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Unpacking Cultural and Creative Industries in Non-Metropolitan Spaces: Insights From Longitudinal Analysis

ABSTRACT

Cultural and creative industries (CCIs) are attracting a growing international scholarship including several notable contributions from geographers. This article represents a modest contribution to the emerging and vibrant African scholarship surrounding the creative economy and CCIs. The aim is to unpack the composition and shifting content of the cultural economy and CCIs in a non-metropolitan space in the Global South. The study focuses on Mahikeng which is situated in South Africa's North West province. Within the extant literature on CCIs this research is novel through applying a historical approach based on a longitudinal analysis of the cultural economy over a 50-year period and understanding the different influences shaping its shifting complexion. This historical perspective on CCIs is a contribution of the research and addresses a knowledge gap in that most existing CCI literature research is characterised by a bias towards present-mindedness. The overall historical evolution of CCIs in Mahikeng is a classic illustration of the rise and demise of a cultural economy cluster in a non-metropolitan space. This trajectory of change in the cultural economy and CCIs can only be understood in terms of the critical moments or junctures of political change which impacted the town.

Keywords: cultural and creative industries; Mahikeng, Bophuthatswana, non-metropolitan spaces

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INTRODUCTION

Cultural and Creative Industries in Contemporary Economic Geography

According to UNESCO (2013, p. 2) cultural and creative industries (CCIs) are defined as “those sectors of organized activity that have as their main objective the production or reproduction, the promotion, distribution or commercialization of goods, services and activities of content derived from cultural, artistic or heritage origin”. For Valiati (2025, p. 13) the economy of CCIs “is a broad concept encompassing the application of economic science theoretical tools in cultural production, distribution and consumption”. Arguably, the concept recognizes culture as a source of intrinsic value and a driver of economic activity. CCIs are distinguished by the capacity to transform creative and cultural capital through multiple and innovative channels (Pastore & Corvo, 2025). According to the definition used in the European Union the cultural and creative sectors are comprised of all activities based on cultural values or other artistic individual or collective creative expressions (Wolniak & Jonek-Kowalska, 2022). However, it is observed the concept of CCIs remains slippery. Pratt (2005, 2008) alerts us to conceptual tensions, confusion and imprecision surrounding both concepts and policy around CCIs. According to Pinheiro and Hauge (2014, p. 87) “following the UK, Anglo-Saxon countries like Australia and New Zealand, in addition to a number of Asian nations, have all adopted their own definitions and nuances thus resulting in an individualized framing of (approach to) the notion of CCIs”. UNESCO acknowledges the elasticity of its definition and points to “its localization potential depending either on national, regional or local needs, as well as policy and development discourses” (Gerlitz & Prause, 2021, p. 1). Thus, Gurel (2025) can pinpoint worldwide slightly different definitions of CCIs are adopted.

Notwithstanding some definitional ambiguity and the absence of an internationally agreed definition, Virani (2026, p. 1) avers that CCIs as a policy construct “has come a long way in the past 10 years or so and more so since the global pandemic 2019–2021”. It has transitioned from being a construct which required strong advocacy to substantiate itself as a legitimate part of the socioeconomic policy landscape “to become a mainstay and a priority in macro- and micro-economic policy the world over” (Virani, 2026, p. 1). Indeed, according to Colombo (2025, p. 18) CCIs “occupy a pivotal role in contemporary society, serving not only as drivers of innovation but also as profound reflectors and shapers of societal values”. CCIs have been viewed variously as flagbearer for the digital economy, a fix for uneven geographical development, a stimulus for urban regeneration, a motor for economic growth and a basis for addressing inequality, exclusion and marginalization (Lewis, 2025). Komarowski and Lewis (2023, p. 1) opine that during past decades CCIs “have increasingly been recognized for their role in local, regional, national and supranational economies; as drivers of economic growth, development and regeneration; and for their social and cultural impacts on well-being, place making, inclusion, sustainability, diversity and culture”. Huang and Zou (2024) demonstrate the manner in which CCIs contribute to urban and regional innovation.

CCIs are recognized widely “as important actors in contemporary post-industrial knowledge-based economies” (Salvadore & Pappalepore, 2025, p. 2). Since the turn of the 21st century Ma (2022,

p. 597) can observe that “the term Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI) has spread globally as a post-industrial strategy for socio-economic revival”. Domenech et al. (2021, p. 1777) contend that CCIs represent “a powerful resource for improving the well-being of rich and poor places at all geographic scales”. Malisiova and Kostopoulou (2024, p. 4500) maintain that CCIs “are widely acknowledged in academic and policy discourse as fundamental resources for local development”. According to Zemite et al. (2022, p. 1) CCIs are “an important and expanding part of local economies; they are known to engage in innovation and risk taking and thus in exploration of new avenues for development”. Across much of Europe CCIs are viewed as a source of adaptive response to new imperatives arising from economic shocks and as an aid to helping regions to recover (Capello & Dellisanti, 2023). The role of CCIs in driving regional growth is an issue which has galvanized much debate (Dellisanti, 2024; Lazzeretti et al., 2017). Across Europe CCIs emerged as powerful potential catalysts of regional development and revitalization (Kalfas et al., 2024; Maddah & Arauzo-Carod, 2025). CCIs are revealed to significantly enhance job prospects in peripheral regions and function as drivers for social cohesion and cultural identity (Crociata et al., 2025). Internationally, the contribution of CCIs to sustainability and attainment of SDGs has been profiled (Borre et al. 2023; Gao et al., 2024; Kovaitė et al. 2022; Zemite et al., 2022). An extensive literature confirms the relevance of CCIs both for sustainable development (Borre et al., 2023; Salvatore & Pappalepore, 2025, 2026) as well as social innovation (Sica et al., 2025). The relationship of CCIs to well-being is subject of accelerating research attention underlining that CCIs can play a central role in promoting inclusive, resilient and sustainable development (Sanjuán, 2025).

During the past two decades Kalfas et al. (2024, p. 1) observe that “researchers, decision-makers, and interested parties from all over the world have paid close attention to Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs)” as critical anchors for regional growth and rejuvenation especially in the context of Europe. Moreover, CCIs potentially might assume a major role in programmes for the post-war recovery and reconstruction such as for Ukraine (Arauzo-Carod & Moroz, 2025). Arguably, according to Colombo (2025, p. 18), within an environment of “accelerating global challenges – ranging from climate change and resource depletion to political conflicts and growing social inequalities – the transformative potential of CCIs has never been more evident”. Moreover, it is considered that “by rethinking production processes, consumption patterns, and the narratives we craft around sustainability, the CCIs can lead the charge in reimagining a future that is both equitable and regenerative” (Colombo, 2025, p. 18). For Virani (2026) the growth of CCIs is inseparable from the rise of neoliberal policy regimes and argues that they are co-constituted rather than merely correlated.

Among others, Brandano and Urso (2023) report that for the past 20 years CCIs have been subject to increased academic as well as policy attention. Undoubtedly, public policy interest in CCIs has been a major impetus for the rise of CCI research (Cho et al., 2018; Ericsson et al., 2024; Valiati, 2025; Virani, 2026) and the recent global burgeoning of academic writing on CCIs (Boos et al., 2025; Duester, 2025; Feng & Yang, 2024; Haugsevje, 2024; Kalfas et al., 2024; Lazzeretti, 2013; Simjanovska, 2026). Gerlitz and Prause (2021, p. 1) reflect worldwide scholars “have intensively studied Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) within the last 20 years due to their economic growth potential and their positive impacts on innovation, regional competitiveness, identity, and more recently, resili-

ence”. Especially, in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic CCIs gained further momentum because of policy developments around resilience and economic recovery (Brandano & Urso, 2023; Daniel, 2024; Drummond et al., 2025 Yue, 2022). Within this expansion of CCI scholarship research contributions made by geographers, urban analysts, cultural scholars and regional scientists have enriched and enlarged CCI debates (Brandano & Urso, 2023; Pratt, 2012, 2017).

Andy Pratt (2012, p. 317) early identified that CCIs exhibit “a distinct geography, one that is dynamic and that has until recently been poorly documented and explained”. Over the past two decades a range of issues around CCIs have consolidated as vibrant topics for discussion and research among geographers, urban studies or regional science scholars (Slach et al., 2015). In particular, Pratt (2012, p. 319) observed that geographers assumed a lead role in interrogating “the localisation of the cultural and creative industries, notably with respect to the clustering of these activities”. It was disclosed that CCIs do not locate haphazardly instead they are in specific locations and clusters (Casadei et al., 2023; Gong & Hassink, 2017). In a landmark contribution Comunian et al. (2010, p. 6) remind us of the importance of understanding more deeply the advantages and disadvantages of particular places for CCIs not only in terms of infrastructure but also with reference to “the kinds of networks, policy and market dynamics that they can offer to facilitate the sector”. The location and spatial distribution of CCIs has been garnering major research attention at national, intra-regional and intra-urban scales of analysis (Antonova, 2025; Biferale et al., 2025; Cabrera-Pereyra et al., 2025; Crociata et al., 2025; Daniela et al., 2014; Maddah et al., 2023; Miguel & Herrero-Prieto, 2020; Sekeroglu & Celik, 2025; Uršič, 2016). One central finding is that as a consequence of heterogeneity, different location behaviour is observable among different kinds of CCIs (Dellisanti, 2023a, 2023b) as well as between new enterprise births and the more established CCIs (Cruz & Teixeira, 2024).

The initial wave of research on CCIs stressed that the dependence of CCIs on large pools of creative labour, extensive local networks of suppliers, access to tacit knowledge and synergies based on spatial proximity strengthened their agglomeration in major metropolitan areas. The emerging international consensus was large cities were considered the best environments for CCIs and especially ‘creative cities’ so as to take advantage of their hard and soft infrastructural benefits including of Richard Florida’s ‘3Ts’ – talent, tolerance and technology (Florida, 2002). In turn, the CCIs and skilled labour pools (talent) attract high technology industries to such creative cities thereby promoting further innovation and economic growth. A critical finding was that in order to derive the benefits of economic growth and development, CCIs needed to co-locate in sufficiently high numbers and to form ‘clusters’ which were viewed as a vital aspect in the formation, expansion and success of CCIs. Overall, the initial burst of scholarly outputs around the economic geography of CCIs was centred mainly on clustering which occurred in the contexts of post-industrial cities of the Global North. This Northern ‘urban bias’ was an inevitable result of the original pioneer scholarship on the ‘creative class’ and ‘creative cities’ which emphasized creativity’s role in restructuring the post-industrial urban economy, galvanizing innovation, entrepreneurship, and new seeds of economic growth (Zhao & Kim, 2025). As articulated by Gibson (2010, p. 3) and others (see Drummond, 2026 in the South African case), one outcome of urban bias has been to foster an “imaginary geography of creativity” which situates CCIs and creativity primarily in the urban context to the exclusion and neglect of other spaces.

In recent years the validity of this ‘urban bias’ which coursed through initial economic geography scholarship on CCIs has come under intense scrutiny. Gibson (2012) demonstrated clearly that creativity beyond city limits occurred in many physically and metaphorically remote or marginal spaces. Drummond (2026, p. 1) points out that whilst CCIs are viewed as “quintessentially urban” arguably “this is not the case in reality”. The landmark works of Gibson (2010, 2012) were critical in debunking this imaginary geography of creativity, instead to highlight that CCIs existed across a range of diverse localities outside of major cities in the Global North. A raft of additional studies confirmed that whilst national geographies of CCIs might be dominated by metropolitan areas “the cultural economy also increasingly thrives in a range of smaller and remote cities” (Yin & Derudder, 2021, p. 12). A growing literature affirms that creativity and CCIs are not merely phenomenon of inner-city spaces. Creative economy development beyond the city is the axis of recent detailed work produced by England and Sendra (2026). Accordingly, whilst CCIs traditionally have been seen as a metropolitan phenomenon, this “predominantly stereotyping approach” has shifted in recent years; Zemite et al. (2022) can observe there is a progressive trend for exploring the traits of CCIs in non-metropolitan spaces. Research by Bell and Jayne (2010) flagged issues around ‘the creative countryside’. Duxbury (2021) points to an emerging international conversation surrounding CCIs in rural and remote areas. Mathisen et al. (2024) demonstrate that in peripheral rural areas creativity, cultural livelihoods are possible. The existence of creative activity clusters in small cities and towns of Spain and Latvia has been interrogated respectively by Escalona-Orcao et al. (2018) and Zemite et al. (2022). Rural and small-town Sweden has been the setting for several research studies on CCIs and ‘creative outposts’ in sparsely populated and peripheral areas of the country (Brouder, 2012; Brouder and Eriksson., 2013). Among other geographical studies are works which have been conducted in relatively remote rural towns of Australia (Daniel, 2013, 2014), and Ireland (White, 2010).

Although the original literature and policy concern around CCIs focused on Europe, the issues around CCIs as vital drivers for economic development inevitably experienced an international spread to include the Global South. As observed by Cunningham and Swift (2019) researchers in the Global South have launched research investigations on the CCIs accompanying the adoption of a cultural and creative economy (CE) development agenda. This surge of research and policy interest around CCIs has been manifest also in sub-Saharan Africa (Drummond, 2026; England & Sendra, 2026; Obiaya et al., 2026; Rodygina & Sinilova, 2025). In particular, CCIs in South Africa have been under investigation and where it has been recorded that the creative economy and CCIs are geographically concentrated mainly in the metropolitan centres of Johannesburg and Cape Town (Gregory & Rogerson, 2018). Nevertheless, in other African studies, a burst of new scholarship is interrogating creative economies and CCIs beyond the confines of major cities and urban areas (Drummond, 2026; Drummond & Rogerson, 2025; England & Sendra, 2026). Given this fluidity, Irma Booyens (2025) calls for an urgent reframing of scholarship around the ‘spatiality’ of the creative economy in Africa.

Figure 1. Location Map of Mahikeng in the North West province and Showing Areas of the Former Bophuthatswana Bantustan.



Source: Map prepared by Fiona Drummond

Within these international debates and research on CCIs, this article represents a modest contribution to the emerging and vibrant African scholarship surrounding the creative economy and CCIs. The aim is to unpack the composition and shifting content of the cultural economy and CCIs in a non-metropolitan space in the Global South. The study is focused on Mahikeng which is located in South Africa's North West province (Figure 1). Within the extant literature on CCIs this research is novel through applying a historical approach based on a longitudinal analysis of the cultural economy over time and understanding the different influences shaping its shifting complexion. This historical perspective on CCIs is a contribution of the research and addresses a knowledge gap in that most existing CCI literature research is characterised by a bias towards present-mindedness.

Study Context: Mahikeng in Historical Perspective

A brief overview of major political events which have shaped Mahikeng's development trajectory provides essential context for understanding the changing complexion of the town's cultural economy and CCIs. It should be appreciated also that since its foundation the settlement has experienced several name changes.

The development history of the original settlement of Mahikeng (meaning "the place of stones") is unusual in South Africa as its origins are as an indigenous African (Batswana) settlement established at a reliable source of water on the banks of the Molopo river. Arguably, Mahikeng has long been something other than an ordinary South African town (Parnell, 1986) with its main claim to international fame deriving from the celebrated role played by Colonel Robert Baden-Powell in the Siege

of Mafeking (October 1899-May 1900) by Boer forces during the Second Boer War. Mahikeng has a complex history with the intertwining of Batswana, Boer, and British cultures and powers. Until Botswana's political independence in 1966 and the construction of a new capital, Mafeking served as the extra-territorial capital of colonial Bechuanaland. In 1966, the Bechuanaland Protectorate gained independence from Britain and the capital function relocated to Gaborone in the newly independent state of Botswana. With its capital status lost Mafeking became a peripheral settlement near the border of the Republic of South Africa (Drummond & Manson, 1991; Drummond & Parnell, 1991). Until 1966 Mafeking managed to remain somewhat apart from the strict implementation of apartheid measures as petty apartheid could not be enforced as stringently as elsewhere due to the British colonial presence. However, with the changing political situation between 1966 and 1977 Mafeking experienced the full weight of apartheid segregation, spatial planning and enforcement of petty apartheid legislation.

The implementation of measures for the making of 'grand apartheid', which centred on the creation of separate 'ethno-states' for South Africa's African population, was a watershed in Mahikeng's history. During the 1960s and 1970s, the architects of apartheid sought to stringently enforce racial segregation through a programme of massive social engineering involving the forced removal of Black Africans from 'White' South Africa to their 'traditional' rural 'Homelands' or what were styled as 'Bantustans'. Four Bantustans' (Bophuthatswana, Ciskei, Transkei and Venda) acceded to 'independence' from South Africa and were given budgetary support from the apartheid government in order to support their sham 'independence' status unrecognised by the international community as legal or separate from South Africa.

Undoubtedly, the most successful of these 'independent' Bantustans was Bophuthatswana, the so-called 'traditional homeland' of the Batswana people, which was established in 1977 with its capital at Mmabatho built six kilometres north of Mafeking. The town of Mafeking was not initially part of Bophuthatswana albeit much debate arose as to possible incorporation. Nevertheless, the white inhabitants of Mafeking, led by the business community, expressed support for joining Bophuthatswana in order to regain the prosperity associated with being a capital and that Mmabatho and Mafeking effectively functioned as one urban centre (Drummond & Parnell, 1991). In 1980 the town was incorporated into Bophuthatswana and renamed Mafikeng to move away from the anglicised spelling and better represent the Setswana language. The local newspaper reported as follows: *"From 19 September it will no longer be Mafeking but MAFIKENG.... Although many Mafekingians will be heartsore that the historic name will no longer appear on world maps, Mafikengians on the other hand will rejoice that the original placename has been restored after 95 years of misspelling"* ("It will be Mafeking no longer," 1980). Further it was pointed out: *"An I for an E and an e for an i - just this simple swap and there you have it - Mafeking becomes Mafikeng. ... There is no question of animosity, it only involves going back to the original Tswana name that was distorted so many years ago"* ("Mafeking – so be it," 1980).

The Bophuthatswana 'independence' years triggered an economic boom for Mafikeng/Mmabatho. Underpinning this new prosperity was the South African state pouring heavy economic subsidies into Bophuthatswana in order to achieve its strategic objective of legitimising grand apartheid.

The town of Mafikeng recovered its status as a political capital. Major infrastructure projects were launched associated with the trappings of any capital city of a newly 'independent' African country (Drummond & Drummond, 2021; Nel & Drummond, 2019). Throughout the period 1980 to 1994, the town was a 'Bantustan boomtown' benefitting from its status as political capital and the lavish subsidies received from the South African state (Drummond, 1991a, 1991b; Drummond & Parnell 1991). Importantly, for CCIs and the cultural economy of the town, Bophuthatswana independence was a pivotal moment. In addition to the construction of a new parliament, ministerial and government buildings and airport, the independence period witnessed the establishment of a new university, radio station, music recording studios, a cultural centre for performances, two hotels and sports stadium complex. Significantly, throughout the years of 'independence' Bophuthatswana's President Mangope prioritised the arts and culture sector in Mafikeng as it was regarded as crucial for legitimisation of the bogus state.

Democratic change in South Africa in 1994 and the rise to power of the African National Congress (ANC) closed this era of plenty through the generous apartheid state subsidies that flowed into the town. In the period of democratic transition it was assumed that the Bantustans would be seamlessly re-incorporated into the new South Africa. Nevertheless, this was not the case as intense opposition occurred from the Bophuthatswana authorities in the hope that an independent Bophuthatswana would still be possible (Lawrence and Manson, 1994). This option was not feasible and with the collapse and crushing of opposition, Bophuthatswana was re-incorporated into South Africa (Jones, 1999). This said, the local opposition towards re-incorporation impacted the attitude of the new African National Congress government towards Mafikeng's development. At the time of transition, considerable anxiety existed regarding the town's future. Although Mafikeng was granted the status of provincial capital of the new North West province, negative sentiment resulted in an effective investment strike and sentiment in the town effectively pivoted from boomtown to ghost-town.

With the demise of apartheid and expansion of democracy, the new ANC government dismantled the legacies of the Bantustans, viewed as institutions of apartheid (Drummond & Nel, 2021). One consequence was the loss or degradation of many of Mafikeng's cultural assets. For example, the local orchestra was disbanded and the former Bophuthatswana television and recording studios shut down. In terms of tangible and intangible culture, the town became a shadow of its former self, no longer a cultural melting pot, nor a town with a cultural infrastructure and institutions to support a vibrant CCI economy. Indeed, the town entered an economic slump due to the after-effects of the 2008–2009 global financial crisis. With the ANC government reclaiming the African heritage of South Africa which had been suppressed during both colonial and apartheid rule, the North West provincial government emphasised the town's African Batswana heritage and thus in 2012 returned to the original Setswana spelling of Mahikeng. Locally, an attempt was made to rebrand Mahikeng as South Africa's cultural capital with a focus on new cultural festivals celebrating the Setswana language and resurgence in Batswana culture (Drummond et. al., 2021).

METHODS

This research on Mahikeng's CCI economy uses an historical approach with primary documentary source materials extracted from archives. The pursuit of archival research is a valued research method in geography and most especially in respect of research in historical geography. The merits of utilising archival methods in uncovering various issues in the historical geographical research on tourism in South Africa are demonstrated in several recent studies (Drummond et al., 2021; Drummond et al., 2022; Rogerson, 2020, 2025a, 2025b, 2025c, 2026; Rogerson & Rogerson, 2024a, 2024b, 2025a, 2025b; Sixaba & Sixaba, 2026). Analysis is undertaken of evidence obtained through the archive of the local *Mafikeng Mail* weekly newspaper across the 50-year period, 1974 to 2023. The newspaper collection was investigated both at the *Mahikeng Mail* offices in Mahikeng and at the National Library of South Africa, Cape Town depot; since 2020 the *Mahikeng Mail* is available online.

A longitudinal approach was adopted to track the evolution and changing complexion of the CCI economy and link this to shifts in the political economy. This research method provided longitudinal data across the historical period under scrutiny. Using newspaper sources the archival approach provided information and facilitated the development of a data base on the cultural economy and CCIs in Mahikeng over the 50-year period. The database was constructed based upon the notices of activities taking place in the town's creative sector over this period. Because of its general international acceptance and comparison, as well as broad range of cultural and creative activity classification, the UNESCO (2009) framework was applied to define and capture the CCIs. The UNESCO framework is the standard classification system used in South Africa for defining CCIs and for purposes of statistical analysis. In the Framework for Cultural Statistics (FCS), culture is defined as "the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, that encompasses, not only art and literature, but lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs" (UNESCO, 2009, p. 9). The FCS identifies six 'domains' which give a sense of the structure and breadth of CCIs. These are (1) Cultural and Natural Heritage, (2) Performance and Celebration, (3) Visual Arts and Crafts, (4) Books and Press, (5) Audio-Visual and Interactive Media; and, (6) Design and Creative Services. These six domains are based on the grouping together and consolidation of existing international classification systems such as the International Standard Classification of Occupations for cultural employment (UNESCO, 2009). To avoid double-counting, the FCS categorises items in accordance with the subject rather than the form in which it appears. Thus, whilst music spans both the categories of Performance and Celebration, and Audio-Visual and Interactive Media as it consists of both live performance and recorded music, it is situated in the Performance and Celebration domain (UNESCO, 2009). Allied to these six cultural domains UNESCO identifies the two related domains of (1) tourism and, (2) sports and recreation which include economic and social activities considered partially cultural (UNESCO, 2009). As several large cultural and sporting events have taken place in Mahikeng the domain of tourism is explored in some detail and use is made of the category 'Tourism events' in the database. Salvatore and Pappalepore (2025, p. 6) assert that "CCIs and tourism have an inseparable relationship".

Overall, for the purposes of this research, the term ‘cultural economy’ is adopted because the main CCI activities found in Mahikeng are considered part of the cultural domains based on the above UNESCO definitions. Such activities include the performing arts, festivals, visual arts, broadcast media as well as cultural heritage. Table 1 lists in detail the identified sub-categories that apply to each domain. The sub-categories were based on the UNESCO guidelines as outlined in the FCS (2009) as well as the specific domain activities identified in the archival research. For example, under the category of music in Performance and Celebration are listed several different genres such as classical, modern/contemporary (including popular music like pop, rock, R&B, house, kwaito), traditional, choral and gospel, and jazz. These sub-categories represent the composition of each domain and link to the evolution of the cultural economy in Mahikeng as these sub-categories shift over time.

Table 1. UNESCO Domains Used in This Research

<i>Cultural Domains</i>	Cultural and Natural Heritage	Cultural Heritage Museums Setswana Heritage Afrikaans Heritage Mafikeng Historical Heritage
	Performance and Celebration	Dance Music: classical, modern, contemporary, pop/rock, hip-hop, house, R&B, Kwaito, Motswako, amapiano, African/Afrikaans/ Indian traditional, choral, gospel, jazz Plays, Drama, concerts, circus Festivals Beauty Pageants
	Visual Arts and Crafts	Fine arts Photography Crafts
	Audiovisual and Interactive Media	Film and Video TV Radio
	Books and Press	Book fairs Book launches
	Design and Creative Services	Fashion Shows Graphic Design
<i>Related domains</i>	Tourism	Sports and recreation: events that lead to tourism such as festivals, national sports events and tournaments

Source: Authors

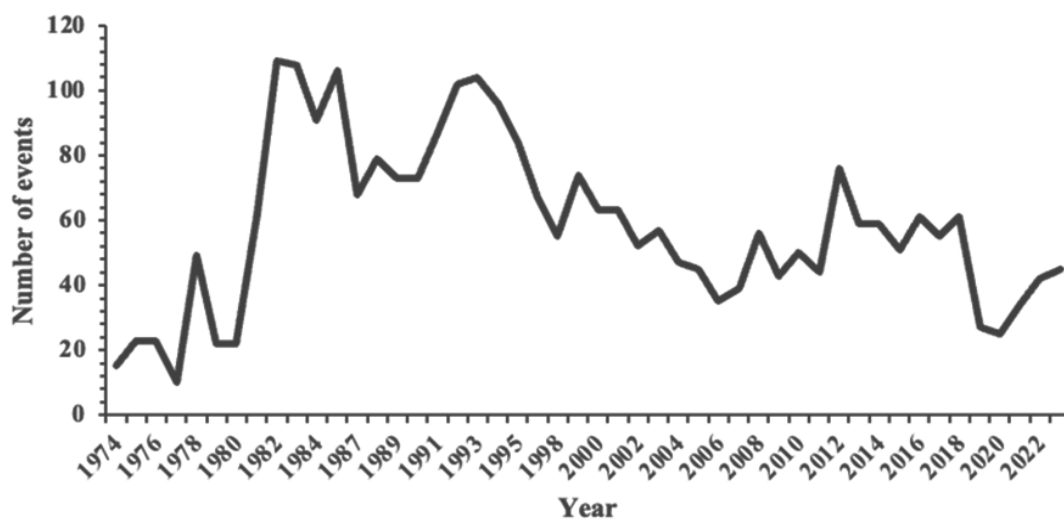
The adoption of the archival approach thus provides information on the local cultural economy and of CCI clustering in Mahikeng over the 50-year period. No other research method could yield data of this type for time-period. Moreover, in taking this historical path, the evolution of the cultural economy can be linked to macro-trends of political shifts. The database was analysed to derive a series of statistical graphs and charts. A detailed and rich tableau of evidence from the archives of the *Mahikeng Mail*³ was generated for analysis.

³ The Mafeking Mail was established in 1899, and in 1900 became the Mafeking Mail and Protectorate Guardian. With the advent of the independence of Botswana in 1966, the paper became the Mafeking Mail and Botswana Guardian. In 1980, following the incorporation of Mafeking into Bophuthatswana, the paper changed to the Mafikeng Mail and Botswana Guardian, in line with what was considered the authentic spelling of the name of the historical town. In

RESULTS

Using the newspaper as resource base, the macro trends in the cultural economy of Mahikeng over the 50-year period can be identified. The total database consisted of almost 3000 data points which provides evidence of changes in the cultural economy of this non-metropolitan space. Figure 2 provides an overview of the cultural economy during the study period in Mahikeng and gives the total number of events in each year. The ‘events’ are classified across the six cultural UNESCO domains as well as the related category for tourism events which includes important events such as national sporting competitions.

Figure 2. Total Number of Events in Mahikeng Cultural Economy 1974–2023



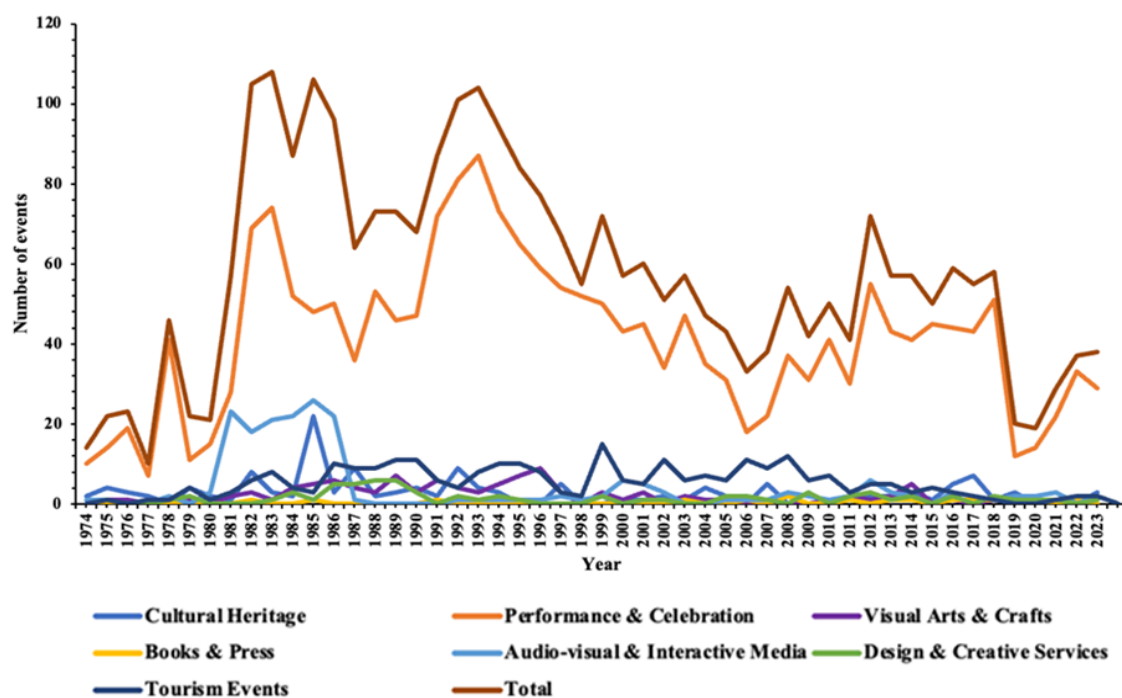
Source: Author Compilation

It is disclosed that from a low base in the mid-1970s prior to the establishment of Bophuthatswana there occurs a sharp upturn following Mahikeng’s incorporation. The peaks of cultural activity occur during the independence and followed by a period of general decline in the democratic era. A marginal revival in activity is evidenced in the early 2010s decade before a steep drop off and recovery linked to COVID. The most significant turning point is Bophuthatswana “independence” in 1977 and the subsequent incorporation of Mafikeng in 1980. The cultural economy experienced a general upward trajectory from 1977 which was driven by government support and investment in cultural infrastructure. In the period 1982 to 1985 the number of events peaked with 108 events being held in 1983. For the next decade the cultural economy exhibits a high-level plateau until 1993 when 104 events are recorded. From that point there is a clear gradual trend down until 2007 with only 38 events being held during the year. In the post-1994 democratic era of South Africa and following the reincorporation of Bophuthatswana with its different priorities and objectives, the new ANC government

1982 it became a newspaper for all Bophuthatswana, and changed name again to The Mail (“The end of an era,” 1982). In 2014 it became the Mafikeng Mail, and in 2015 changed to the new spelling and became the Mahikeng Mail. For clarity, it is referred to as Mafeking Mail (until 1980), Mafikeng Mail (1981–2014) and Mahikeng Mail (from 2015) in line with the spelling of the name of the town.

was not as supportive of the town's cultural economy and this is reflected in the general downward trend of total events. A degree of stabilisation and recovery is discernible from 2008 until 2018, albeit at significantly lower levels than the peak years. The precipitous decline from 2019 to 2021 is attributable to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. A small recovery is observed for 2022-2023.

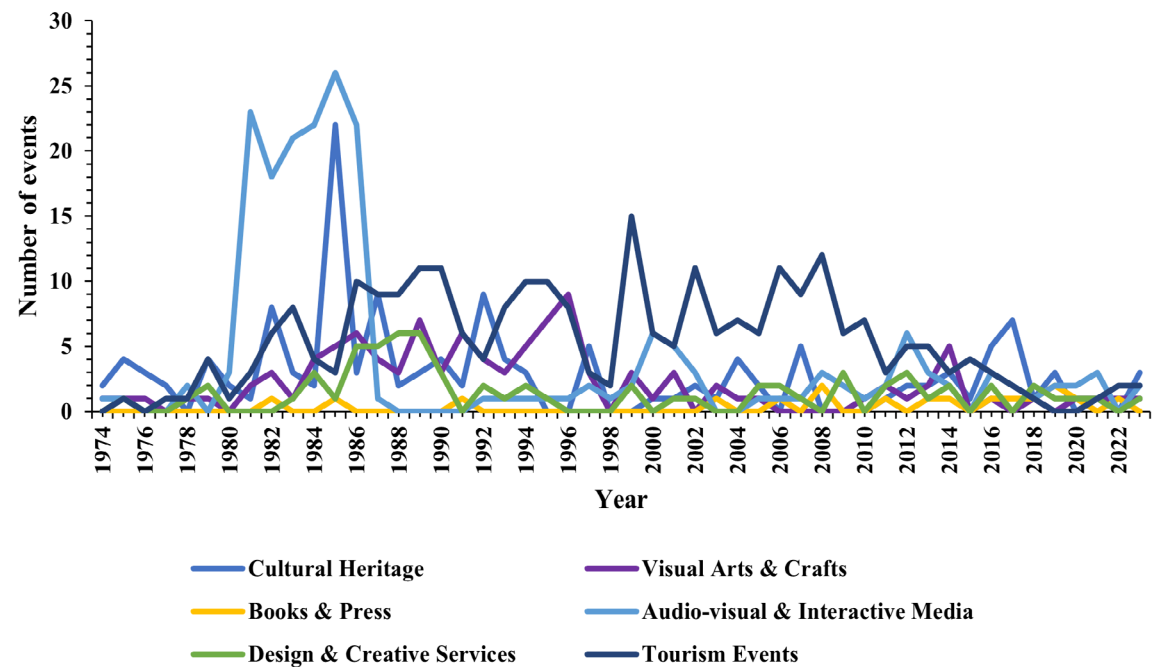
Figure 3. Mahikeng Cultural Economy per Domain, 1974–2023



Source: Author Compilation

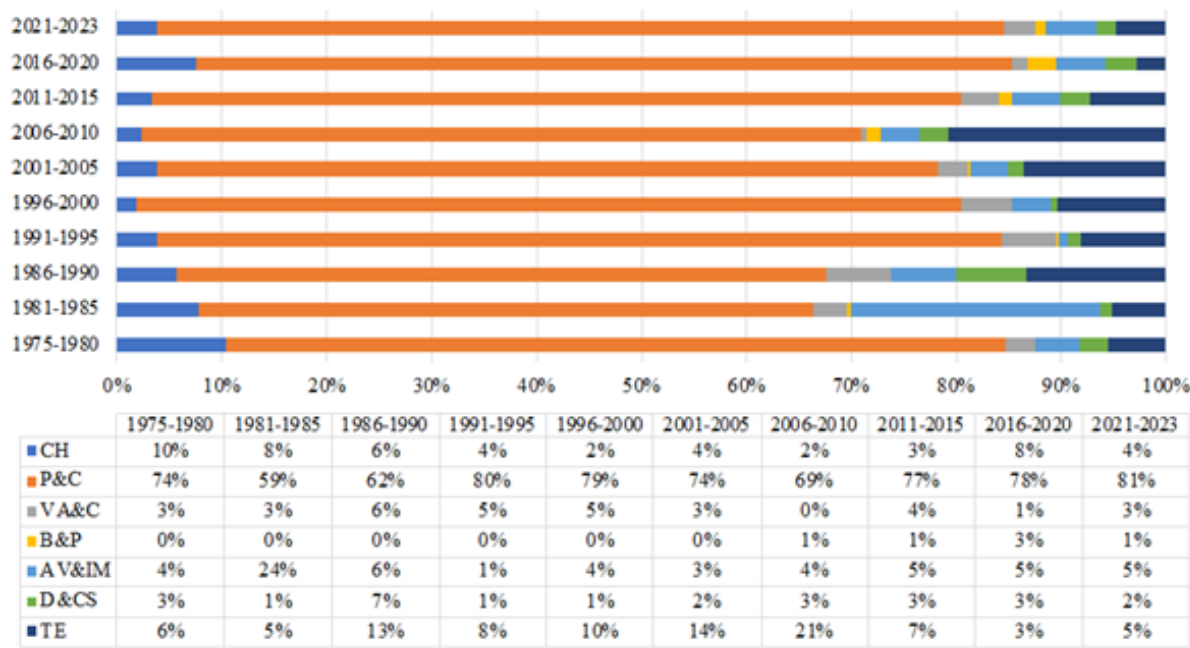
These trends can be unpacked in further detail in terms of the differentiation of the different domains. Figure 3 charts the recorded event by domain across the 50-years investigation. Several points can be noted. First, is to observe that for a former Bantustan capital and now secondary centre in peripheral space on the margins of South Africa, Mahikeng reveals an extraordinary depth and diversity of the cultural economy. Arguably, no other former Bantustan capital, current provincial capital or secondary city in South Africa could match this record. Second, in terms of activities by domain Figure 3 shows clearly the dominance of Performance and Celebration within the cultural economy of Mahikeng. Over the 50-year period are recorded 2062 events in Performance and Celebration which constitutes 72 percent of all cultural activity in the town. Thirdly, Figure 3 indicates the relative contribution of each domain activity and shows that the second largest category is Tourism Events (TE) with 265 events or 9 percent of total activity. The domains of Audio-visual and Interactive Media, Cultural Heritage and Visual Arts and Crafts follow with a share respectively of 7, 5 and 4 percent. The two smallest categories in the town's cultural economy are those of Design and Creative Services, and Books and Press. The smaller domains are represented in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Zoomed in View of Smaller Domains



Source: Author Compilation

Figure 5. Cumulative Percentage Breakdown of Domain Activities in 5-Year Intervals (1975–2023)

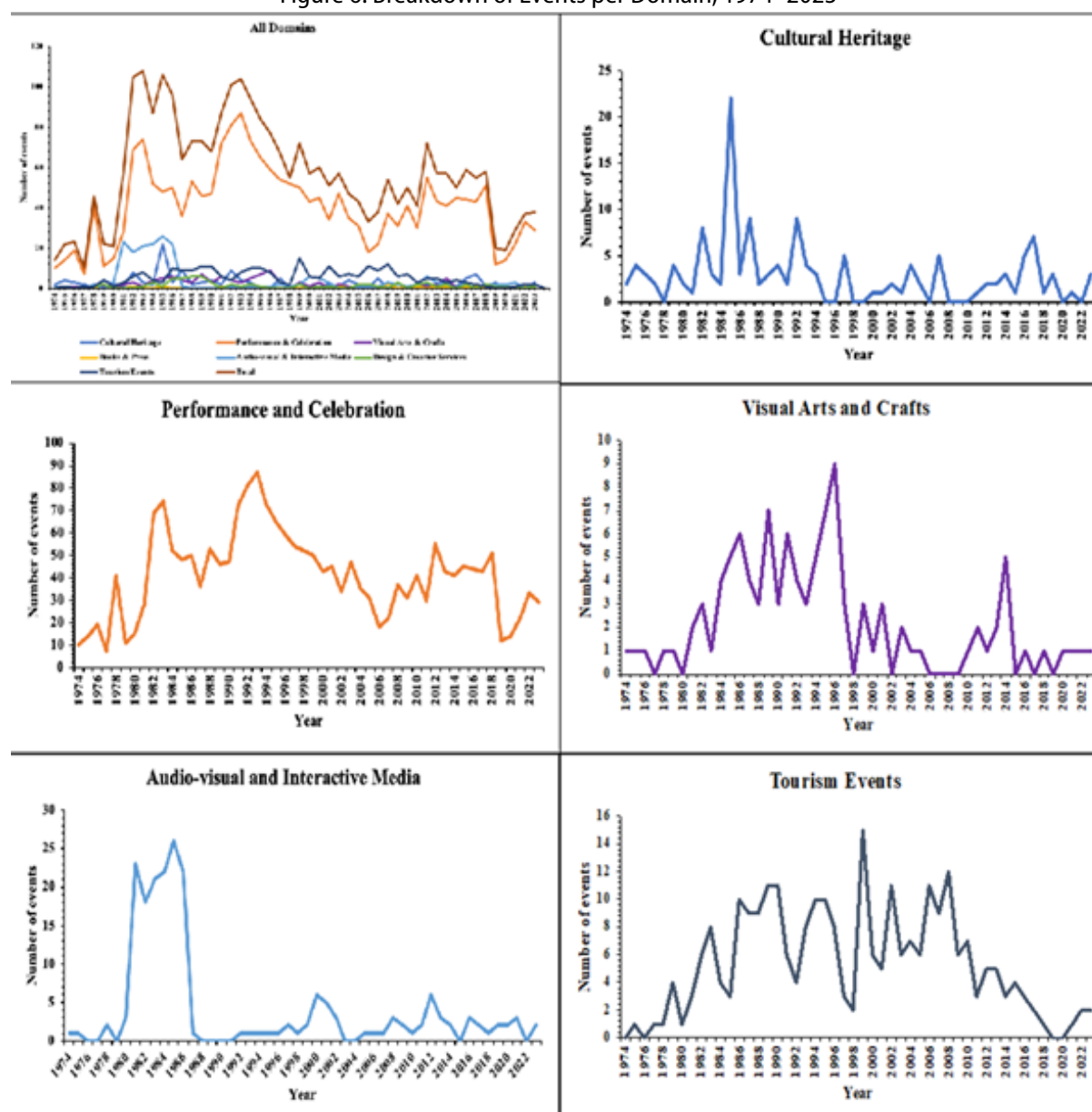


Source: Author Compilation

Using cumulative domain activity across five-year intervals, Figure 5 displays the shifts over time in each domain activity. It is evident that during the peak and plateau of cultural activity in the 1980s to the early 1990s there is a greater degree of diversity in domain activity. Of particular interest is the spike in Audio-visual and Interactive Media during the period 1981-1985 when this domain accounts for 24 percent of total activity. It is disclosed also on Figure 5 that the domain of Tourism Events is

particularly important for the 2006-2010 period accounting for 21 percent of total activity. Further detail of the ebb and flow of activities in each domain across the study period is provided on Figure 6.

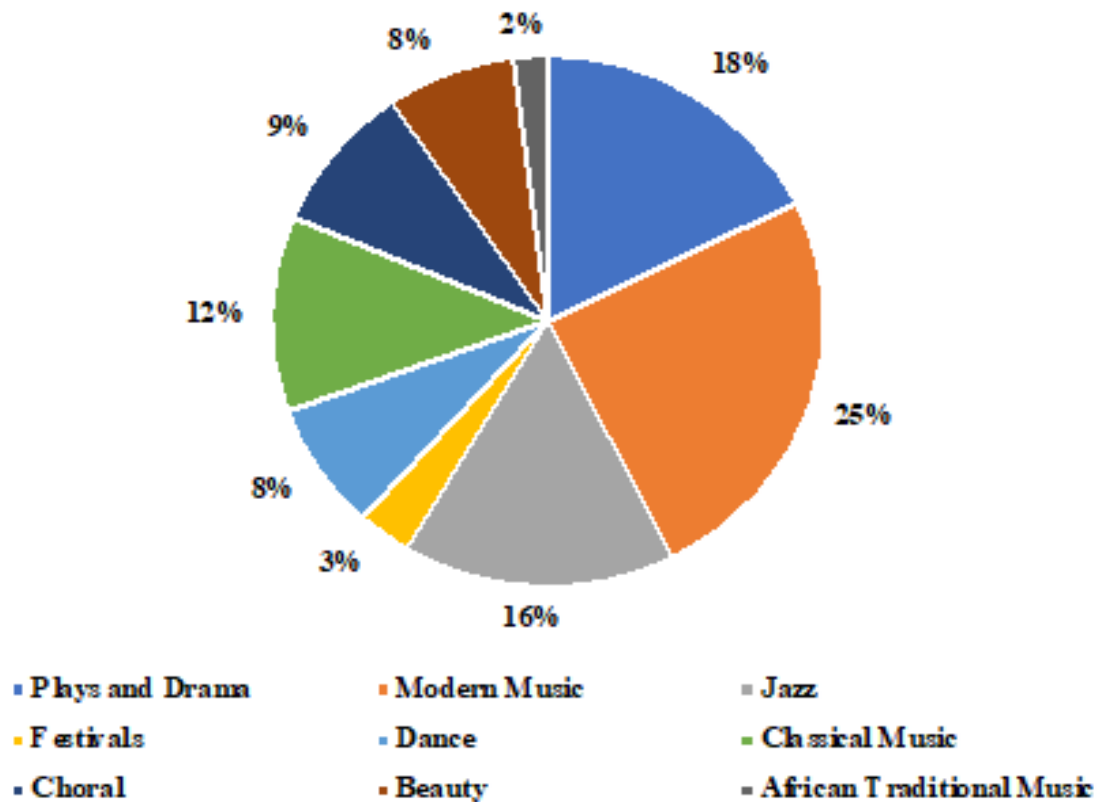
Figure 6. Breakdown of Events per Domain, 1974–2023



Source: Author Compilation

Taken together the analysis provided in Figures 3-6 indicates the dominance of the Performance and Celebration domain throughout the fifty-year period. Indeed, for the local cultural economy of Mahikeng a close association exists between the annual Performance and Celebration domain data and the total number of events over time. This reinforces how important this single domain is to the overall cultural economy of Mahikeng as the main type of CCI activity in the town (Drummond & Rogerson, 2025).

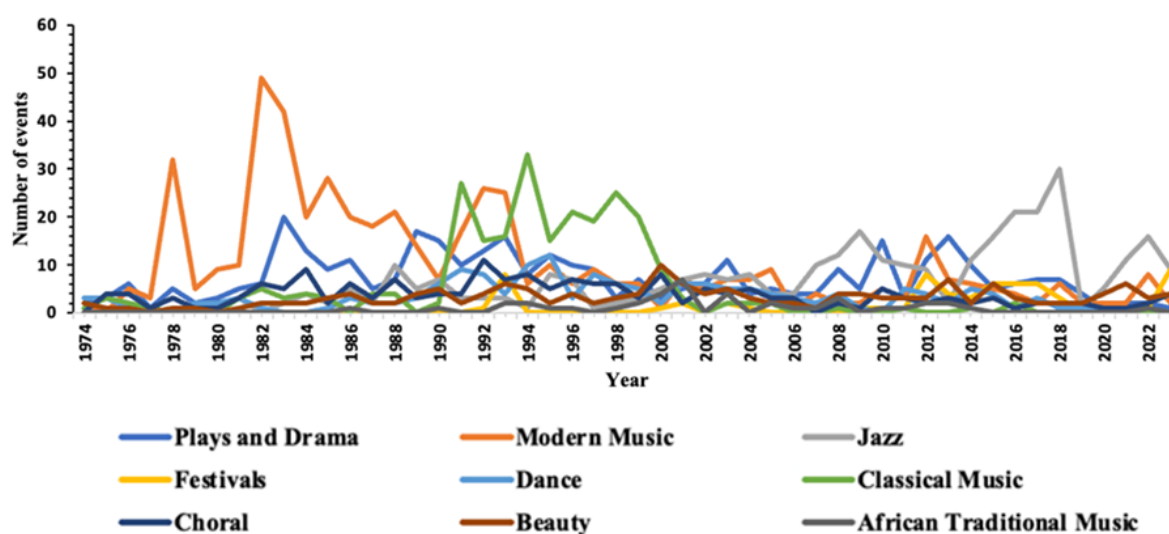
Figure 7. Proportion of total events, 1974–2023



Source: Author Compilation

The data collected from the newspaper archives allows further differentiation of Performance and Celebration domain into its constituent sub-categories as set forth in Table 1, namely Plays and Drama, Festivals, Dance, Beauty Contests and Music. Moreover, given the wide variety of musical genres, the music sub-category was further disaggregated into Modern Music, Jazz, Classical Music, Choral and African Traditional Music. This classification illustrates the wide range of performance events that occurred in the town covering a breadth of genres. As is disclosed on Figure 7 music is the largest category overall as it represents 64 percent of events in the Performance and Celebration domain. Modern Music is the largest musical genre, representing 25 percent of total domain activity and followed by Plays and Drama (18%), Jazz (16%) and Classical Music (12%). Although festivals of music represent only 3% of total domain activity events, it must be highlighted that these are large events such as Mahika Mahikeng with a significant local economic impact on the town (Drummond et al., 2021). Just as the earlier analysis of the UNESCO domains in the cultural economy of Mahikeng pinpointed changes occurring over time a narrowed focus on the category of Performance and Celebration reveals that this has also experienced shifts over time as different sub-components gained and lost in prominence. Arguably, at one level these change over time are a reflection of shifting consumer tastes across the 50-year period but also a reflection of patterns of government funding support for the arts.

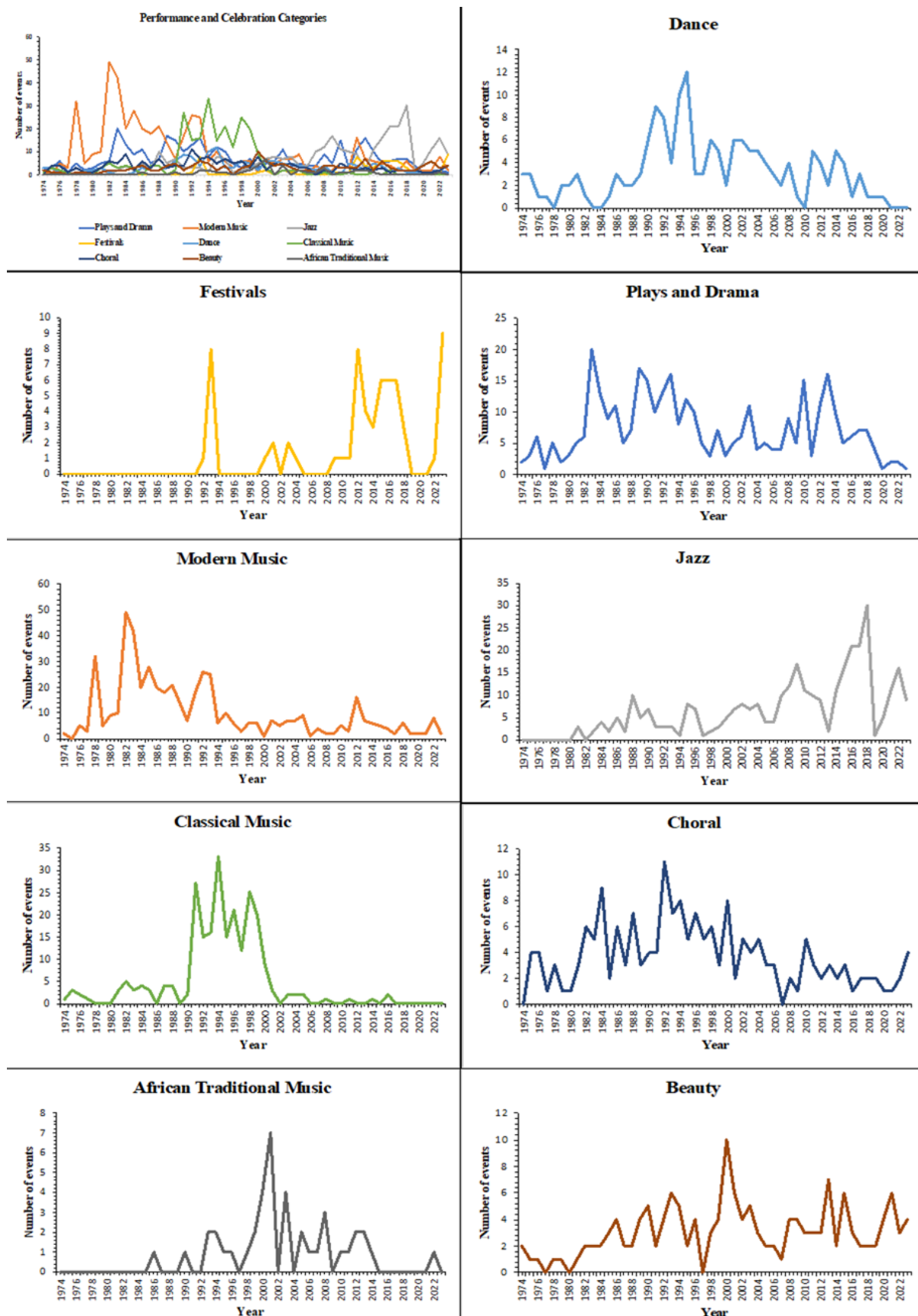
Figure 8. Categories of Performance and Celebration, 1974–2023



Source: Author Compilation

Figure 8 illustrates the patterns over time in relation to these different forms of Performance and Celebration. From Figure 8 it is evidenced that different types or sub-categories of performance peak at different times across the study period. Several points can be highlighted. First, that Modern Music, which includes modern, contemporary, pop/rock, hip-hop, house, R&B, kwaito, *motswako* and *amapiano*, experienced a peak in 1982 and 1983 with 49 and 42 events respectively. A secondary peak was also recorded in 1978 when there were 32 events. Of note is that this secondary peak of modern music occurred during the Bophuthatswana independence era when there was in place a political and development agenda of hosting events for prestige purposes through the attraction of top musicians (Brownell, 2021). Another significant category in the independence years was Plays and Drama, fairly constant through the time period. Second, is the sharp rise and fall of the category of Classical Music from 1991 to 2000. This corresponds to the years between the inauguration and closing of the local Chamber Orchestra. Third, it is observed that Jazz music gained in popularity from 2007 onwards, rising to prominence as the largest sub-category by the decade of the 2010s. Finally, Figure 9 isolates each of the categories of Performance and Celebration allowing the trends over time for each category to be recognised. Details of these categories are discussed elsewhere (Drummond & Rogerson, 2025).

Figure 9. Breakdown of Events per Category of Performance and Celebration, 1974–2023



Source: Author Compilation

CONCLUSIONS

In an international overview of the development of scholarship on CCIs since 2000 Lazzeretti et al. (2018, p. 14) asserts “the increasing relevance of research on CCIs”. This paper represents a modest contribution to the recent burst of global scholarship concerning cultural economies and CCIs. More specifically, it is a response to Fiona Drummond’s (2026, p. 1) observation that “a comparative knowledge gap has formed as the urban bias obscures how non-metropolitan spaces act as important locales of creativity”. Unquestionably, whilst national geographies of CCIs consistently highlight the dominance of metropolitan areas this is not to say that other marginal or peripheral spaces more marginal or peripheral spaces, including non-metropolitan spaces, are not creative. A novel aspect of this contribution is application of an historical approach and use of a longitudinal analysis to unpack the composition and changes taking place over time in cultural economies and CCI activities. Using an historical approach the analysis underlines the dynamic nature and changing complexion of the cultural economy over the 50-year horizon of this investigation. The results of the mining of the archive of the local Mahikeng Mail newspapers provided a comprehensive base for analysing the macro- and micro-shifts occurring in the changing cultural economy of the town. The analysis was conducted through the application of the standard UNESCO cultural domain categories with the addition of the related domain of tourism events. The results disclosed the overwhelming dominance of the domain of Performance and Celebration throughout the study period.

The overall historical evolution of CCIs in Mahikeng is a classic illustration of the rise and demise of a cultural economy cluster in a non-metropolitan space. Arguably, this trajectory of change in the local cultural economy can only be understood in terms of the critical moments or junctures of political change which impacted its rise and fall. It is demonstrated that the rise of Mahikeng’s cluster occurred during the era of the former ‘independence’ of Bophuthatswana from 1977 to 1994 when there occurred substantial government support for CCIs and the construction of an infrastructure which nurtured the expansion of a local cultural economy. In particular, the findings demonstrate the vital importance of infrastructure and generous funding for the arts which was a distinctive feature of the Bophuthatswana era. In effect, the investment in cultural infrastructure projects created a CCIs cluster in the combined town of Mafikeng–Mmabatho. The tangible cultural assets forming the basis for a CCI cluster in the town encompassed a vibrant local newspaper, radio station, and television broadcaster (BopTV); orchestra, dance, drama, and arts and crafts at the Mmabana Cultural Centre; recording studios (where the soundtrack to the Lion King was produced); cultural festivals and, the activities of the University of Bophuthatswana’s fine art department (Drummond & Drummond, 2021).

Post-1994 a dramatic shift occurs in the status of Mahikeng and in the accompanying policy environment that conditioned the cultural economy. It was shown that within an overall trajectory of decline the local cultural economy evidences certain changes in its complexion. The year 1994 saw the re-incorporation of Bophuthatswana into South Africa and marked the start of a steady decline of events held, which bottomed in 2007. This demise in the local creative cluster was largely due to a withdrawal of and reprioritization of funding by the national ANC government. In some cases,

local institutions (the orchestra) and infrastructure (recording studios) closed down; in others such as BopTV and radio these were absorbed into national structures but on a much-diminished scale. Another significant element for change in the cultural economy was the political unrest and the resultant damage to local cultural infrastructure which occurred with the unrest and riots of 1994, and again in 2018.

In final analysis a critical examination of the evolution of the cultural economy in Mahikeng offers certain policy lessons from its historical experience. First, is to highlight that although it was unplanned, a non-metropolitan cluster emerged and consolidated in Mahikeng during the Bophuthatswana era. This confirms the findings of previous research that creative clusters can emerge in non-metropolitan spaces both in the environments of the Global North (Brouder, 2012) and Global South (Drummond & Snowball, 2019). Second, it is important to acknowledge that the Mahikeng cluster was state-led and of the critical significance of government support for the overall development and health of the cultural economy and of its various domains. The analysis confirms that this cluster did not continue to prosper after the state was transformed and was accompanied by the withdrawal of support and funding which, in turn, caused decline, retrenchments and a loss of cultural talent. Lastly, the experience of the Mahikeng cluster shows that following its loss of impetus it has proved difficult to revive. This suggests in policy terms that non-metropolitan cultural clusters require some degree of state support with private sector and community buy-in, as no one sector has been able to successfully take up the mantle and maintain the CCIs cluster without the support of the other.

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