Article

More than songs and stories: The nexus between cultural records and national development

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Abstract

This article examines the little researched link between cultural records and national development, considering, in particular, the role African cultural information could play in spurring the continent's development. It argues that cultural records play a significant, if oft-overlooked and little understood, role in national development. Furthermore, it suggests that if the information deposited and derived from records documenting culture is not included in policy making and analyses of development, the development process is actually shortchanged. The study pays attention to the African context in which this issue is particularly heightened due to a general disregard for the relevance of good records management to national development, and inadequate financial support for the archives, libraries, museums and indigenous knowledge centers responsible for documenting and preserving culture and heritage.

Keywords

culture, cultural records, Ghana, indigenous knowledge

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Introduction

> *Culture is at the beginning and the end of development*
> – Leopold Senghor

> *We need to tell the African story as part of the effort to build a new Africa in which no child will go to bed on an empty stomach*
> – Kwesi Pratt, Jr., Socialist Forum of Africa

While not articulated as directly as Senghor's assertion ("la culture est au commencement et à la fin du développement") to defend the cost of the 1966 World Festival of Negro Arts held in Dakar, Pratt's comment over 50 years later, made at a 2018 conference revisiting the 1958 All Africa Peoples Congress, hints at the nexus between culture and development, and the role African cultural information, in particular, could play in spurring the continent's development. Implicit in Pratt's comment also is the need to capture and record these stories, for how can they be harnessed for the task of national development if they cannot be accessed? Beyond the attention they draw to the need for effective preservation, these comments imply strong links between culture and development, and therefore invite consideration of the significance of cultural records – defined simply as those materials that document culture – to the process of national development. The nature and possibilities of the latter relationship is the focus of the current discussion.

The pertinence of records and good record keeping to good governance and national development has been established (Kemoni and Ngulube, 2008; Adams, 2010; Akotia, 2012). Invariably, the records often discussed as essential for national development are those created in the course of administrative and governmental business. While these record types are undoubtedly crucial to national development, the

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focus on these records inadvertently creates the impression that they are the only types of records vital to development. This state of affairs leads, on the theoretical side, to a neglecting of other records as they do not receive the same degree of scholarly scrutiny; on the practical side, to a dismissive attitude towards records created outside the arena of official transactions. that might develop among government officials, practitioners and other stakeholders. It takes little to imagine how cultural records must fare in the context of the pressing eco-political realities operative in most developing countries. Yet, as this paper argues, cultural records play a significant, if oft-overlooked and little understood role in national development. The discussion further suggests that if the information deposited and derived from cultural records is not included in policy making and analyses of development, the development process is actually shortchanged, as it limits our understanding of the factors that contribute to development and indeed restricts how development itself is perceived and measured.

The matter is particularly heightened in the African context. It is not an exaggeration to assert that, despite the good intentions expressed in such documents as Ghana's national policy on culture, and in contrast to Senghor's unequivocal declaration, harsh economic realities constrain many African governments from giving more than lip service to the importance of culture and heritage.[1] As a result, archives, libraries, museums, indigenous knowledge centers and other heritage institutions are under extreme financial duress and struggle to adequately fulfill their mandate as their nations' memory keepers. Sadly, for many of these institutions, the records they preserve languish under deplorable conditions, deteriorating, in some cases, beyond recovery. Further complicating matters is the tendency, in general, of African policy makers to neglect the relevance of records and good records management to national development. Recent shifts towards digitization to address this issue often do not positively impact cultural records because their importance to national development remains largely unrecognised, even among the continent's archival theorists. This paper addresses that gap in the field and makes some recommendations.

Although this paper is of necessity a preliminary consideration of the subject, it seeks to establish the importance of cultural records to national development and to outline the relationship between having a robust cultural records policy and national development. In its geographical parameters, it first considers the topic broadly from international (mostly Western) and African perspectives, and then narrows to the national level, examining the Ghanaian context. To better situate the discussion and provide context for its conclusions and recommendations, it is necessary to understand its key concepts. As such, the following section will review the literature on records, culture, cultural records and national development, providing definitions in the process, in order to frame the subsequent discussion on how cultural records can contribute to national development or, stated alternatively, the importance of cultural records to national development.

Literature review of key concepts

Records

In broad, academic terms, records refer to any recorded information created, generated, collected or received in the conduct of business (Akotia, 2012). Records, according to ISO Standard 15489:2001 are information created, received and maintained as evidence and information by an organisation or person in pursuance of legal obligations or in the transaction of business. The documentation and records management manual for Ghana's Public Procurement Act (Act 663, 2003) defines documentary records, both in print or electronic formats, as essential elements for efficient and effective management of activities that provide evidence in support of decisions and actions taken, and also provide an audit trail for verification of transparency, accountability and effectiveness.

Other purposes for records are listed by Akotia (2012), who asserts that in the context of an organisation's business activities, records assist in the provision of corporate memory, the formulation and evaluation of policy, accountability through the provision of evidence, decision-making, protecting organisational interests, reducing risk, and documenting successes and failures. Akotia (2012) also notes that in the societal context, records, particularly those considered of permanent value and kept as archives, help to preserve a nation's collective memory and provide "essential evidence in the chain of history" (Akotia, 2012: 13).

The ISO definition, importantly, gives room for the consideration of individual creators of records. These records created by individuals for their own individual needs and purposes have been termed personal archives (Douglas, 2013). Archives, according to the

Society of American Archivists are permanently valuable records such as letters, reports, accounts, minute books, draft and final manuscripts and photographs that people, businesses or government keep because of their continuing value either to the individual or creating agency or to other potential users. Archives, the association avers, serve to strengthen collective memory as they are the documentary evidence of past events, the facts used to interpret and understand history. Douglas argues that as a category of archive, personal archives are under-studied and underrepresented in the archival literature.

Like Douglas, Baladi (2016), Bastian (2003), Bastian and Alexander (2009), Drake (2017, 2019), Flinn (2010), Huvila (2008), Ketelaar (2005), McKemmish et al. (2011), Wurl (2005) and other recent articulators of archival theory, this study, by its consideration of cultural records, thus moves away from the view of early and influential theorists such as Hilary Jenkinson who endorsed a narrow view of archives as the records of administrations.

Culture

It is necessary, to get a more complete sense of what is meant by cultural records, to briefly consider the corollary concept of culture. Yencken (2001) rightly suggests that the concept 'culture' defies definition. Durkheim and other sociologists have understood culture as "collective representations" within which are contained "social legacy" (as quoted in Awedoba, 2002). Representing much of the "intangible aspects of our values, customs and patterns of life", culture has been defined by Hawkes (2001: 3) as the production of social values, or:

> the social production and transmission of identities, meanings, knowledge, beliefs, values, aspirations, memories, purposes, attitudes and understanding; the 'way of life' of a particular set of humans: customs, faiths and conventions; codes of manners, dress, cuisine, language, arts, science, technology, religion and rituals; norms and regulations of behaviour, traditions and institutions. So, culture is both the medium and the message – the inherent values and the means and the results of social expression.

Further, culture has been described as the beliefs, knowledge, customs, morals, habits and traditions of a people (Andrews, 2010). In a definition that elaborates on Andrews', and names aspects of culture which could readily describe the materials that constitute a society's cultural records, Precious (2010:2) notes culture to be:

> . . . values and norms people have which make them live in a particular way. It is a way of living in a particular community. It is therefore the sum total of all things that refer to religion, roots of people, symbols, languages, songs, stories, celebrations, clothing and dressing, and all expressions of our way of life. It encompasses food productions, technology, architecture, kinship, the interpersonal relationships, political and economic systems and all the social relationships these entail . . . culture is learned . . . it takes place by a process of absorption from the social environment or through deliberate instruction, or through the process of socialization.

By including "food productions, technology, architecture", Precious's definition hints at indigenous knowledge, the unique living corpus of information used by communities for local-level decision-making in agriculture, health care, food preparation, education, and natural resource management, among others (Lodhi and Mukilecky, 2011.; Zaman et al, 2015); hence, indigenous knowledge is an integral part of culture (Mwebesa et al, 2007). Culture has also been considered as the totality of human actions which represents a people's source of identity, pride and dignity and which is socially transmitted from one generation to the other (Akinjogbin, 2002 as quoted in Oghi, 2014). Thus, culture is clearly "both 'overarching and underpinning', covering both the values upon which a society is based and the embodiments and expressions of these values in the day-to-day world of that society" (Spokes, as quoted in Yencken, 2001).

While culture(s), conceived of as a site of shared meaning are full of unifying possibilities, they can also be contested spaces, crucibles of struggle or compromise between the dominant and the subordinated of societies (Martin and Yakama, 2010: 91-93). In speaking of culture(s) and cultural records, the discussion here does not ignore this friction. Indeed, it notes the different ways the sometimes fractured record of our collective sociocultural and political memories are collected and remembered, and argues for the recovery and documentation of these various narratives. Within such contested spaces, this very recording oftentimes becomes an empowering act for marginalized and powerless voices to carve out an inclusive space, promote their wellbeing, or build (a sense of) participation in the national project.

Cultural records

When considered from the expansive definitions of what culture is, cultural records can be conceptualised as equally wide-ranging in scope. Cultural records are created both by individuals and by the collective. Speaking of the collective aspect, Chodorow (2006: 373) asserts:

> . . . the cultural record is the sum of the things we put away and drop on the floor as we, the whole society, go through life. It is the detritus of our ways of life and our ways of thinking, of our knowledge and beliefs, and of our superstitions and nightmares. None of these descriptive words outline the shape of something we can grasp, because the cultural record, which contains our cultural heritage, seems to incorporate the whole, unabbreviated body of evidence of everything we produce.

Furthermore, our cultural record is composed of "the scholarship that gathers, sorts, and analyzes what we know or think we know, the government records, the artistic works, the movies and broadcast programs, and now the millions of Web sites" all of which are the ways societies today record what they believe and think, and how they view things (Chodorow, 2006).

Also providing the basis for understanding culture and the ways individuals experience and process societal events are the records produced by individuals. Reflecting the sometimes fractious nature of societies and cultures, these records often present viewpoints that challenge official or mainstream renderings and, according to Copeland and Barreau (2011), include personal diaries, photographs, letters, scrapbooks, notebooks and the ever-increasingly digital versions of these, all of which provide knowledge – and differing views – of local history, customs, and events.

Beyond the written and audiovisual forms noted above, cultural records are also created in other formats that Eurocentric paradigms do not reflexively consider. Therefore, in contemplating the contours of what encompasses the cultural record, attention must be paid to the different ways people and societies remember and memorialise folkways, communal knowledge, events and experiences. Oral traditions are one such significant method. Oral traditions, as defined by Vansina's classic work (1985: 27) are "verbal messages (spoken, sung, or called out on musical instruments only) which are reported statements from the past beyond the present generation". Tale and Alefaio (2009: 88) define oral traditions as "the synthesis and transmission of knowledge and histories in a community from one generation to the next . . . [an] approach [which] is not about 'data' or 'facts' that are captured in the 'formal record-keeping environment', but rather it is a knowing which comes from doing and sharing." In this context, an individual's ancestry, for example, is learned through song and dance, not by consulting genealogical documents.

Similarly, several librarians, writers and theorists of the African and African diasporan experience have pointed to the centrality of the oral tradition as an important cultural record in these communities (Alemna, 1998; Bastian, 2003; Williams, 2006). Indeed, for these societies, even where written forms of recordkeeping exist, the oral record is still considered a vital repository of history, customs and indigenous knowledge. Exploring the history of print serials among Montreal's black communities, for example, Williams (2006) notes that due to the influence of the oral tradition within Montreal's communities of African origin or descent, printed documents were not always considered the best cultural representation and, if any serials were not deemed as "valued storehouses of Black culture," they were then likely to be treated with neglect and discarded without regret. Williams' conclusion supports Alemna's (1998) assertion that although all societies have relied on oral traditions to preserve knowledge of the past before writing became the de facto method of recording events, thoughts and activities, certain societies, especially in the developing world, continue to rely on, or at least value, oral traditions. This tendency can be easily appreciated as this is often the main mode through which these societies' indigenous knowledge, vital to their development and survival, is preserved and transmitted.

Significantly, Alemna (1998) reminds us that in many instances, these societies had been under colonial subjugation, which produced a mass of documentation related to the colonial project and not to the lives of the people. Indeed, European colonisers often suppressed any indication that indigenous population had a history or culture of their own. Speaking of the Fijian case, for instance, Tale and Alefaio (2009) point out that despite containing cultural, historical, technological and scientific knowledge, Fijian oral traditions were dismissed as "quaint little fables and romanticized self conceptualizations" by British colonists who were, in the words of the authors, people with neither the patience nor the desire to understand. Thus, where vignettes of indigenous cultures and knowledge found themselves onto the pages of

colonial documents, they were often denigrated or ridiculed. The effect this commonly had was to then reduce their own cultural worth in the eyes of the colonised. The collecting of cultural records can address this inferiority mindset and, as Tale and Alefaio conclude in their article, would serve not only to protect community memories, but would increase societal awareness of the existence and role of records generally.

It is clear from the above discussion that cultural records have some characteristics similar to those Akotia and others have identified for administrative, corporate and government records, in that they, in a sense, reveal the in- and out-workings of an "institution", that is, societies, and contribute to the collective memory. However, there is a significant difference. Unlike these other records, cultural records are not primarily or intentionally created to serve such functions as providing information and evidence used to make decisions, take action, demonstrate accountability, or enable other uses. Instead, they are primarily created in the course of living, social interactions, relationships, and economic and political activity. Normally, these records, especially those created by individuals, are not created with the intention of being more than private discourse or action. Yet, their existence, as a "collective archive" of nations and societies, so to speak, helps to preserve the narratives, great and small, well-known and obscure, famous and infamous, that uncover the various paths of a society's development. This is a significant function of these records in relation to national development, revealing the economic, cultural, and political contributions of individuals from all strata, and staking their claim in the nation.

National development

National development often refers to the ability of a nation to improve the lives of its citizens. According to Alemna (2006), development may be defined as a social process of change which a society which was underdeveloped at the beginning of this process achieves through the mobilization of its people and other resources. Ghana's Vision 2020 National Development Policy Framework identifies high rates of population growth, low levels of domestic savings, low levels of productivity, inadequate energy supply and a disadvantageous world economic system as constraints to development (Ghana Vision 2020). Yet, national development cannot be solely understood in these political and socioeconomic terms. Declaring that development is not synonymous with economic growth alone, a UNESCO statement on culture and development defines development as a "means to achieve a more satisfactory intellectual, emotional, moral and spiritual existence". Thus, development can and should also be measured in broader dimensions than just what macro-economic indicators show (Sen, 1999; Awedoba, 2002; Andrews, 2010). Assessments of improvement may be material, such as an increase in the GDP, or social, such as increasing literacy rates, wider availability of healthcare and, as the UNESCO statement highlights, the general wellbeing of citizens.

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP), for its part, comprehends development to be a comprehensive process of widening people's choices and level of wellbeing (Awedoba, 2002). In addition to wellbeing, Hawkes (2002: 13) adds connectedness, arguing that one may be sick, hungry, poor and rained upon but still have wellbeing if one feels an active part of an organism that is bigger than oneself; for this reason, our social memory and our "repositories of insight and understanding" are essential to our sense of belonging. In claiming that the objectives contained in the vision are designed to "promote the well-being, welfare, development and happiness of the people of Ghana", the framers of Vision 2020 ostensibly acknowledge a social and more holistic measure of development.

Sustainability has been at the forefront in the current discourse on development. Gleeson and Low (2000) assert that sustainable development is about the achievement on a global scale of the principles of economic development, social justice and ecological responsibility. For Hawkes, there are four pillars of sustainability, namely cultural vitality, social equity, environmental responsibility and economic viability. Hawkes elaborates further on each of these pillars, citing cultural vitality as encompassing wellbeing, creativity, diversity and innovation; social equity as involving justice, engagement, cohesion, welfare; environmental responsibility being concerned with ecological balance; and economic viability with material prosperity.

Cultural records and national development: the nexus

Using Hawkes' four pillars of sustainability framework, it is the contention here that cultural records

vivify cultural vitality, promoting the wellbeing and innovation that ultimately lead to development. As Hawkes puts it, "knowing where we have come from helps us discover where we want to go." Yet, cultural records do not simply satisfy a psychological need to understand who we are and where we come from, important as that is, but, because they are a record of what societies believe are favourable ideas as well as how they deal with unusual events, cultural records can also be called upon to solve practical problems (Awedoba, 2002; Chodorow, 2006). As a source of information, cultural records register individual and communal experiences of the world, distilling the concepts and associations that are, as Alemna (1998) terms it, socially useful and which can be used to build a good foundation for society. In the words of Michelle Bachelet, former President of Chile, "What we learn from the past ought to help us confront the future" (quoted in Blanco-Rivera, 2009: 133).

These are the characteristics of cultural records that have a significant impact on development. Yet, as highlighted in the previous section, development here is not merely conceptualised in quantifiable terms such as increasing GDP, but also in the intangible value added to the nation's human capital which then seeps through to foster material advancements. Furthermore, these components of cultural records as a facet of culture and as information, provide cultural records with an implicit value in relation to national development. Cultural records are a form of information. As has been established in the literature, information is a resource as vital to development as people, land and industry (Alemna, 1998). As Awedoba (2002) puts it, people cannot be expected to adopt good decisions that would benefit their societies if they are unaware of the choices and options that exist. Therefore, like any other resource, information needs to be carefully mobilised and utilised to achieve maximum development. This has been particularly advocated for indigenous knowledge, which still mostly resides in the memories and activities of community members. Thus, as recent scholarship indicates, there exists a critical need for the documentation and management of this key, time-tested resource for development (Muswazi, 2001; Ngulube, 2002; Mwebesa et al., 2007; Stevens, 2008; Lodhi and Mikulecky, 2010, 2011; Khalala et al., 2014; Nkwanyana, 2018). The capture of indigenous knowledge and other cultural records that originate locally would also address the predominance of foreign information and fill the gap in local information which Alemna has identified as a significant problem in Africa's information society.

The ensuing discussion probes the ways in which the connections between national development and cultural records are being considered by scholars, governments and non-governmental entities internationally, regionally and nationally.

International perspectives

As definitions earlier noted suggested, cultural records are, simply put, a record of culture. Culture in itself is a concept that is currently being explored as crucial to sustainable development (Andrews, 2010; Maraña, 2010; Hawkes, 2001). Scandinavian researchers at the Dag Hammarskjold Institute have articulated the concept of "alternative development" in order to grapple with the realisation that "development must come to terms with the cultural background" (Awedoba, 2002). Others have argued that Asian economic powerhouses China, Japan, Korea and Malaysia have done precisely that. Alhassan (2006), for instance, credits these countries' development success to an "interface" that incorporates all aspects of development, adopting, adapting, and creating technologies to suit their basic societal values.

Critiquing the Australian context and calling for a comprehensive understanding of culture that encapsulates it as a communal mode of social production and transmission of values, meaning and purpose and not simply a matter of arts and heritage, Hawkes (2001) argues that a cultural perspective and the expression of social goals and aspirations is essential to the public planning process where the first step must be an engagement with the values and aspirations of those who will be affected by policies. Unless this happens, then development plans and policies will likely be unworkable and fail to generate the intended end. Further, cultural vitality is as essential to a healthy and sustainable society as social equity, environmental responsibility and economic viability.

In this connection between culture and sustainable development two interrelated issues are at play. Firstly, Hawkes argues that if a society's culture disintegrates, so will everything else, and thus vitality is the single most important characteristic of a sustainable culture; in other words, "a sustainable society depends upon a sustainable culture" (Hawkes, 2001: 12). Secondly, cultural action is required in order to lay the groundwork for a sustainable future, therefore

the initial strategies that need to be implemented to successfully achieve sustainability must be cultural ones. Strategies incorporating cultural records are suggested in a later section of the study.

Likewise, commenting on the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) makes a strong case for culture and its role in development:

> Culture is who we are and what shapes our identity. Culture contributes to poverty reduction and paves the way for a human-centred, inclusive and equitable development. No development can be sustainable without it.

The UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development marks the first time that the international development agenda refers to culture within the framework of Sustainable Development Goals. As the quote above reveals, the agenda was clearly framed with a serious consideration of culture's contribution to sustainable development, envisioning, for example, the formulation and implementation of policies to promote sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products by 2030, as well as strengthening efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage. The culture focus of the 2030 Agenda had precedent in the Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies for Development held in Stockholm in 1998 where it was suggested that one year of the Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006) be devoted to the connections between culture and development and the elimination of poverty. The conference's recommended policies for member states included making cultural policy one of the key components of development strategy, promoting activities designed to raise the awareness of cultural factors in the process of sustainable development among citizens and decision-making bodies, and to strengthen the study, inventory, registration and cataloguing of heritage, including oral traditions which the conference recommendations recognised as containing information valuable to the design and implementation of conservation policies. This latter point recalls Hawkes' connection of environmental responsibility to sustainable development and reveals, as do Tale and Alefaio's observation regarding the marine biology information embedded in Fijian oral traditions, that indigenous environmental and ecological knowledge critical to development is often found in cultural records.

African perspectives

Parallel to the UN 2030 is the African Union's Agenda 2063, a vision and action plan that calls for all segments of African society to work together to build a prosperous and united Africa. Central to the Agenda's vision of accelerated development and technological progress is a pan-African cultural impetus that pivots around cultural records and heritage, including folklore, oral traditions, languages, film, music, theater, literature, festivals, religions and spirituality. Apart from being celebrated and elevated, the framers of Agenda 2063 envision these "cultural assets", to use the language of the Agenda, to significantly raise self-awareness, well-being and prosperity, and to contribute to world culture and heritage. In other words, Agenda 2063 in theory acknowledges that cultural records factor into a positive national psyche which constructively influences development. In addition, cultural records support and provide evidence of African contribution to world culture and heritage.

Evaluating the goals of Agenda 2063, Eguegu (2016) views cultural "symbols" as critical in advancing Africa's vision and development. Linking China's and Japan's "remarkable levels of modernisation and development" to their cultural tenacity, which has seen them guard their culture while instilling it into every facet of their society, Eguegu contends that such a cultural revolution is the only means by which Agenda 2063's vision can be realised. Other critiques of Agenda 2063 are mindful of added factors that could disrupt its potential. Nkenkana's (2015) and Amupanda's (2018) analyses of the Agenda, for example, remind us that culture can sideline groups within a nation along age, gender, ethnicity, (dis)ability and other lines, and raises the concern that Agenda 2063 and other such instruments do not always adequately or effectively address these complex situations. Therefore, nation-specific adaptations of Agenda 2063's ambitious framework should be sensitive to avoid reinforcing marginalization. There is evidence that where there is political will to adopt the spirit of the Agenda, national policies can be formulated that impact positively on the preservation of cultural records in Africa (Saurombe, 2016).

And this documentation is necessary for African communities (continental and diasporan) for whom non-collection and non-preservation of cultural records can create "silences" or, as Bastian expresses it, a "kind of 'historylessness'", especially in the face

of the Eurocentric notion that history is connected to the written document. Another danger becomes that, without records emanating from within these communities to counterbalance observations made by outsiders, their cultures can be maligned, misunderstood or misrepresented. The significance of this latter point to development is reflected in the fact that Agenda 2063 recognizes "ownership of the African narrative and brand to ensure that it reflects continental realities, aspirations and priorities . . . " as a critical enabler for Africa's transformation (Agenda 2063: 20).

National perspectives: the Ghanaian landscape

A number of recent explorations of Ghana's national development have contemplated the role of culture in development in ways beyond the economic benefits of cultural assets to the country's balance sheet. For example, in his analysis of foreign development assistance to Ghana, Andrews (2010) underscores the need for cultural understandings in the development process. Importantly, Andrews notes that many governments and stakeholders have failed to understand the extent to which culture can influence development. Andrews further opines that culture, as the way of life of peoples, should be considered if the goal is to move to a better place; culture is not antithetical to development. As such, Andrews' study highlights the role of socio-cultural factors by demonstrating that cultural factors need to be better understood by donors if socioeconomic development is to occur.

Similarly, Awedoba's 2008 investigation of culture and development explores how the former can have a bearing on the latter in Ghana. His analysis of several aspects of culture directly relates to the nexus between cultural records and national development. For instance, in discussing language and development, Awedoba probes the national language question. Still, apart from which language is used in education and instruction, the matter of content is also vital. The inclusion of local folklore, history and traditions, educational excursions to heritage sites and visits to libraries and archives to view documents of importance to the nation's past, would all greatly contribute to the sense of self-assurance and confidence that Awedoba and others have identified as a crucial factor in the positive development trajectories of Asian powerhouses China, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore and South Korea.

Hawkes' four pillars of sustainability could have easily framed Alhassan's 2006 discussion of traditional authorities' contribution to sustainable development through their role in managing environmental resources. Reminiscent of Tale and Alefaio's evaluation of the Fijian situation, Alhassan recognises chiefs not simply as managers of these resources, but considers traditional authorities to be custodians of critical cultural information relating to them. Crucially, Alhassan argues that this indigenous knowledge must be documented and transferred otherwise its continued contribution to development would be lost.

Apart from these scholarly considerations of culture's role in Ghana's development, cultural concerns have also emerged in government policy. The 1992 Ghanaian constitution, which enjoins every president to present a "coordinated programme of economic and social development policies"[2] within two years of taking office, advocates "the conscious introduction of cultural dimensions to relevant aspects of national planning". Vision 2020, the plan Rawlings presented in 1995, recognised the importance of cultural beliefs and heritage to development frameworks. However, the subsequent government's development plans, Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy and Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS 1 & 2), assessed by Crawford and Abdulai (2009) as a World Bank-influenced consolidation of neoliberal hegemony and not a break from it, were more wedded to an economic understanding of development and only mention culture within the context of promoting a sustainable and responsible tourism sector for revenue and employment generation (GPRS 2: 29). Crawford and Abdulai's conclusions provide an alternative framework within which to understand why, over a decade later, many of the initiatives outlined in the 2004 national cultural policy, including provision of facilities for private, personal and family records, are yet to be implemented (Silverman, 2015; Alhassan, 2018). Beyond a lack of political will, lack of appreciation for the goals of the policy, and/or a lack of understanding of the nexus between culture and development, if the development agenda is still indirectly set by outside forces, then it follows that African culture, generally maligned as it already is, would not feature as an important element in development discourse.

Nevertheless, concerned individuals, civil society organisations, religious ministers and traditional authorities interested in, and aware of, the social dimensions of development contributed at public fora to the design and implementation of these policies in

Ghana. Thus, the policies reflect these alternate visions of development to varying degrees. Vision 2020's objectives, for example, include the preservation and promotion of traditional values and practises that encourage and reinforce national unity, social cohesion and harmony, as well as promoting socio-economic development and preserving an open, friendly, and hospitable society.

Additionally, Vision 2020 recognises the economic value of cultural beliefs and their manifestation in traditional festivals, noting that they could attract tourism and its attendant foreign investment. Therefore, the plan suggests raising the awareness of the population to the economic potential of cultural practices and traditional festivities for community and national development, the preservation and maintenance of cultural assets (castles and forts, royal residences and mausoleums, music, stories, etc) for the enjoyment – and, one might add, the education! – of future generations. Although the cultural assets mentioned, especially music and stories, are cultural records, neither Vision 2020 nor GPRS 1 & 2 (which continue the tourism agenda), explicitly consider the value of a richly documented cultural record to national development goals. Yet, more robust cultural recordkeeping would lead to increasingly dynamic and appealing exhibitions that would help diversify what some consider Ghana's tourist industry's "monotonous products" (Gyasi, 2013), and generate greater tourist visits. Tourism to the United Kingdom, for example, benefits from visits to the British Museum and British Library as much as it does from those to Buckingham Palace and Tower Bridge ("British Museum tops UK visitor attractions", 2015 and "UK's top 50 visitor attractions revealed", 2016). The type of tourist would also be more varied; there would be, for example, a rise in academic researchers concomitant with the increasing depth, variety and quality of records. Also not considered in Ghana's development plans are the previously discussed psychological effects that cultural records could have, such as greater wellbeing, connectedness and sense of ownership which would positively impact development.

Despite the poor follow through on the goals of the national cultural policy and development to date, the collection of cultural records could yet be made a priority in Ghana's national development; these agendas provide a usable framework for any government that understands the nexus between culture and development and believes, as expressed in Vision 2020, that incorporating cultural considerations into the national development process would encourage greater community participation in policy formulation and programme implementation. This would also counteract the negative consequences that the exclusion of indigenous and cultural information from these plans has on the very development at which they ostensibly aim. Breisinger et al. (2011), examining the Ghanaian case, have argued that oftentimes African development agendas fail because governments have simply implemented policies that have proved successful elsewhere and not set realistic goals adapted to local conditions or, one might add, based on or influenced by local knowledge.

It is clear, then, that although neither the concepts of information or records generally, or that of cultural records specifically, are mentioned in the Ghanaian constitution or national cultural policy and development plans, both of these, if harnessed intentionally, can contribute to the "enabling environment" for capacity building which the plans aim to create.

Conclusion

Based on the importance of cultural records to national development discussed above, it is clear that the establishment of both governmental and institutional cultural records policy is imperative. As Chodorow (2006) asserts, we cannot accept that our understanding of our culture rests on happenstance, on such "accidental processes" as a record being preserved just because someone decided to save it or stored it in a safe place away from hazard or theft. Repositories such as the Black Cultural Archives in London, England, the State Black Archives Research Center and Museum at the University of Alabama (SBARCM), and the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in New York, both in the United States, were established as determined efforts to counter not just the uncertainty about the cultural record in general, but that of formerly subjugated and vulnerable communities in particular. The SBARCM, for example, has an active archival program that includes collecting biographical information on residents of significance in the community's history, highlighting African-American architecture, genealogy, and collecting photographs and information regarding cemeteries (Williams, 2006). The SBARCM maintains the Akan sankofa bird symbol as its logo to signify "the role that this repository

plays in providing a dialogue between the present and the past" (SBARCM website).

For African communities, as has been noted for the diaspora in the Caribbean, where oral traditions can be more accessible than the written word for a significant proportion of the populace (Williams, 2006), an emphasis on remembering traditions and preserving them through a cultural records policy is crucial. This, however, does not negate or diminish the much-needed and critical work of collecting, arranging and preserving cultural records in audio-visual, digital and print formats. Speaking of the significant role of the oral tradition in African and African-descended communities in Canada, John Addo, an African-born publisher of the serial *African Affairs*, nonetheless commented that, as an editor, he could no longer rely upon it:

" . . . it would probably not be the best way of doing things, to keep them oral. I'm African you understand, and in our tradition I can pull an old man in for an interview and he can narrate history from his fathers, [from] his family, etc. but if he passes away what happens to his stories? . . . when he's gone, the library is gone" (Williams, 2006, p. 204)

But the "library" need not disappear. For the African context, Agenda 2063 should not just be lip service. All the cultural areas enumerated in the agenda demonstrate the importance of culture and cultural records to a nation's development. Yet this potential cannot be fulfilled unless there are cultural records or systematic policies for collecting of such.

Although the key role that information professionals such as librarians and archivists can play in the collection and preservation of cultural records has been generally acknowledged, particularly as relates to the documentation of indigenous knowledge, a gap still persists between this awareness and the actual support extended to undertake such work (Muswazi, 2001; Sithole, 2007; Stevens, 2008). Careful attention to the aims of proposed legal frameworks and policy documents at the international and national levels beyond mere political posturing is therefore needed so that financial resources to fund archives, libraries, indigenous knowledge centers and other heritage institutions are made available. This commitment must exist especially if other Agenda 2063 aims regarding cultural heritage preservation, Encyclopaedia Africana, Museum of African History, Culture and Art named in the technical document are to be met. Therefore, under the auspices of Agenda 2063, funding should be made available for either the establishment of community archives that would collect, arrange and preserve cultural records, including oral histories, or, as suggested by Alemna (1998), increase the mandate and funding of the National Archives and public libraries to embark upon the work of collecting the papers of individuals and organizations.

Also worth considering would be incorporating the Canadian "total archives" tradition which has meant that most archival institutions acquire both the records of government and the private papers of prominent individuals, such as politicians, writers, artists, etc. However, paying attention to recent trends in humanities and social science research, it is imperative that the records pertaining to and produced by non-prominent individuals are also sought and collected. Without the letters, songs and stories of the "common people," for example, how could a social history of Ghana be adequately and completely told?

Concomittantly, the current re-conceptualising of the role of the archivist to include archival activism is to be encouraged. In this re-envisioning, the archivist takes the initiative and seeks records as opposed to solely awaiting records to come to them. Low awareness of archives and records among the general public could most likely be mitigated if there were a more robust involvement and recognition of communities in the creation and preservation of records, especially in the cultural milieu. When the knowledge people and their communities carry – how it is their forebearers lived, fished, farmed or herded, etc. – is accorded the same level of respect and importance as the happenings in legislative assemblies and boardrooms, it enriches the development process (Mwebesa et al, 2007) and facilitates a "representational belonging" (Caswell, Cifor and Ramirez, 2016) which helps people make the connections between records and their own roles and contributions to society and the national narrative and makes them become more invested in the process. The following quote illustrates this point poignantly:

"Since I was a child, I was aware that the old laboratory had old documents . . . Now they are neatly organized in boxes and carefully arranged. I never realized their importance until I saw how meticulously they were cared for . . . It is embarrassing to realize that I did not know then that our heritage was in those papers" (Punzalan, 2009: 208)

Clearly, in the eyes of this community member, a teacher, witnessing the archival acts of arranging, boxing, labelling and exhibiting turned the dormant records that bore witness to the past she

knew into meaningful archives that embodied heritage and identity.

In proposing other ways in which culture's importance can deliberately impact on the development planning process, Hawkes (2001: 27) suggests "cultural action", stating that "human and social development are culture in motion. Beyond all interventions of the state, we must promote the active participation of communities in the making of their lives". It would not be hyperbolic to suggest that active participation in the *recording* of their lives is also key. This is a work that could be carried out most effectively out of community archives. Community archives and archivists, particularly those located in and serving formerly subjugated or so-called "minority" populations, seek to understand and preserve the histories and traditions inherent in rituals, commemorations, festivals, music, dance, naming ceremonies, local stories and sayings, as well as material culture and crafts such as quiltmaking and recipes. They also search for the non-official, ephemeral print documents that are often produced in villages and towns without either state knowledge or sanction (Williams, 2006). All of these are cultural records that illuminate the collective and the individual experiences and contributions that, taken together, propel a society or nation forward.

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Notes

1. One notable exception, perhaps unsurprisingly, is Senegal which has a number of decently supported libraries, museums and archives, including a national cultural archives mandated to collect oral traditions. Mbaye S (1990) Oral Records in Senegal. *American Archivist* 53(4): 566-574; Dione B and Diouf D (2010) Senegal: Libraries, Archives and Museums. *Encyclopedia of Library and Information Services* (3rd edition) 1(1): 4687-4695. London, UK: Taylor & Francis.
2. For a nation reputed by some to have had the world's first development plan in colonial governor Gordon Guggisberg's ten-year (1919-1929) development plan (Sampson, 2014), this constitutional requirement is almost instinctual.

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