p. 205).

Dilthey's hermeneutics of human action had significant influence on the

development of the continental philosophy of history. And after the linguistic turn in the social sciences of the 1970s, historians, philosophers, and literary scholars of all philosophical persuasions began to accept this general belief in the importance of context for the interpretation of events. Today, most social scientists recognize “the rhetoric of historical writing, the non-reducibility of historical narrative to a sequence of “facts”, and the degree of construction that is involved in historical representation” (Little, 2011). This is the Historicism to which Paul Hamilton (2003) dedicated his introductory text, *Historicism*: “Artworks and historical events, like our reworkings of them, are inseparable from their moment”.

This is the historicism most widely adopted today. Academics in the Media Studies field are just some of the social scientists who employ this type of hermeneutical historicism. Operating from a cultural perspective, scholars like Richard Dyer (1979), for example, combine personal experience together with historical evidence to analyze the communities to which they belong. From another perspective, historicism is clearly a dominant value of political economists of the media. Peter Golding and Graham Murdock (1997) describe their work as together as historically located: “The historical anchoring of critical analysis is distinct from any approach which is...detached from the specifics of historical time and place” (p. 72).

Overall, historicism is both a heavily loaded and influential term for history and social sciences in general. It connotes a hermeneutical commitment to grounding interpretation of historical events in their original contexts; it implies at least some degree of determinism in history; and it disallows historical interpretations that ignore the role of causal factors. Although not universally supported, it is an important tool for anyone

involved in the interpretation of human events, not least of which, media studies.

For the present study, therefore, the quality of the interpretation of events will be tied to the extent to which that interpretation is grounded in the moment-to-moment history of events. Only by situating the digitization of Ghanaian music within the broader history of music, recorded music, Ghanaian music, digital music, and the international record industry will the study be able to most appropriately determine who is likely to benefit from the project, and how might any conflicting benefit claims be resolved.

CHAPTER V

HISTORICAL ANALYSIS: DIGITIZATION IN CONTEXT

Thus far, the present study has argued that human events must be contextualized in order to be best understood. Therefore, in order to fully comprehend the digitization of music in Ghana, its beneficiaries, and those who bear its costs, this chapter will seek an answer to this study's first question: what is the political economic history of the Ghanaian music industry? Here, relying on policy, news, and corporate documents, the study will offer a historical narrative of the events leading up to the digitization project and of the current events surrounding the project. As Smythe has stated so succinctly, our goal in this section is to determine "who gets what scarce goods, when, how and where."

As a reminder, the information uncovered in this chapter will be used to more fully answer this study's secondary questions:

1. Who claims to benefit from the digitization of Ghanaian music and how long will they continue to receive those benefits?
2. If any, who will bear the costs?

And we will also look for clues that may help determine:

3. How might any potentially conflicting benefit claims be resolved?

Lastly, this chapter will also attempt to consider the social totality. The following detailed historical narrative will attempt to reveal information about the institutions involved in the production of the digital music commodity as well as the social relations involved in inspiring digital copyright *advocacy* and *reform*. Finally, the related and reviewed news coverage will reveal the hegemonic elements of the

digitization project – revealing how the project is being delivered to and perceived by the general public.

HISTORY

The success of Ghana's highlife – the first distinct African popular music – and its total government support of the musical arts made Ghana into a haven for popular musicians in the 1960s and 70s. Africa's first permanent recording studio blossomed into four recording studios and two record pressing plants by the mid 1970s. Ghana's highlife was known across the continent and popular in London and dozens of bands and venues sprung up to meet the demands of its growing audiences (Collins, 2001, p. 2). And in 1974, Ghana established its musicians' union, MUSIGA, to protect its musician's best interests.

The first cultural policy of Ghana was laid out in 1975 during this heyday of Ghanaian music. In it, highlife is acknowledged as an important, prevalent (albeit heavily commercialized) form of Ghanaian culture, in need of protecting. Defining Ghana's commitment to this end, the document states:

Culture is considered to be of such great importance that it is not left to private enterprise which might turn it into profit-oriented enterprises providing rather low forms of entertainment. Moreover, the size of the expenditures involved and the machinery required if a genuine public cultural service is to be provided, combine to make cultural promotion a responsibility which only the government can satisfactorily undertake on a national scale by providing the necessary encouragement, funds, and facilities (p. 41).

Clearly, this was inscribed prior to the neo-liberal reforms of the World Bank and the IMF in the late 1980s, however, it speaks to the high place of music in Ghana's overall conception of its culture – highlife included – and, importantly, to the Government's commitment to its advancement and protection.

Later on in the document, the authors describe the consequences of inaction in regard to defending Ghanaian culture:

It is well known that freedom from colonial rule does not necessarily bring a corresponding freedom from the cultural legacy of colonialism. It is only when a deliberate and carefully considered cultural policy aimed at decolonization in the cultural sphere is introduced that the stage is set for the gradual attainment of cultural independence (p. 45).

As previously mentioned in this study, however, several significant political and economic disturbances in the late 1970s and 80s fueled what Collins called a musical “brain drain” in the Ghanaian music industry. In 1979 alone, the musical production in Ghana dropped to a quarter of its previous levels and, for decades, never recovered. Many musicians relocated to Europe or nearby Nigeria and those that stayed sought cultural refuge in the spiritual music scene. Consequently, popular dance music began to be used in religious services and the gospel music genre flourished. Even today, gospel music accounts for over half of the music produced in Ghana (2001, p. 4).

The situation worsened in 1982 when the PNDC military government instituted an evening curfew. The curfews dramatically reduced the available opportunities for the few musicians remaining in Ghana and forced those who formerly relied on live performance to support themselves into transitioning to digital music production. The

technology available then, being less than adequate, drastically lowered the quality of Ghanaian musical output. When the curfew was lifted, the musicians that returned to the nightlife scene had abandoned their traditional instruments and transitioned, instead, to drum programs, midi synthesizers, and pre-recorded loops. The formerly robust, traditionally influenced Ghanaian popular music had been replaced by cheaply made, “burgher highlife,” so called for its use of electronic instruments popular in Hamburg, Germany.

Some of these innovations, as will be discussed later, instigated trends that would later become both profitable and internationally reputable. Hip-life, the combination of highlife and hip-hop, is notable among these innovations. However, for the private sector and for the international representation of Ghanaian culture, these changes were devastating. However, when the ‘World Music’ trend developed in the mid 1980s, showcasing (and leveraging) traditional music to international audiences, Ghana’s popular music had fallen below an acceptable standard.

Despite its disadvantaged position, secular music was subjected to the IMF/World Bank led structural adjustments of the late 1980s by an eager-to-adjust Ghanaian government. These policies drove overall improvement in the Ghanaian economy, however, the heavy-handed taxes on music production made it too expensive to produce the big-band highlife for which Ghana was formerly known. Inadvertently, this drove even more of Ghana’s musicians into the religious music sector which was sheltered from the new country’s new cultural tax policies.

In a continuing downward spiral of support, the inability of Ghanaians to produce high-quality popular music, caused them to be overlooked by their government’s cultural

policies; as the new millennium approached, international development agencies were forced to disqualify Ghana for loan and aid programs allocated for the arts and entertainment. However, with no cultural representation at the ministerial level, Ghanaian musicians had little leverage to seek change (Collins, 2001, p. 5-7).

ADVOCACY

In 2001, John Collins, musician, consultant and professor at the University of Ghana, delivered a paper that addressed these gaps in Ghana's cultural policies and argued for the necessary improvement. His paper recommended providing representation for culture at the ministerial level and enacting a five to ten year tax holiday for working musicians. This, Collins claimed, would greatly improve the live music industry which was both important for practicing musicians as well as for the tourism industry.

Whether as a result of this or other instigation, the regulation of music and culture in Ghana began to change shortly after Collins' address at the 2001 Ghana Music Awards. In 2003, the Ghanaian government added a cabinet-level ministry position to cover tourism and culture – now, officially, the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, and Creative Arts (“Ministry of tourism,” 2013). The following year, in 2004, Ghana's cultural policy was also updated for the first time since 1975.

Still guiding Ghana's cultural decisions today, the 2004 Cultural Policy of Ghana is an important document with many ramifications for the current study. It begins by echoing the original 1975 Cultural Policy's commitment to the protection of Ghanaian and African cultural heritage:

This Cultural Policy...is dedicated to the realization of the Vision of the People of

Ghana to respect, preserve, harness and use [Ghana's] cultural heritage and resources to develop a united, vibrant and prosperous national community with a distinctive African identity and personality and a collective confidence and pride of place among the comity of Nations ("The cultural policy," 2004, p. 7).

Overall the document acknowledges the central role of cultural diversity in its relative peace and stability and acknowledges *the necessity of State intervention for the health of its culture* (p. 8).

Toward that end, the Cultural Policy lays out several objectives: the goal to employ culture toward the "human development and material progress" of the country and its members; to utilize the media to promote cultural understanding; to make Ghanaians more aware of the value of their skills; to gather resources for the advancement of culture from public, private, local, and foreign sources; to create legislation to protect cultural assets; and to create a cultural fund to promote Ghanaian culture, funded in part by copyright earnings (p. 10).

The policy document also delineates several objectives specifically related to the digitization project currently taking place. In chapter four of the document, the authors broadly suggest, "the practice, creation and promotion of all forms of Ghanaian Music shall be encouraged by the State." Also, acknowledging the significant amount of revenue generated through cultural performance, they propose "documentation, preservation and presentation" as a method of expanding the reach of Ghanaian culture. The document could not be clearer when it states that, "the State shall encourage private entrepreneurs to establish production plants and support activities to document, preserve, protect, publish and promote Ghanaian Music."

While vowing to encourage the production of music through tools of the state and preserve it through documentation and exposure to the media, the Cultural Policy of Ghana also vows to protect it. Similar to other policies in Europe and Latin America, Chapter seven of the Cultural Policy Document features several formulations of cultural protectionism. Ghanaian television is protected from overwhelming international cultural flow by a mandated 70% to 30% Ghanaian to international production ratio. Radio is similarly protected by a mandated “pre-eminence” over foreign broadcasts. While these policies may not be enough to protect Ghanaian culture alone, they set an important precedence for State intervention on the behalf of the protection of local cultural production.

The following year, in 2005, the goals of the Cultural Policy Document were given some legal enforceability through an updated version of the country’s 20-year-old, 1985 copyright law. The update added several important enforcement laws and established a regulatory body. The document also introduced a more equitable collections agency; previously, royalties from all creative industries were collected in a pool and distributed equally. Thus, rather than promote all cultural expressions equally, this often de-incentivized owners of intellectual property from collecting their royalties as they were frequently minimal at best.

International development organizations began to take note of the advancements being made in Ghana’s cultural policies. In 2006, for the first time, the International Monetary Fund’s Poverty Reduction Strategy for Ghana incorporated culture as an essential element of making Ghana’s private sector more competitive. Music, specifically, is listed together with film as one of the primary strategies for job creation

and growth.

Additional international attention continued to grow over the following years. In 2008, The Center for World Music at the University of Hildesheim in Germany joined together with the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation to “digitize, archive, and safeguard the Gramophone Library of the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation” (“Welcome to the,” 2010 p.1). By 2010, the project had digitized over 2000 CDs and 1000 audiocassettes of music.

The digitization project on which this study is focused began amidst this rising national and international interest in the use of culture for the promotion of international development. The first explicit formulation of the project began as an initiative of the Norwegian Copyright Development Association (NORCODE) who, in 2010, launched what it called an “anti-piracy” campaign. The campaign aimed to educate members of the global general public of the importance of copyright and the negative impacts of piracy. According to a report by Modern Ghana, NORCODE aimed to increase the indigenous purchase of original musical works from just 10% of the population to 50% of Ghanaians ((“*NORCODE supports anti-piracy*,” 2009). As a part of this training, NORCODE, together with Ghana’s musicians’ union, financed the digitization of an “exact and complete database on Ghanaian music” to be completed by 2011 (“*Annual report*,” 2010, p.3).

REFORM

The same year, in 2010, MUSIGA members elected a young, driven president who, borrowing from the momentum of the international and national copyright interests, began advocating for increased protection of right owners in Ghana. The story of

Obour's takeover and restructuring are outlined in the opening pages of this study. As outlined in their 2011 Annual Report, the NORCODE library project was completed and the information was delivered to the brand new Ghana Music Right Organization (GHAMRO). The library will be used by GHAMRO to collect royalties and, eventually, will be made available for online purchase.

The formation of Ghana's new music rights organization was a result of another major 2010 event in Ghana – the third-ever update to Ghana's copyright policy. This policy further enabled the proportionate collection of royalties by dismantling the interim collection society, the Copyright Society of Ghana (COSGA). In the following years, this copyright policy, together with increased government support would pave the way for the digitization project currently in question.

International and internal support of the creative arts inevitably manifested in the Ghanaian government. Though support had been listed in Ghanaian policy for years, the music industry in Ghana received its first-ever explicit, tangible financial commitment from the Ghanaian budget in 2012. In the 2012 budget and economic policy document, music and the creative arts umbrella under which it is categorized, are allocated for within “policy initiatives” section of the document (“*Budget statement and,*” 2012, p. 2). The document notes the potential for the creative arts to “create jobs and provide increase income to all stakeholders.” The US \$600 billion value of the global creative goods and services industry between 2002 and 2008 (the financial crisis) is listed as a kind of missed opportunity. To achieve this goal, the budget allocates GHc2.0 million (\$918,000.00 USD) to support the creative arts in 2012 and calls for a specific collaboration with the music industry to “identify the potential of the industry through an

impact assessment study” (p. 279). Although more than previously allocated to the creative arts, the allotment represented less than 00.00018% of the nation’s overall budget. The United States, for example, typically allocates near 00.04% of the overall budget to the arts (Boehm, 2012).

The following year, funding for the creative arts was relocated in Ghana’s budget document from policy initiatives to the economic sector as a part of the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and the Creative Arts. Here, the document still recognizes the potential for the creative arts “to shape and reinforce Ghana’s economic growth,” noting the importance of utilizing technology toward the improvement and increased viability of Ghanaian culture. The specific level of support, however, is listed in a supplementary document, referred to in the budget as the “Creative Industries Sector Medium-Term Development Plan” located in the “Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda - (GSGDA)” (*Budget statement and*,” 2013, p.106).

The GSGDA is a three-year guiding document that outlines the strategies and economic allocations necessary to achieve Ghana’s development related goals. In the 2010-2013 document, support of music, intellectual property, and the creative arts is included in the overall goal to enhance the competitiveness of Ghana’s private sector. Barriers to development are listed as weak institutional frameworks, lack of access to capital, weak copyright laws, weak enforcement, weak coordination between governmental departments concerned with the creative industry, and lack of an empowered collection agency to administer royalty collection.

Therefore, to make the private sector more competitive, the document outlays \$2.284 million USD over the three-year period and outlines ten specific goals. Though

the amount is just 0.12% of the overall amount dedicated to enhancing Ghana's private sector competitiveness, it is an important amount as it was the first time in Ghana's history that the Ghanaian government has funded the creative arts – paving the way for the explicit support of the music industry a few years later. Several of the budget's ten goals are also important for the present study: 1.1) provide legal and regulatory protections for intellectual property, 1.4) increase awareness of intellectual property rights, 1.5) increase intellectual property rights protection and enforcement of existing legislation, 1.6) use technology to support the industry, and 1.7) encourage the use of local content on electronic networks. The Musicians' Union of Ghana is listed as one of the implementing and collaborating agencies necessary for the success of these initiatives.

Progress toward these ends began immediately with the 2010 update to the country's existing copyright regulations, mentioned earlier. As intended, the changes in 2010 made it much easier for right owners of digital music to enforce and collect from the protections of their creations. Specifically, the new regulations allow for the imposition of a levy on any devices used for the reproduction of a creative work, analog or digital, and outline the formation of a copyright tribunal to handle copyright disputes. Furthermore, all request and approval forms have had the word "ANTI-PIRACY" affixed to them.

The most recent progress report, the 2011 report, announces even more progress toward the GSGDA goals. Over 1,000 new creative works were registered by the Copyright Society of Ghana and the total creative exports increased 28.6% from 2010. However, the report also acknowledges an extreme lack of data that disabled them from

being able to provide any meaningful information about music sales, specifically. They cite this as an impediment to progress and vow to direct more funds toward the regular collection of data and other statistics related to the creative industry.

Finally, the 2011 progress report explicitly mentions the digitization of over five thousand (5,000) songs by MUSIGA and the Norwegian Copyright Organization (NORCODE), performed under the digital meta-data library initiative. This digitization, the report cites, will “promote and enhance the internal and external marketing of Ghanaian music.” The development of an Internet portal with which to sell these, and other, digitized songs is also mentioned – spearheaded by MUSIGA. The hope, listed in the document, is to be able to participate in the global music market and to serve the needs of “future collective management organization for the music industry” (*“The implementation of,”* 2011, p. 47).

While the progress report and the government both cite the digitization project as meeting their respective goals, the funding for project was actually provided by African and International development organizations. In 2010, the UNDP and the World Bank, together with ECOBANK, initiated a project to help bolster and leverage the newly digitized Ghanaian music library. Early in 2012, ECOBANK funneled a \$20,000 donation through the UNDP country office in Ghana. These funds were marked for several purposes. Research, the purchase of digitization equipment, the design of a new website to host the digitized music, and to fund the new project’s launch were the project’s central goals. The donation, notably, qualified as an act of corporate responsibility for the pan-African bank network, ECOBANK. And, in exchange for their contribution, MUSIGA also agreed to use the ECOBANK logo in association with all

digitization efforts as a condition of the donation. (Adjei, 2013, p.2).

Overall, four organizations are listed as participants in the digitization project. The funds were routed through UNDP to add both credibility and oversight to the donation. The project also fit well within existing UNDP strategies in Ghana to explore potential partnerships with the private sector. For their “General Management Services,” the UNDP leveraged a 7% fee on the donation. The World Bank was brought onto the project to help oversee the digital portal element of the project. Their involvement in the project appears to have been minimal. Lastly, the official responsibilities for MUSIGA were also outlined in the document – to publicize the collection of music and ensure its timely launch.

NEWS COVERAGE

The news coverage of the digitization project echoes the language of the government documents and MUSIGA’s official position that the project is both an avenue toward financial prosperity for the country and a weapon against piracy for the nation’s musicians. In July, 2013, *Africa Music Daily* interviewed MUSIGA president, Obour, about the state of MUSIGA’s efforts to digitize the industry. Among Obour’s talking points were the continued fight against piracy, the promotion of intellectual property rights, and a plan to produce a study of the industry to enable "results-driven" research (Blagrove, 2013, p. 1-2). In March, *Flex Ghana* reported on the education effort being undertaken by the Ghana Association of Phonographic Industries and Norwegian-based international digital music distributor, Phonofile, to "educate Ghanaian music label and right owners on how to market and maximize profit on the sale of Ghanaian music

online" (Anthony, 2013, p. 1). The report cites MUSIGA as a collaborator on the project and does not explore any possible detriments of the venture.

A June report in BEATWAVES openly blames piracy for the loss of millions of the local currency. The article defines piracy in detail and denounces the radio stations, ring tone salesmen, and nightclubs for "not paying their dues." Musicians mentioned in the article condemn the government and MUSIGA leadership for not being more policy-proactive. The article then acknowledges that several musicians also reached out to them asking for an educational article to help educate the public (Owusu, 2013).

Other major news outlets, PeaceFM, Modern Ghana, and My Joy Online have reported the events related to the digitization project similarly. Overall, the news coverage surrounding the digitization project reveals a highly coordinated public relations effort to increase awareness of intellectual property rights and their purported effect on the incomes of Ghanaian musicians. They highlight the multinational support of ECOBANK, UNDP, and the World Bank and the cooperation of national music organizations MUSIGA and GAPI.

CHAPTER VI

RESULTS: THE BENEFICIARIES OF DIGITIZATION

The documents surrounding the digitization project in Ghana suggest that several different groups will benefit from the project. Furthermore, no group is listed, explicitly, as a cost bearer. Looking beneath the claims of the documents, however, several important challenges arise to those benefit claims. This section will first re-list the alleged beneficiaries of the digitization project – as outlined in the project documents. Then, this chapter will consider the validity of those claims, addressing the major challenges presented by supplementary documents. Lastly, this chapter will attempt to synthesize the projects benefits and costs to determine its overall effect on Ghana’s culture, its musicians, and its music industry.

BENEFICIARIES

Leaders and supporters of the digitization project make several benefit claims - implicitly and explicitly - directed toward three primary groups: Ghanaian musicians, Ghanaian people, and the Ghanaian government. The first group of alleged beneficiaries are the musicians - with new, digital infrastructure, musicians, they say, will have access to the millions of dollars of untapped digital revenue, generated by the sale of digital music globally. These musicians, supported by new streams of revenue, will be able to enjoy both increased standards of living during their musical careers and the resources required to eventually retire from the industry. Many musicians in Ghana today live or die by their ability to perform; without royalties generated by the sale of their songs,

aging and disabled musicians, many claim, cannot survive.

Musicians will also benefit from increased exposure to international markets. As John Collins argued in 2001, traditional Ghanaian music fits well within the borders of "World Music," however, its reach is limited by its availability abroad. In many cases, patrons of Highlife must travel to Ghana to purchase physical copies of the music they enjoy. The digitization project will make it considerably easier for consumers to patronize Ghanaian music. This includes those in Ghana who are willing and able to consume Ghanaian music but prefer the convenience of digital music files.

According to Ghanaian cultural policy and some international initiatives, the benefits for Ghanaian musicians are also cultural. From the language of the documents above, the digital archive of Ghanaian music will preserve and protect the legacy of traditional Ghanaian music for future generations of music. The gap in Ghana's cultural memory caused by the political instability of the late 20th century in Ghana could be avoided with access to an archive of recorded music. And with increased access to national and international music markets, more musicians will be able to make a living through their musical pursuits, bolstering the nation's culture in an upward spiral of growth.

The next group of beneficiaries of digitization listed in the related documents are the Ghanaian people as a whole. As the supporters argue, Ghanaians stand to claim many of the same cultural and economic benefits as musicians. With access to a digitized archive of Ghanaian music, citizens will enjoy a more convenient consuming experience while supporting their nation's artists financially. And, if musicianship becomes more lucrative and sustainable, Ghanaians will eventually enjoy improved versions of the

music they already enjoy - enhanced by the variety and quality typically fostered through competition for profit. This includes expatriated Ghanaian citizens who use cultural products, like music, to stay connected to their home culture.

Lastly, as a whole, Ghanaian citizens stand to benefit nationally as a result of taxation on the profit of the sale of Ghanaian music. As the Ghanaian government and digitization supporters have made decidedly public, increased sales for musicians lead to enhanced infrastructure and public services over the long term. Ghana is still a developing nation and musicians see their role in helping generate profit in the private sector as an integral piece of their nation's development strategy. As revealed in the budget and development documents, funding cultural development is money well spent as it moves the country forward while promoting and protecting its culture.

These hopes for development reflect the alignment of Ghana's government with those of the development-oriented organizations in Ghana. Ecobank, the lead financier of the project, was established in 1985 with the intent, "to contribute to the economic and financial integration and development of the African continent" (*About us*, 2012). Prior to their founding, West Africa had been dominated by state-run and regional banking institutions. Today, operating in over 30 nations, Ecobank Transnational Inc. is the leading independent regional banking group in West Africa. Their investment in the digitization project reveals the perception of culture – by development agencies and corporations alike – as a capable vehicle of international development.

Ecobank's funds were channeled through The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank. The UNDP was established in 1965 in an effort by the United Nations (UN) to address the growing income inequality caused, in

part, by the industrial revolution. Through the promotion of development (as defined within the modernization paradigm), the UN hoped to reduce poverty and increase equality. The UNDP receives a majority of their funding through support from countries such as the United States, Germany, and Great Britain. The UNDP then uses these funds towards the ends outlined above.

During the 1990 world summit meeting, the UNDP formally re-articulated their founding development objectives as the now famous “Millennium Development Goals” (MDGs). These goals highlight eight of the UNDP’s highest development priorities. Of these eight goals, the eighth MDG strives to achieve “a global partnership for development.” Within this goal, there are five additional targets, two of which are relevant to the digitization project in Ghana. Target 8.A: “Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system.” Target 8.F states: “In cooperation with the private sector, make available benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications.” The GSGDSA – the guiding document of Ghana’s development from which the digitization project was born – directly references the importance of culture in achieving these millennium development goals.

Finally, also funding the digitization project in Ghana is the World Bank. According to their website, “The World Bank Institute (WBI) is a global connector of knowledge, learning and innovation for poverty reduction. It is part of the World Bank Group. It connects practitioners, networks and institutions to help them find solutions to their development challenges” (“*The world bank*,” 2012). The World Bank was established in 1944 when economists from Europe and the US met in Bretton Woods, New Hampshire to orchestrate the reconstruction of Europe following the devastation of

World War II. Then, the goal of the World Bank was to facilitate private capital transfers to help rebuild Europe, consistent with the global climate at the time.

In the 1980s, however, the role of the World Bank and the other Bretton Woods organizations expanded to include the propagation of liberal economic policies in line with the Washington Consensus. These goals included the elimination of national boundaries to trade, and the opening of labor markets. Many theories about the positive and adverse affects of these policies nationally are debated among scholars. Suffice it to say that the channeling of Ecobank's funds through the UNDP and The World Bank, with the support of the Ghanaian government, signals both the alignment of these various organization under the Washington Consensus and the digitization project's fulfillment of the international interests of the organizations' member states.

To summarize, the benefits of digitization argued by supporters of the project include musicians, their patrons, and the Ghanaian government as a whole. By extension, employing a "what's good for Ghana is good for us" line of reasoning, international development organizations such as the UNDP and The World bank also stand to benefit from the success of Ghana's cultural sector. A healthy, stable west-African country means, generally, less threat to the flow of capital overall.

CHALLENGES

There are, however, some key assumptions involved in the estimation of the benefits of the digitization project being made by the supporters and organizations involved. These assumptions, unchallenged, could prove more detrimental than the project is beneficial to the Ghanaian musician and music industry. They are: that digital

music is significantly profitable; that the profit generated will benefit its proposed claimants; and that the effects on Ghanaian music caused by these initiatives, if any, will be positive. This section will explore each of these assumptions in detail.

The first major assumption is that digital music sales offer enough revenue potential to significantly affect the quality of life of the musician and, consequently, significantly affect the GDP of the musicians' country. Advocates like John Collins have perpetuated this assumption by projecting the raw profits of music sales onto Ghana's population as "untapped potential." Leaders in MUSIGA have echoed these sentiments, using similar rhetoric to petition the Ghanaian government for financial support.

These projections, however, do not account for the actual dispersion of profit within the global recording industry. The US music market, for example, is controlled by just four international conglomerates – Universal, Sony, Warner, and EMI. Together, the "Big Four" produce and distribute roughly 95% of US music (Sirois and Wasko, p. 350). The percentage is only slightly lower for the Big Four's market share of the global music industry that, in 2012, stood at 88% (The Nielsen Company, 2012).

These corporations are also aggressively pursuing deals with musicians that commodify as many facets of the musician as possible. In these expanded-rights deals, or 360 deals, record labels mine profit from the musicians' sales, performances, merchandise, etc.... In return, the signed musicians are compensated with a salary, significantly smaller than the profit generated through their leveraged, creative labor (Ostrove, 2013).

In 2010, the Future of Music Coalition (FMC), based in the US, launched a multi-staged research project to better understand and more accurately portray the ways in

which modern musicians make a living. The “Artist Revenue Streams” project set out to uncover what percentage of musicians’ incomes come from each possible revenue source. From 2010 to 2012, FMC project managers surveyed over 5300 US musicians from varying levels of success. Overall, they found that the average musician makes less than half of the national income average from their labor as musicians. Furthermore, for the survey respondents, less than 6% of that amount came from the sale of sound recordings. Of those surveyed 88% said that they had made \$0 from the digital sale of their sound recordings (Future of Music Coalition, 2012).

Yet the supporters of the digitization project in Ghana seem convinced otherwise. The MUSIGA leadership specifically cites the lifestyles of musicians as a benchmark and a hope for the musicians of Ghana. That idolization, however, ignores the reality that the lifestyles of US musicians are often one part of an overall branding campaign undertaken by record labels to fetishize as many aspects of a musician’s persona as possible. It appears that unmediated celebrity worship and the misappropriation of statistics by industry leaders has helped propel the myth that musical success leads to vast personal wealth. This myth, then, acts as the carrot in front of the cart – drawing musicians into advocacy for a mode of production that – if commensurate with other international models – will generate wealth for international conglomerates, from the labor and patronage of Ghanaians.

The final challenge to the benefits presented by supporters of the digitization project lies among the cultural benefits proposed by the authors of Ghana’s cultural policy. In the cultural policies of the late 1970s and early 2000s, Ghana’s policymakers make clear the benefits of using technology for the protection and preservation of culture.

This ethos is also communicated by the non-profit and development-oriented organizations involved in the project.

Rather than preserving and protecting vulnerable contributors to Ghanaian culture, however, the digitization project seems to be preserving the interests of capital for contemporary Ghana (See Figure 2). Of the songs digitized for the project by MUSIGA, over 66% of the albums were labeled Gospel. Less than one percent of the music digitized could be classified as traditional Ghanaian music. This seems to indicate that, rather than representational archiving, this project is highly selective – only the music that sells the most gets preserved. In return, this seems to violate the central purpose of Ghana’s original Cultural Policy: “Culture is considered to be of such great importance that it is not left to private enterprise which might turn it into profit-oriented enterprises” (“Cultural policy in,” 1975, p.41).

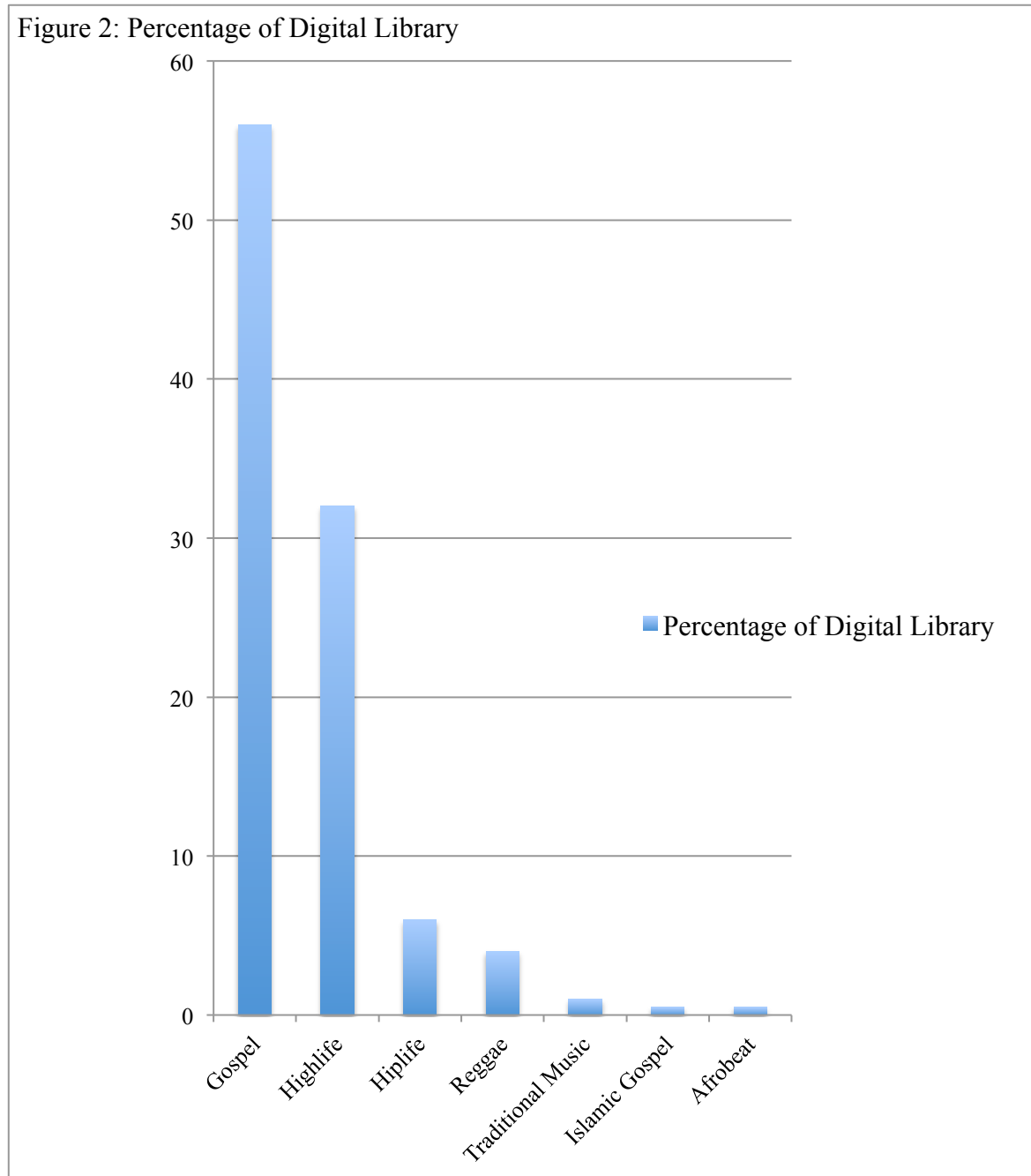
SYNTHESIS

In light of this additional information, some of the projects benefit claims, it seems, need to be adjusted. Certainly this project has benefits for musicians and for Ghanaians alike. But how are those benefits mitigated or negated altogether by greater external benefits?

As musicians in the country currently lack a digital distribution portal for their music, revenue is guaranteed to increase for intellectual property rights owners. This is especially true for the first generation of musicians, many of whom are either independent or signed by Ghanaian labels. In its digital form, Ghanaian music is also more protected from cultural drain caused (as it was in the 1980s) by political instability.

In the event that musicians leave the country en masse again, the new generation of musicians will be able to more easily access their cultural predecessors and rebuild from that foundation. Ghanaian citizens also, for a price, may come to enjoy a more “convenient” consuming experience than their current interface with peer-to-peer sharing.

However, as was demonstrated above, musicians wont likely make as much as



claimed from their digital sales – certainly not enough to eliminate the need for live performance and good financial planning. This is especially true once the digital infrastructure is in place and the market for digital Ghanaian music has become established. Once this capacity has been demonstrated, the diligence and advocacy of concerned Ghanaian musicians will have lowered the barriers of entry for international music conglomerates to participate in the Ghanaian music market, extracting profit, possibly through expanded rights deals as are common in the US.

Similarly, without any additional tax reform, the trickle-down economic benefit for the Ghanaian government is likely to be lower than has been claimed by supporters of the digitization project. And, in return, average Ghanaians will bear almost all of the cost. Citizens of Ghana who, now, pay little or nothing for their music (as they have done for time immemorial) would be legally and culturally disciplined for consuming Ghanaian popular music without payment. And in this world, where digital music availability is limited to what will garner a profit, traditional and niche music in the country will enjoy even less exposure than they do currently.

...

As it stands now, the predictions of Gramsci, Attali, Burkart and McCourt appear correct. Music in Ghana, like culture in general, is both a tool and an indicator of power. And in a capitalist society, that eminent power is capital itself.

By following Smythe's example and investigating the path of scarce goods in society, asking "when, how and where" those good are distributed, and by emphasizing Meehan, Mosco, and Wasko's focus on survival and control, the power relationships in Ghana's music industry are illuminated. Traditional music has been a part of traditional

Ghanaian society for time immemorial. Music is used to commemorate unions, meetings, and funerals alike. Following their colonization by the British, however, Ghanaians began producing music at the behest of their wealthy colonizers – highlife was a blend of traditional Ghanaian and European music, performed exclusively for colonial parties and dignitary celebrations.

The introduction of recorded music in Ghana further isolated its average population from its music. The new highlife music and big-band jazz being played by its musicians – even traditional music – was now available beyond the scope of colonialism. But access to expensive technology was now the barrier to entry and the tool of fetishization. As vinyl records became cheap, radio became expensive, and as the cost of radios declined, televisions soared. The same pattern has reemerged with the innovation of digital music; the mp3 promised the return of free music for Ghanaians with access to technology. Yet, as this study has outlined, Ghana is in the middle of yet another fetishization cycle, introducing scarcity through the legal framework of copyright the mechanical framework of digitization.

Development organizations, and even immediate beneficiaries themselves, tout that bolstering music production is a benefit to the people who gain access to it and the musicians who can make a living producing it. But, if doing so degrades the availability of the music, or degrades the cultural experience of the musician – if it facilitates the cooption of culture (music) for the generation of profit – those organizations are operating as extensions of the state, maintaining power for the benefit of the primary power in capitalist societies, capital accumulation. In other words, when empowerment becomes a tool of imperialism, the latter is all that can be certain.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The musicians and policy makers working in Ghana to direct funding toward the establishment of a relationship between Ghana's cultural producers and its private sector have an exciting and unique opportunity. Having experienced Ghanaian music first hand, the artists – both new and traditional – are talented and highly motivated to make music that makes their country a better place. This study has shown, however, that their energy has been one-directional.

Over the past decade, musicians and activists have focused almost exclusively on changing the infrastructure and the culture to facilitate revenue generation from their crafts. Their work has led to the development of several important pieces of digital infrastructure. However, as has been the case in the US and elsewhere, the revenue generated through these technologies is often ultimately gathered by those with the power to support them.

Musicians in Ghana, however, have an opportunity to pre-empt the replication of this pattern. Through the appropriate application of protectionary cultural policies, temporary tariffs, and responsible tax policies, Ghanaians can protect the control of their cultural products from leaving their country in the form of revenue. A tax on the sale of Ghanaian record labels to international conglomerates, for example, set aside to fund the development of national performance venues (currently in lack in the country), would enable more working musicians to make a living, independent of international record labels. In the US, live performance is still the primary way in which average musicians

make the largest percentage of their livelihood. Additional taxes and protectionary policies – put in place before the viability of the market is confirmed in the following five to ten years – could protect generations of musicians from having their cultural labor exploited by international conglomerates.

This is the recommendation of this study. A digitized library of Ghanaian music will empower scores of musicians to sell their music nationally and internationally to previously inaccessible markets. And, by accepting the realities of the international music industry, and of the effects of industry on culture, this study finds that a win-win solution is possible through progressive copyright legislation. Simply put, based upon international examples, Ghana's digitization project is likely to lead to short term profits for musicians, long-term profits for international record labels, and dramatically increased costs for average Ghanaians – all of this with little long-term improvement to the quality of life of the musicians or significant development of the country. This, however, could be rectified with the appropriate, protectionary cultural legislation.

Additional research, like the study currently being done in Ghana, should seek to quantify the actual size of the Ghanaian markets to cement the claims of this study which, currently, are founded primarily upon the examples of other national music industries and the global music industry as a whole. This study could not determine, for example, who exactly owns the music that has been digitized and, consequently, to whom the first royalties will be paid. A study, currently taking place in Ghana under the supervision of John Collins and other industry leaders, seeks to provide Ghanaian policy makers with this information. The study, however, is currently incomplete (*“Stakeholders meet over,”* 2013).

In addition to the lack of Ghanaian music industry data, this study had other limitations. First, related to the methodology, the historical nature of this study narrowed the pool of applicable data to news, company, and policy documents. To gain a more full understanding of the perception of these events by Ghanaian musicians and the Ghanaian general public, interviews should be performed and analyzed to further contextualize the documents. Additionally, many of the documents that were analyzed were vaguely written and difficult to interpret without the assistance of a Ghanaian industry expert. Ghana's cultural policy documents, for example, are unclear whether the cultural protections therein are limited to government media only or are meant to guide all Ghanaian media, public and private.

Although outside the scope of the current study, this investigation could have also benefited from a network analysis of the Ghanaian music industry. Ideally, this would survey the relationships between individuals and organizations involved in the digitization on the side of the music business. Many of the tasks involved in digitization are distributed among these networks, formal and informal. Without such an analysis, it is difficult to determine who is truly benefiting from the distribution of tasks associated with the digitization and sale of Ghanaian music. When MUSIGA needs the new website coded, which company do they select, how, and why?

Similarly, further analysis of the relationships between other African music industries and international record labels would have provided a strong, comparative example of the predicted outcome of the digitization of Ghanaian music. Knowing the current trajectory of other, more established African music industries would have strengthened the predictions made by this study that international labels (and their

respective nations of incorporation)– not musicians – will see the biggest long-term benefit from the digitization and commodification of music. This information would have also served to confirm the interest of international record labels in African popular music.

Finally, this investigation was limited in its comparative access to similar studies. Additional studies of similar scope would have provided significant guidance on the methodology and overall structure of a study of this nature.

Overall, this study confirms the suspicions of critical scholars that political power, however it is disguised, is among the primary molding forces of culture in our society, as Gramsci first conceived. Through this specific, real-life example, we can see the interests of wealthy nations playing themselves out in the creation, marketing, and distribution of Ghanaian popular music. Furthermore, these interests are being reinforced and propelled by those who will ultimately perform the majority of the labor. Under the guise of empowerment, wealthy nations are paving the way for technologically lubricated capital accumulation.

Rather, this study argues that for development to be truly “empowering” – the increased manifestation of power in social groups, communities, or individuals – those being empowered must be both the primary directors and primary benefactors of that development in the short, medium, and long term. Musicians may be empowered by their access to additional markets, or their ability to reach new audiences, or their ability to make a living as an artist – however, if those benefits don’t extend beyond the first generation, the empowerment is nothing more than low-cost leader for the further exploitation and dis-empowerment of a group of people.

APPENDIX A
LIST OF ACRONYMS

COSGA – Copyright Society of Ghana

FMC – Future of Music Coalition

GHAMRO – Ghana Music Right Organization

GNP – Gross National Product

GSGDA – Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda

INCD – International Network for Cultural Diversity

MDG – Millennium Development Goals

MUSIGA – Musicians’ Union of Ghana

NORCODE – Norwegian Copyright Development Association

PEC – Political Economy of Communication

UN – United Nations

UNDP – United Nations Development Programme

WBI – World Bank Institute

WIPO – World Intellectual Property Organization

WTO – World Trade Organization

APPENDIX B

DOCUMENTS ANALYZED

GOVERNMENT

The Implementation of the Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda (GSGDA), 2010 – 2013; 2011 Annual Progress Report

Medium-Term National Development Policy Framework: Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda (GSGDA), 2010 – 2013; Volume I: Policy Framework

Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda (GSGDA): Costing Framework, 2010 - 2013

The 2012 Budget Statement and Economic Policy, The Republic of Ghana

The 2013 Budget Statement and Economic Policy, The Republic of Ghana

Copyright Regulations, 2010, ghanapublishingcompany.com

CORPORATE

MUSIGA Annual Report, 2011 – 2012

MUSIBUY, musiga.gh.org

Ghanaian Database Metadata, MUSIGA

NORCODE Annual Report, 2010

CULTURAL

Making Ghanaian Music Exportable, John Collins, 2001 Ghana Music Awards

About Us, GBC Gramophone Library

About Us, National Commission On Culture, ghanaculture.gov.gh

Cultural Policy in Ghana, The Unesco Press, Paris 1975

The Cultural Policy of Ghana, National Commission on Culture, 2004

NEWS

Ghana Develops First National Intellectual Property Policy, Modern Ghana News

Obour Talks Musiga and the Future of Ghanaian Music, Africa Music Daily

Musicians lose millions of Cedis due to piracy, George Clifford Owusu

Veep confers with MUSIGA, Joy Online

Obour hot over cash again!, Nii Ogbamey Tetteh

MUSIGA Joins ECOBANK, UNDP, World Bank To Provide Digital Infrastructure, peacefmonline.com

GBC Gramophone Library digitized by German Government, German Embassy, Accra

MUSIGA, partners to improve marketing of Ghanaian music, myjoyonline.com

Gospel Musicians Threaten to Boycott MUSIGA Activities, hotfmghana.com

MUSIGA, Ecobank sign MoU to digitize sale of Ghana music, Ekow Quandzie

GhanaWeb to introduce a mechanism to enrich musicians, ghanaweb.com

NORCODE supports anti-piracy project in Ghana, modernghana.com

Timeline: Ghana's modern musical history, BBC NEWS

GAPI and Phonofile to make online sale of Ghanaian music a REALITY, flexghana.com

DEVELOPMENT

ECOBANK, UNDP and World Bank Collaboration towards the Creative Industry Development in Ghana, Initial ECOBANK Contribution

Insurance Report, ECOBANK Ghana Limited

Cheque Transfer, ECOBANK Ghana Limited

"Support to the Creative Industry" Initiative Cheque Handover Ceremony, ECOBANK and UNDP Ghana

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