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Autonomy?

South African

~~Independent~~ Self – organised

Art institutions,

funding models and its effect

on institutional programming

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This thesis is in fulfillment of the requirements for the Master in History of Art degree in the department of History of Art of Witwatersrand University

Supervised by Nontobeko Ntombela

Declaration

I, declare that this thesis is a presentation of my original work. It is submitted for the Master in History of Art degree in the department of History of Art at the University of Witwatersrand. It has not been submitted at any university for a degree or examination.

_____ Date: _____

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Abstract

This Masters project explores the notion of autonomy and the effect of external funders on self-organised art institutions. Institutional self-censorship and its resulting loss of autonomy are brought to the fore. Through textual sources and practice-based research, the limitations of current funding models are discussed with the intention of instigating experimentation on alternative funding and institutional models that may provide a greater degree of autonomy. The study establishes the South African art context through one-to-one interviews with a selection of founders of local self-organised art institutions, in order to establish the limitations of their respective funding models. The practical component is presented as a book to be published on the PAN!C website. The book includes five interviews with founders of self-organised institutions, two round-table discussions that question the notion of autonomy and an introductory text to the book.

Keywords

Autonomy, Self-organised, funding

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Introduction

This Masters project focuses on the loss of autonomy brought about by the effect of external funding on the programming of South African self-organised [1] art institutions. This project includes a thesis and a practical component, in the form of an online publication[2]. The publication includes one-to-one interviews with founders of five South African self-organised art institutions, namely: Keleketla! Library; Center for Historical Reenactments (CHR); Chimurenga; Bag Factory Artists' Studios; and Nothing Gets Organised (NGO). The selection of these institutions was based on their various programming and institutional structures, how they have responded to the local art environment, their need to offer experimentation and the consequent mitigating of meritocracy. Meritocracy is the notion that individuals should be judged on merit, disregarding the systematic bias that bolstered individuals within South African apartheid, which played a huge role in the past and the remnants of it are still visible today. The focus on the local context is based on a need to mitigate the meritocracy that was brought about by apartheid, mainly affecting black practitioners. The selected institutions are engaged in experimental ways of nurturing tentative practices, even though they face challenges such as the influence of external funders, in subtle and overt ways that this thesis elaborates. The online publication includes two round-table discussions. The first discussion took place at Keleketla! Library and included young artists [3] as participants, to discuss self-organised art institutions, their limitations and the potential of other forms of funding that do not result in undue influence. The second round-table discussion was an online discussion, that took place over a period of three months, and included curator Khwezi Gule; director of VANSA, Molemo Moiloa; and co-founder of Keleketla! Library, Rangoato Hlasane.

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[1] Self-organised art institutions is used in the place of terms such as independent, artist–run and alternative spaces.

[2] The online publication will be uploaded after the examination. The physical book that has been printed is only for examination purposes. Please see appendices for examination. The physical book that has been printed is only for examination purposes. Please see appendices for examination. The physical book that has been printed is only to the PAN!C website.

[3] The round table discussion included the following young artists; Mbali Khoza, Simnikiwe Buhlungu, Refiloe Namise, Tshegofatso Mabaso, Nyakallo Maleke, Boitumelo Motau and Abri de Swartd.

This research uses a number of self-organised art institutions as examples, in order to critically analyse the notion of autonomy and external funders' influence, which results in a loss of autonomy. This thesis discusses firstly, the notion of autonomy focusing on individual and institutional autonomy within the local art environment. Second, it discusses the defining terms used to define independent, artist-run or alternative art spaces, ultimately art institutions initiated in order to 'fill in the void' as eloquently expressed by Koyo Kouoh, to describe institutions that respond to gaps within the arts (2010). Within this research, the term 'self-organised', "describes systems whose internal organisation tends to increase in complexity without being guided by an outside source" (Superflex 2006:5). This term refers to autonomy's definition of self-determination without external influence (Colburn, 2010). Third, it critically analyses current funding models within South Africa, and the impact these models have on the institution's programme. Last, it discusses the conceptual framework of the practical component, which is a book.

Context of research

One of the primary motivations for this research was the shortage of local self-organised art institutions. This has resulted in a system that leads young artists to seek commercial representation as soon as they graduate with an art degree. Commercial galleries are currently the most dominant spaces that offer artists exhibitions and other resources necessary for developing their practices[4]. In general, commercial galleries tend to have a specific taste for their programmes and artists that do not fit into this will not be of interest to them. Furthermore, the number of new young artists they can take on is extremely limited. Most of the state-supported museums, which could, potentially, "fill the void" left by the galleries, are not sufficiently funded to support programmes that include independently- curated exhibitions and accompanying publications (Gule 2010). As a result, commercial galleries hold the only key for most artists to explore and grow their practice. This

[4] This observation is informed by my six years experience of working at Stevenson. In an interview, curator and artist Gabi Ngcobo laments the importance given to commercial galleries, even at art schools. She talked about the need for young artists to imagine other avenues for practising.

sets a limit on more broad-based and inclusive art production, as well as the manner in which it is disseminated.

This gap makes the sustainability of self-organised art institutions an imperative, as they enable experimental practices. Furthermore, the few self-organised art institutions active within South Africa rely heavily on funding from foreign state missions, specifically the Goethe Institut and Pro Helvetia (Department of arts and Culture research report, 2010). This often results in the tailoring of the art institution's programme to such funder's interests, leading to the exclusion of artists and practices that may not be popular with these funders. This situation compromises the balance of what the creative community produces. It would appear that the degree to which an art institution has financial freedom, achieved by not relying solely on an external funder/s, dictates the extent to which autonomy can be obtained in its programming.

In South Africa, self-organised art institutions are founded by individuals, as opposed to top-down, government-mandated institutions. Each self-organised institution has a specific focus and ways of working which, in turn, exclude certain art practices. Self-organised art institutions tend to privilege more experimental modes of working, over those traditional forms of practice perceived to be preferred by the market, such as painting and sculpture. The aim is to encourage the opening of possibilities available to self-organised art institutions with different tastes and ways of working; allowing for the development of more dynamic artistic and curatorial forms of practice.

Another major motivation is the fact that only a few reports on funding models in South Africa exist, with nothing focused on independent art institutions[5]. This study seeks to add information on self-organised art institutions operating within the South African art world. Robyn Cook's recently completed DPhil thesis, entitled *The new institutions: artist-run participative platforms and initiatives in South Africa,* (August, 2016) deals with artist–run initiatives and their experimental exhibitions in

[5] The 2010 research report commissioned by the Department of Arts and Culture still remains the most informative document available.

the South African contemporary art landscape that has more commercial galleries. There are similarities between this research and Cook's because both focus on self-organised art institutions. The difference is that where Cook is concerned with self-organised institutions engaging relational aesthetics, this Masters project is concerned with possible undue external funder's influence on institutional programming. It also seeks to encourage other funding and institutional models that can be sustained in order to mitigate the inequalities that persist after apartheid.

With this in mind, there are individuals and self-organised art institutions that have employed and experimented with different funding models and experimental programming in South Africa. Those that have not been adequately explored include the Keleketla! Library; Chimurenga; Center for Historical Reenactments; Nothing Gets Organised; and Bag Factory Artists' Studios. The method of round-table discussions and one-to-one interviews[6] with founders of these self-organised art institutions draws out innovations in their models. This entails looking at how these models were used in the local context, as well as their respective shortfalls. Overall, self-organised art institutions are vital to the arts, as they support experimental practices, both on the institutional and individual level and foster the kind of critical thinking that supports a holistic and balanced creative community. Focusing on existing South African innovations not only addresses limitations within the wider South African creative arts, but also draws on ways of thinking and practising that are specific to South Africa.

Though it is not within the scope of this research, there are other factors to consider in this field. These include institutional reliance on the founder of a self-organised art institution's network, so that the founder's network is a major resource, making it difficult to continue the institution if the founder leaves it. Further, over time, what was once experimental can become conservative; a common occurrence that may compromise the institution's autonomy, once it has established a sustainable funding model. It is also important to note that the interest in the programmes of art

[6] The interviews are with Malose Malahlela and Rangoate Hlasanse from Keleketla! Library; David Koloane founder of Bag Factory Artists' Studios, Gabi Ngcobo from the now defunct Center for Historical Reenactments, Ntone Edjabe from Chimurenga and Sinethemba Twalo from Nothing Gets Organised.

institutions is merely for the purpose of looking at the effects of funding bodies on the autonomy of the institutions, and not to critique their decisions on the exhibition programme in general.

Research methodology

The research uses two qualitative methodologies. First, desktop research where existing literature is consulted to build a picture of the landscape. This forms part of the textual analysis. Second, practice, which is making a book and also informs and directs the thesis by picking up on issues that are hard to historicise (Eaves 2014:47). The book offers differing perspectives on the notion of autonomy, by grappling with the disjuncture between theory and practice. Where theory can be idealist, practice is pragmatic. The practical component includes one-to-one interviews with the founders of five self-organised art institutions, and two round-table discussions. The founders of South African self-organised are institutions were interviewed: Rangoato Hlasane and Malose Malahlela from Keleketla! Library; David Koloane from the Bag Factory Artists' Studios; Ntone Edjabe from Chimurenga; Gabi Ngcobo from Center of Historical Reënactments and Sinethemba Twalo from Nothing Gets Organised. The interviews have also served as research for the thesis, as the founders of the self-organised art institutions have confirmed or refuted the desktop research previously conducted. This makes for a richer thesis as it is not only based on theory but also on the practice of running self-organised art institutions, and their experience in the local art world. The first round-table discussion was held at Keleketla! Library with young artists; the second round-table was an online discussion between Khwezi Gule, Rangoato Hlasane and Molemo Moiloa. The online discussion was inspired by the *NKA Round-Table III: Contemporary African art and the museum* (2012). The round-table was a conversation between curators of African art.

According to Ronald Christ, the format of interview has been doubted as a research tool, because it feels as if it has been set up and is not at all objective (Christ, 1977: 112–113). Interviews claim to provide information from the source, which can then be taken as truth. This is true. However, there are a number of factors that one should be aware of when considering interviews as fact. The rapport between the

interviewer and the interviewed, as well as the interviewer's point of view, need to be taken into account. Interesting and engaging questions, from both the interviewed's and the interviewer's perspectives may bring out unexpected information. The aim of this research is to make information about self-organised institutions available, and it is important that first person accounts of founders of these institutions be presented, in order to present information based on experience and practice, instead of providing a theoretical perspective. The experience of these founders (produced by the interview format) allows those interested in self-organisation to become aware of some of the challenges in the local art field. Restoring or jogging South African art institutional memory, through the compiled interviews, enables easy access to information on self-organised art institutions in South Africa that have been, and can be tested on the ground. This MA project's accessible online publication is also meant to counter the institutional amnesia. Self-organised institutions close down and a few years later, when new ones open, they face similar challenges and consequently close down.

The desktop research for this thesis problematised the notion of autonomy, defined as self-creation, by looking at a number of examples of self-organised art institutions, instead of analysing it by looking at one case study. The research tracked moments of autonomy through different institutional models and, therefore, uses examples in order to recognise the nuances and tensions that each example exposes. This Masters project (thesis and book) highlights the disjuncture in the differing audiences: the academy for the thesis on one hand, and art practitioners for the online publication on the other, which seeks to instigate experimentation on institutional and individual level. It is through practical applications—interviews and discussions—that poignant elements specific to local situations may become visible. The research to hand may then be influenced by previous interviews and literature (Farber and Mäkelä, 2010: 11-13).

Research output

The Masters project consists of a thesis and a practical component in the form of a book.

1. Thesis chapter outline

This thesis is structured in the following manner.

Chapter 1 defines the notion of autonomy and contextualises this term within the context of local art. This chapter defines autonomy as self-creation and continues to define aesthetic autonomy and relative autonomy, which contextualises autonomy's use within art discourse. The Bag Factory Artists' Studio is used as an example to tease out the tensions and contradictions of autonomy within the local art environment. Importantly, economic privilege through apartheid is argued to be a loss of autonomy, particularly for the black practitioner. Self-organised institutions are seen as collective responses to mitigate issues created by issues such as economic privilege.

Chapter 2 deals with the differing terms used to define self-organised institutions. The nuances of each term are examined. This is also used to deal with the context in which these institutions operate. The Sober and Lonely Institute of Contemporary Art (SLICA) is used as an example, when defining artist–run institutions. Doual'art, Centre for Contemporary Art, Lagos and the Raw Material Company serve as examples to define independent art institution. Portia Malatjie's text, *Alternative/Experimental Art Spaces in Johannesburg,* is used to define the term 'alternative art space'. The Center for Historical Reenactments is used to deal with the notion of collectives and collaboration within the local art field, while connecting this term to historical precedents. I then argue for the use of the term self-organised, in order to deal with the differing institutional models that are used locally. Nothing Gets Organised, a recently initiated self-organised art institution, is used to deal with this term.

Chapter 3 deals with current funding models and their limitations for self-organised art institutions. Keleketla! Library and Chimurenga are used to illustrate the influence exerted by external funders in both subtle and overt ways. Small-scale funding models are also discussed through Keleketla! Library's *Stokvel* and *Skaftien* projects.

Chapter 4 illustrates the conceptual framework of the practical component, by looking at notions such as open source, where people can modify an initial item and the modifications themselves are shared, growing the body of knowledge in an easily accessible manner.

2. Practical component

Five interviews with founders of South African self-organised art institutions, two round-table discussions and an introductory text, contextualising the book, have been published as an experimental online book that is accessible to a wider public through the PAN!C website. PAN!C is a website that catalogues African self-organised institutions. The format of the online book was inspired book the *Self-organisation, counter-economic strategies* (2006). The *Self-organisation, counter-economic strategies* book introduces self-organised institutions that are countering capitalism through collective efforts that undermine hierarchy in institutions. Though, this research is not concerned with politics, the book's format of online accessibility enables the information to operate as open source. The online publication seeks to be accessible to a wider public to instigate further experimentation on an institutional level.

Chapter 1: Autonomy?

Autonomy is a nebulous philosophical term that is generally used synonymously with 'complete freedom'. It has been subjected to rigorous scholarship in western philosophy, politics and contemporary art. It has been defined as 'self-creation' and 'self-authorship' without external influence (Colburn, 2010). This definition undermines the role played by systematic and economic privilege, this is inherited from apartheid in South Africa. The concept of autonomy and its contradictions has not been researched at length on this continent, particularly within contemporary art. When 'autonomy' is used it is in the pedestrian sense only, meaning complete freedom. This chapter seeks to define the term and to apply it in the local art context. The Bag Factory Artists' Studios serve as the example used to unpack the contradictions and tensions within the local art context, particularly for self-organised institutions.

1.1. Defining autonomy

Autonomy is a western philosophical concept[7] that, at its core, is defined as 'self-creation,' or 'self-authorship'; that is, free from external influence. This definition is taken from Ben Colburn's book *Autonomy and Liberalism* (2010). In this book Colburn distinguishes between three definitions of autonomy. First Colburn writes about autonomy and reason, also known as moral autonomy, where he references Immanuel Kant's argument that the autonomous subject follows his will, which should be governed by moral law. The second definition, of autonomy and motivation, appears where Colburn refers to Gerald Dworkin's definition of autonomy, as follows:

[7] The notion of autonomy can be linked to writings on independence on the continent. Although Julius Nyerere and Kwame Nkrumah do not use the term autonomy, they write about ideas of decoupling the state from colonial thought and reclaiming autonomy. To make the connection between independence and autonomy would be a digression. See Julius Nyerere: Chapter V *'Ujamaa': the Basic of African Socialism in Africa's Freedom,* published by Unwin Books, London, 1964 and Kwame Nkrumah's *Consciencism: Philosophy and Ideology for De-Colonization*, 1964.

> A person is autonomous if he identifies with his desires, goals and values, and such identification is not influenced in ways which make the process of identification in some way alien to the individual. Spelling out those conditions of procedural independence involves distinguishing those ways of influencing people's reflective and critical faculties which subvert them, from those which promote and improve them (Dworkin in Colburn, 2010:9).

Third, autonomy and individualism, which Colburn bases on Joseph Raz's conception of personal autonomy:

> The autonomous person is a (part) author of his own life. The ideal of personal autonomy is the vision of people controlling, to some degree, their own destiny, fashioning it through successive decisions throughout their lives (Raz in Colburn, 2010:12)

For the argument of this thesis Colburn's notion of 'self-authorship' and 'self-creation' is used to speak of artistic autonomy as well as institutional autonomy. It further interrogates how autonomy is enabled or limited within the local art context.

Agency and subjectivity are two terms that are conflated with the meaning of autonomy. It is therefore important that these terms are defined in order to highlight their approximations with autonomy. Agency is defined as "a being with the capacity to act, and 'agency' denotes the exercise or manifestation of this capacity" (Stanford, 2015). In Amy Allen's article *Power, Subjectivity, and Agency: Between Arendt and Foucault* (2002), she demonstrates the interconnectivity of subjectivity and agency by writing that, "[O]ne cannot have the ability or capacity to act without having the ability or capacity to deliberate, that is, without being a thinking subject" (Allen, 2002:135)[8]. It then becomes clear that if agency is the 'capacity to act' and autonomy is acting on one's own will, without external influence, autonomy goes further as it implies 'one's own will' in action. Curator and

[8] Here is the full quote from Allen's text dealing with Foucault's and Arendt's text.
"However, it seems clear to me that subjectivity is a precondition for agency; after all, one cannot have the ability or capacity to act without having the ability or capacity to deliberate, that is, without being a thinking subject. Thus, if power is a condition for the possibility of subjectivity for Foucault, then it will follow that it would be a condition for the possibility of agency as well."

scholar Nontobeko Ntombela argues for black artists' agency within their varying practices, in her essay *Shifting Contexts: Material, Process and Contemporary Art in Times of Change* (2016). To further clarify, though black artists have agency, as well-argued by scholars such as Ntombela, they may not necessarily have autonomy. This is unpacked in the sections that follow. In the same essay, Ntombela writes about 'black subjectivity', arguing that the artists' subjectivity is seen through their use of their 'individual experiences' within their practice. If agency is the 'capacity to act' and subjectivity is speaking from 'individual experiences', autonomy is the ability for 'self-authorship' that is not based on external influence. That is, an autonomous artist does not act based on external influence, so the artist does not respond in practice to the stereotypes of what an African artist ought to be. The fact that scholars and curators have been writing about the African artist's agency and subjectivity means that they are responding to external influence, which stereotypes African practitioners. Ntombela argues for the reading of works by African practitioners, without relying on stereotypes (of what an African artist ought to be). In this sense, autonomy, is responding to one's own will without external influence.

The question then becomes: Does autonomy actually exist? These definitions of autonomy are utopian[9], in that the subject is considered to be able to act without external influence. The notion of Utopia defined as idealism, and often unattainable, has been referenced in exhibitions such as the twelfth Bamako Biennale entitled *Afrotopia*[10]. It is within this utopian understanding of autonomy that many self-organised institutions emerge with the ambition not to be influenced or dictated to, either by its funders in the running of the organisation, nor when it comes to institutional programming. The focus of this study is on the emergence of self-organised institutions and the autonomous idealism that births them. Here it looks at two moments of autonomy: the autonomy for the artist through creative practice, and institutional autonomy, where the organisation operates based on its own

[9] Here I am using Thomas More's Utopia that is idealistic "where human life is organized in the best way possible" (Turner 2003:xv).

[10] Here is an expansion of the biennale. However, this idea of Afrotopia is a digression from the study. 'Titled *Afrotopia*, the bienniale aims to explore Africa's attempt to establish itself as the centre of its own worldview. The artists were asked to consider the meaning of Afrotopia, defined by Senegalese intellectual Felwine Sarr as 'an active utopia, with a self-appointed mission to seek out and fertilize the vast spaces of possibility in the reality of Africa today' (Artforum 2017).

intent, without external influence. It looks at creative practice to explore moments of autonomy for the artist and institution. Artistic autonomy is linked to the institution because the institution can enable and sustain the artist's autonomy. This study's focus on institutional autonomy is based on the idea that if the institution has autonomy it can enable artistic autonomy by extension. In order to make visible the link between the artist and institution, it is imperative to define autonomy within the arts, which is defined as 'aesthetic autonomy' and 'relative autonomy'. The section below, defines autonomy and its use within the arts.

1.2. Gaining autonomy: aesthetic autonomy and relative autonomy

In order to have an understanding of institutional autonomy it is important firstly to define aesthetic autonomy and relative autonomy. Aesthetic autonomy is defined by philosophy professor Jennifer A. McMahon, in her article *Aesthetic Autonomy and Praxis: Art and Language in Adorno and Habermas* (2011), where she writes that:

> The concept of aesthetic autonomy can be interpreted in at least two different ways. It can refer to a unique way of engaging with the world that suspends the interests and physical needs that typically characterize physical creatures' orientation to the world. On the other hand, it can describe a convention of the socially constructed institution, which is the art world, according to which artists are free of external compulsions, such as might be forced upon them by religious, political or moral authorities (2011: 155).

McMahon bases this concept of aesthetic autonomy on the definitions of three philosophers similar to Colburn. First, Immanuel Kant's aesthetic autonomy, in which ideas can be formed "from a realm within ourselves" without external influence, be they political, religious or moral authorities (McMahon, 2011: 155-156). According to McMahon, Kant's aesthetic autonomy was conceived in a similar way to his moral autonomy, in which the autonomous subject follows his will, which should be governed by moral law. Second, McMahon refers to Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's definition that it "is a notion of aesthetic autonomy, according to which art is a

system whose meaning can only be adequately understood by reference to its historical development" (McMahon, 2011: 156). Third, McMahon describes Jürgen Habermas's definition as:

> [T]he notion that art can transcend its particular milieu by combining aspects of concepts to form new unities, relative to the conceptual framework that dominates the relevant community (ibid).

These definitions are useful in that McMahon's use of Hegel situates autonomy within art's history, where art is understood based on the concept of art in relation to its history. Through referring to Habermas, McMahon argues that the industry is not stagnant; it is continually introducing new conceptual frameworks and incorporating them into the industry. These definitions refer to artistic autonomy, where the artist has the freedom to produce artworks based on their own will, which is informed by the history of art, and add new concepts to the arts.

Another important concept of autonomy to be considered in relation to aesthetic autonomy is relative autonomy. Performance artist Andrea Fraser, in her article *Autonomy and its Contradictions* (2012), states that:

> The relative autonomy of all fields, from this perspective is contingent upon their capacity to "impose their own norms and sanctions" within their sphere and to exclude external or competing norms, values and so forth. In this sense, to say that fields are 'relatively autonomous' is not just to say that they are never completely autonomous, but also that they are autonomous only relative to other fields. What is particular to cultural fields as they developed in the west, in Bourdieu's analysis, is their tendency not only to exclude but also to negate, and even invert, economic values specifically (Fraser, 2012:2).

This notion of relative autonomy refers to the art industry deciding on its own logic, without influence from other industries. This is seen through the art market and how it differs from other markets, particularly when it comes to the pricing of artworks and the relation to production costs of the object. Another aspect that proves art's

relative autonomy is that of academic programmes in fine art and curatorial practice that do not consider where the students will work after graduating. This point is made clear by editor of e-flux Anton Vidokle in his article *Art Without Market, Art Without Education: Political Economy of Art* (2013), where he states that:

> [U]nlike other fields, such as law or medicine, where graduates can reasonably expect a job upon graduation, there are no guarantees that an artist with an MFA degree will find a teaching job. With recent shifts in hiring policies at most universities—towards part-time, untenured, adjunct labor—very few artists ever get a tenured, secure position. To me, this resembles a kind of pyramid scheme or institutional blackmail in which money is extracted using false promises, with the benefits going to very few—primarily the institutions themselves (Vidokle, 2013:7).

However, it is important to note that all these concepts of autonomy were defined and applied to the west (Europe and United States of America). This demands that autonomy should then be considered within the African art context, particularly South Africa, if the term continues to be used in theorisations of art. Robyn Cook is an artist and founder of the Sober and Lonely Institute of Contemporary Art (SLICA), an artist-run space currently in stasis. Her recent doctoral thesis, titled *The New Institutions: Artist-run Participative Platforms and Initiatives in South Africa* (2016), uses the term autonomy without considering the progression of the term or the tensions that arise when applying it to different contexts. In an autonomy reader, produced by Van Abbemuseum in 2010, when Clare Butcher was part of the editorial team, she contributed a short text *Subjective Autonomy.* Butcher quotes theorist Achille Mbembe in order to argue that there are "superficial divisions made between colonial and 'western' kinds of time and place, and the ways in which the notion of autonomy has been bound almost exclusively to a western modernist tradition of thought" (Butcher, 2010:28). Butcher makes this argument by referencing the now-defunct art collective Gugulective's[11] practice to highlight 'subjective autonomy'.

[11] Gugulective is an art collective that has operated from Gugulethu township since 2006. The members of the collective are Athi Mongezeleli Joja, Zipho Dayile, Lonwabo Kilani, Dathini Mzayiya, Khanyisile Mbongwa, Kemang Wa Lehulere, Unathi Sigenu (deceased), Themba Tsotsi, Loyiso Qanya and Ayanda Kilimane

Though, the text speaks of the theory of autonomy and its implication within the local art context, and argues that as it is used by artists, it requires expansion in dealing with different moments of loss and gain of autonomy within the local art context.

Butcher's source, Achille Mbembe, wrote on autonomy in Africa. In his essay *African Modes of Self-Writing* (2002), he states that:

> The effort to determine the conditions under which the African subject could attain full selfhood, become self-conscious and be answerable to no one else, soon encountered historicist thinking in two forms that led it into a dead end. The first of these is what might be termed 'Afro-radicalism', with its baggage of instrumentalism and political opportunism. The second is the burden of the metaphysics of difference (nativism). The first current of thought—which liked to present itself as 'democratic', 'radical,' and 'progressive'—used Marxist and nationalist categories to develop an *imaginaire* of culture and politics, in which a manipulation of the rhetoric of autonomy, resistance, and emancipation serves as the sole criterion for determining the legitimacy of an authentic African discourse (2002: 240-241).

Here, Mbembe links the use of autonomy within the discourse of African independence of the 1960s and 1970s and its problematic connection of the self in service of the state. Thus, autonomy was concerned with the extrapolation of Africa from foreign rule. Mbembe's assault is on the discourse of independence, because it is based on some notion of pre-colonial Africa and reclaiming this tradition as a way to claim Africa's autonomy from colonialism. He writes that these texts do not thoroughly explore the diversity of African people; that this discourse of independence is based strictly on black and white people and does not speak to "Luso-Africans and Africans of South Asian or Lebanese-Syrian origin". This lack of thorough investigation of subjectivities "diminishes the possibilities available to individuals to fulfill themselves as continuous subjects" (Mbembe 2002:267). He concludes that "attempts [to] define African identity in a neat and tidy" fashion, are doomed to failure (2002:271). He then concludes that:

> African identity does not exist as a substance. It is constituted, in varying forms, through a series of practices, notably practices of the self. Neither the forms of this identity nor its idioms are always self-identical. Rather, these forms and idioms are mobile, reversible, and unstable (2002:272).

Mbembe's text addresses the idea of determining an African identity through a linear perspective of time and space, where the self is neatly packaged and understood. Mbembe's argument is thorough in exploring and complicating the notion of an African subject. His text is important in dealing with the identity of an African and the impossibility to neatly do so. Though the focus of this study is South African self-organised institutions, it is not concerned with the identity politics of the individual artists but rather the role that apartheid played in subjugating the black artist and that through collectives and self-organisations, black artists are mitigating some of the issues faced within the arts. This is not to say that other African countries have not been consulted, in order to draw similarities and make comparisons regarding self-organised art institutions. Though apartheid sought to separate and package identity into neat definitions, this study is not concerned with race and identity politics, but concerned with systematic bias, which is linked to racism through the apartheid regime, and with how it is mitigated through self-organisation.

That said, this fraught notion of the identity of an African is argued to be fertile ground for contemporary art. In curator Okwui Enwezor's essay *The Postcolonial Constellations: Contemporary Art in a State of Permanent Transition* (2008), he makes a case for the religious art of antiquity and the process that it underwent in order to make it into the halls of art. He claims that the African artifact is only considered in relation to its usefulness within modernity, but without gaining its autonomy and decoupling from modern art. He further writes about art's autonomy through the 'art for art's sake' argument that claims art's apartness from any function within society (2008:212). This argument is perhaps the most widely-used notion of autonomy within the arts, particularly in Robyn Cook's DPhil thesis, where she argues for autonomous art, which she links to artist-run initiatives and further

claims that these institutions have autonomy (2016:10)[12]. This thesis argues that self-organised institutions lose their autonomy in their negotiation with external funders, which is dealt with extensively in Chapter 3.

The following section seeks to explore the tensions and contradictions that arise when applying notions of autonomy to the local art context. It focuses on black practitioners in order to highlight the role of structural exclusions within the arts, and the resulting loss of autonomy based on systematic bias, in order to find moments where privilege can be mitigated and a degree of autonomy can be gained, through collective practices and self-organisation, even if it is only possible for a short periods.

1.3. Loss and gain of autonomy

As mentioned earlier, when autonomy is conjured up it is often idealistic and utopian, where complete freedom from any influence is imagined. In a chapter in the book *Reproducing Autonomy* (2016), Marina Vishmidt writes: "Autonomy is the point at which the subject thinks herself 'complete', before she encounters objectivity and realises that she is not" (2016:44). This means that, at the inception of the institution there is some form of utopian ideal, before encountering the context within which it operates, which becomes the first point where autonomy is lost and the institutions reconfigures and transforms in order to continue existing. This section will argue for a degree of autonomy within the arts by focusing on the local context, using a Johannesburg-based, self-organised art institution, the Bag Factory Artists' Studios. This example allows for discussion of the local art context in detail and deals with the issues that lead to a loss of autonomy for art practitioners. It argues that institutional autonomy is one way of gaining autonomy. The influence exerted on self-organised institutions by external funders is another moment where there is a loss of autonomy. Chapter 3 specifically concerns funding, the influence on institutions and the resulting loss of autonomy.

[12] Though Cook deals with loss of funding from external funders, she does not deal with privilege instituted through apartheid as another moment of loss of autonomy for the black artist.

The art institutions selected as examples for this thesis are all, on one level or another, self-organised. In the introduction of the book *Self-organisation, counter-economic strategies* edited by Will Bradley, Mika Hannula, Christina Ricupero, and artist collective Superflex they write that:

> The term self-organisation is borrowed from systems theory and the natural sciences, where it describes systems whose internal organisation tends to increase in complexity without being guided by an outside source. In recent years, it has been used in relation to certain kinds of social groups or networks; in this context, the term does not have a strict definition, but broadly speaking it refers to groups that are independent of institutional or corporate structures, are non-hierarchical, open and operate participatory decision-making processes (2006:5)[13].

This definition of self-organised institutions is closely linked to Sylvère Lotringer's definition of political autonomy that Sven Lütticken uses in his article *Autonomy After the Fact*:

> Political autonomy is the desire to allow differences to deepen at the base without trying to synthesise them from above, to stress similar attitudes without imposing a 'general line', to allow parts to co-exist side by side, in their singularity (Lotringer in Lütticken, 2012:1).

Within South Africa, the impact of inequality between those who were and are currently privileged, which is a result of apartheid, plays a major role on how institutional autonomy is lost where the goal is 'filling in the void' on one hand and exercising autonomy in programming on the other. This notion of "filling in the void" is well articulated by curator and founder of Raw Material Company, Koyo Kouoh, in her text, aptly titled *Filling in the Void.* She points out that the core reason for "the establishment of these spaces has been the need to address an artistic and critical

[13] The institutions discussed do not consider themselves self-organised, but I will use this as an all-encompassing term to group these varying art institutions. In Chapter 2, I discuss the terms that have been used to define these art institutions.

void' (Kouoh 2012:17). Chapter 2 unpacks this notion of 'filling in the void' in more detail.

1.3.1. Bag Factory Artists' Studios

In order to speak about the Bag Factory Artists' Studios, one has to consider their history, starting from the Thupelo workshops that led to the founding of the Bag Factory Artists' Studios through David Koloane's involvement in both organisations[14]. David Koloane and Bill Anslie initiated the Thupelo workshops in 1985, inspired by the Triangle Network[15], New York residency of 1982. Thupelo workshops are a historical example of 'filling in the void', where multiracial artists shared methodologies and ways of practising without the oppressive apartheid system that their daily existence was based on. At the workshop, the scale of the artwork became a major topic, wherein artists could imagine working on a scale not dictated by their living conditions. At the time, their homes would have been four-roomed houses for most black artists, which were where they mainly practised. Thupelo transcended the notion of scale and race within South Africa, achieving a huge success for its time. To find a racially neutral zone was important. Then, to find the funding to stage such an important meeting of artists was a second challenge. The workshop is mentioned in order to highlight that the initial thought of a multiracial workshop taking place in South Africa was an early, artist-led initiative. Harsh conditions did not stop the imagining of a space where autonomy could be exercised, albeit temporarily. Reference to the first Thupelo workshop in Johannesburg is meant to highlight the context in which artists were practising and the negotiations that institutions underwent in order to achieve temporary autonomy.

The workshop context, by virtue of its two-week duration, allows for autonomy to be exercised. American political writer, essayist and poet Hakim Bey coined the term

[14] The Bag Factory Artists' Studios model is credited with inspiring Gas Works in London.

[15] Triangle Network is a network of artists and organisations founded by artist Sir Anthony Caro and collector and philanthropist Robert Loder, through an artists' workshop in upstate New York, in the summer of 1982.

'temporary autonomous zone' (TAZ) in the book *The Temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchy, Poetic Terrorism* (1991), by looking at moments where society experienced a sense of autonomy through alternative conceptions of social norms. The examples he provides are pirate Utopias[16] and dinner parties (Bey, 1991). He does this by recognising that autonomy is a time-sensitive factor, in that it is a fleeting moment. In the case of Thupelo workshop the participating artists experience autonomy; this autonomy may not extend to the institution organising the workshop because the institution loses its autonomy as it negotiates the apartheid system and external funders, and therefore makes necessary compromises for the workshop to continue. On the other hand, the participating artist's everyday apartheid reality is suspended during the two-week-long workshop, where they are encouraged to engage in a non-racial and non-hierarchical setting and experience a moment where they can experiment in their practices. This is a form of artistic autonomy. In this instance, Bey's temporary autonomous zone can be seen within the workshop context as there is a suspension of reality (apartheid South Africa) and it is within this suspension that autonomy is upheld (freedom to experiment with material and scale).

As a result, in 1991 artist David Koloane co-founded a non-profit institution, the Bag Factory Artists' Studios with patron Robert Loder[17]. This institution offered fourteen studios for emerging and established artists, as well as two studios reserved for their international residency programme. The Bag Factory was founded in what was called the 'grey area'[18] where black and white people could meet during the apartheid time. A non-racial artistic studio space was important to David Koloane in order to allow interracial and international interaction between artists (Koloane, 2004). Sam

[16] Pirate Utopias were an eighteenth century network of islands spanning the entire globe, where pirates docked their ships for refreshment and traded their wares. Some of these islands became communities where people lived outside of the law. Though they were eventually found by the government, they lived a free life albeit for a short while (Bey 1991:53)

[17] Robert Loder (1934–2017) was an art patron who met artist Anthony Caro in 1980 in Johannesburg. Caro and Loder led to the founding of Triangle Network, which included African artists due to David Koloane's influence during Thupelo workshops and Bag Factory Artists' Studios. Bag Factory Artists' Studios inspired Gas Works in London and other similar institutions across the world. These institutions form part of the Triangle Network.

[18] During apartheid in South Africa, black and white people were not allowed to occupy the same areas, However, Newtown and Fordsburg were zoned as a 'grey areas', because of the fresh produce market. This meant that black and white could inhabit the same space. It was important for the artist's studios to be in a place that was close to the city and that allowed a non-racial engagement.

Hlengethwa, Pat Mautloa, Bongi Dhlomo and David Koloane were the founding members of the Bag Factory and they were joined by Helen Sebidi a short while later. This was an artist-initiated institution, focused on providing studio space for black artists who could not afford it and, to this day, it still does this, while including a local and international residency space. The Bag Factory fills an important void within the local and regional art community that is not easy to fill. Koloane reflects on the contribution of the Bag Factory to the art community in the book published to mark the Bag Factory's twentieth year celebration (2004).

Co-founder Robert Loder died in 2017 and it is problematic that the building where the Bag Factory operates is now owned by the estate of a deceased European patron. The Bag Factory is in its twenty-seventh year of operation and its most valued asset, the building, is not owned by the non-profit organisation. The influence of an external funder, in this instance, may be through restrictions brought about through the lack of ownership of the building. The loss of autonomy is in the inability to decide what to do with the building, hindering the expansion of the Bag Factory. David Koloane, in an interview that forms part of the practical component of the online publication, reminds us that black people were unable to buy, or even sign rental leases, for property in the city during apartheid. Here, it becomes clear how autonomy was lost through 'encountering objectivity' which was the apartheid government. It was only through the assistance of a white person who signed the lease, that the artists could acquire the use of the building. Robert Loder acquired the building, allowing the Bag Factory to pay a nominal fee to use the space. The issue of external funding and autonomy is at the core of this thesis which discusses the loss of autonomy brought about by external funding in Chapter 3.

Vishmidt's (2016) loss of autonomy, experienced through encountering a context, is seen in the racial challenges that the Thupelo workshops organisers faced, in order to reach a point where artistic autonomy was achieved, although it was only for the duration of the workshop. It is argued that the first moment of loss of autonomy is in Vishmidt's 'encountering objectivity'. For the black artist during apartheid South Africa, this moment was in realising that the political system was meant to cater to

the white South African. For the black artist this 'encountering objectivity' was their everyday experience of being policed by the enforcement of laws that dictated where black subjects could live and work, which jobs they could study for. This moment held the realisation that, though black artists were interested in practicing art, their existence did not allow any type of freedom (Koloane 2004:3-4). In a chapter co-written by Kerstin Stakemeier and Marina Vishmidt in the book *Reproducing Autonomy* (2016), they ask "Who is the subject of autonomy?" their answer is that:

> According to the dictate of liberal common sense, 'autonomy' is a political concept referring to free individuals represented by their freely elected governments. From this perspective, slaves are 'heteronomous', while modern proletarians thrown into the industrial reserve army of labour and forced to eke out a life in the teeth of the 'workfare' programs of the modern state, are 'autonomous' (Stakemeier & Vishmidt 2016:56).

Reading this in relation to apartheid South Africa in the time when the Thupelo workshops took place and when Bag Factory Artists' Studios (1991 to 1994) were founded, the black artists were heteronomous, as they had no freedom nor could they freely elect the government that served them. Therefore, the black artists' development was different to that of their white counterparts. Until 1994 all black artists were heteronomous which, according to Stakemeier and Vishmidt (2016) means that they were not autonomous. At this point there was no freedom, let alone autonomy. However, the Thupelo workshops suspended reality, thus allowing the artists temporary autonomy. The navigation of the apartheid contexts meant that concessions had to be made to circumvent the impact that the context implied for the heteronomous subject. However, working within a collective mitigates this 'helplessness' because it is shouldered collectively. Even though the notion of Utopia is lost, this does not mean a complete loss of autonomy, when the result is not the imagined one.

If we continue with Stakemeier and Vishmidt's line of thought, in democratic South Africa all practitioners are autonomous. However, autonomy cannot be considered

without the notion of meritocracy which, art historian Suhail Malik writes, "disregards the social conditions by which individuals come to be who they are, which hinders or bolsters them, assuming social equality where there is none" (2012:11). Within the local context, apartheid meant white artists were educated and supported systematically, while black artists' production during and after apartheid is judged without considering that apartheid made sure that their production was of inferior quality. This was done through refusing black artists access to tertiary education and excluding them from exhibitions. During democracy there is still exclusion of black artists, which art historians Thembinkosi Goniwe (2009), Same Mdluli (2016) and the young artist collective iQhiya have highlighted through texts and public discussions.

In the Common Practice Conference report (2016), Carla Cruz writes that meritocracy:

> …makes us believe that one's progression comes from merit alone and not through systemic biases of inclusion/exclusion, racial or sexual favouritism, privileged backgrounds or economic independence. Those who succeed will feel a sense of entitlement while underachievers will feel that they *obviously* have less merit—this undermines any form of solidarity (Cruz 2016:6).

In order to speak of autonomy, one has to be clear about these systematic biases and the major impact they have on any notion of self-actualisation, because the artists' ability to exercise autonomy is based on their *capacity* to act on their own will. Colburn elucidates this notion of *capacity* stating that:

> First, we might distinguish between autonomy conceived of as *local* property—that is, as a property of a person at a particular time and perhaps in respect of particular decisions or actions—and as a *global* property, meaning a property of a person's life as a whole. Second, we can distinguish between different types of properties that one might take autonomy to be. Some conceptions take autonomy to be a *condition* that someone can be in, and others take it to be a *capacity* that one might possess, the possession of

> which is itself valuable (independently of its exercise, for example). (Colburn, 2010:4).

Currently, South Africa continues to have great economic inequality. This usually means that a large number of black practitioners are mostly underprivileged, and that their practice is not affected by economic inequality and systematic biases, highlighted above in discussing meritocracy. Recent statistics show that 55.5 per cent of South Africans[19] live in poverty, most of whom are black people. In a personal interview, David Koloane spoke about the struggle that black artists have to endure, with very little chance of success (Koloane, personal interview 2017, 27 November). Massa Lemu's essay *Gugulective as Biopolitical Collectivism* (2016) is about the post-apartheid conditions that led to the founding of artists' collective Gugulective. Khwezi Gule (2010) and Thembinkosi Goniwe (2009), among others, have written about the conditions that black artists practice under. In 2010 the Department of Arts and Culture commissioned a research report conducted on the visual arts industry. The research report is tentative in tone and does not offer exact statistics. Nonetheless, it is clear that the art market is dominated by white artists who live in urban areas, where they can exploit the access that cities afford, whereas the black female artist is the most disadvantaged (Research Report, 2010). Self-organisations, such as the Bag Factory Artists' Studios, thus serve as an example of pragmatic solutions to challenges faced by artists who have little financial means. Often, those forms of self-organising that are initiated, draw from a very dry economic well! This makes it even more imperative that one brings up institutional autonomy, particularly because the odds are stacked against the black artist who cannot practice without institutional support.

Further emphasising this notion of economic capital and its relationship to autonomy, French theorist Pierre Bourdieu in *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993) writes about autonomy saying that:

> [E]conomic capital provides the conditions for freedom from economic necessity, a private income (*la rente*) being one of the best substitutes for

[19] Statistics South Africa's poverty trends reported by Fin24 on 22 August 2017.

> sales (*la vente*), as Théophile Gautier said to Feydeau: 'Flaubert was smarter than us… He had the wit to come into the world with money, something that is indispensable for anyone who wants to get anywhere in art (1993: 68)[20].

Bourdieu describes 'industrial literature' as artistic production that is sellable. He makes a distinction between two terms. 'Art for art's sake' he terms *autonomous* production, which in this paper is used interchangeably with the term experimental artistic practice[21]. This is also often considered non-sellable art. Heteronomous production he terms 'bourgeoise art' which here is used as sellable, contemporary art (Bourdieu 1993: 68). In order to speak of the loss of autonomy brought about by systematic bias, contemporary art and experimental art must first be defined.

Contemporary art has been criticised for its indeterminacy. It has been mainly defined as art made after the 1940s, and includes a number of art movements after the 1940s, such as conceptual, video, performance, installation, relational aesthetics, institutional critique (Medina, 2010:10-11). The following definitions of contemporary art and experimental art are used to unpack how artists from the Bag Factory are considered either as autonomous (experimental) or heteronomous *(*sellable). It also includes what are considered traditional media such as painting and sculpture. In the article *Forever Young: A Short Guide to Some Paradoxes of Contemporary Art* (2015), writer and academic Suhail Malik writes that:

> Contemporary art is condemned to newness—or, at least, to its newness in contrast to the apprentice/masterpiece model of Classicism, and to Modernism's claim to organise the development of art according to an intrinsic logic, tied to historical development. Not only is every artist in contemporary art obliged to be distinct from every other (new with regard to everyone else), but each 'work' an artist produces has to be different with regard to every other of his or hers. That is: new.

[20] This means that an artist who comes from family wealth is able to devote more time to the practice without having to worry about selling their art in order to cover their living costs. These artists are therefore privileged.

[21] It is difficult to define what exactly constitutes experimentation in contemporary art. However, media that are deemed difficult to sell in commercial galleries are often considered experimental, such as performance art, installation and to a lesser degree video art. Experimentation is also tied to the new. What was experimental a year ago may no longer be experimental this year, as it would have lost its sheen of newness.

Experimental art, on the other hand, is considered to be:

> 'When…we are often referring not to a formal testing procedure but to the inclination to test social boundaries and conventions; in other words, to contemporary art's roots in the history of the *avant-garde*' (Bennett, 20012:1).

Therefore, experimental artistic practice is a practice that seeks to break with convention and this is not tied to the medium, but rather to testing and investigating the medium, material or concept. This experimentation results in Malik's description of contemporary art's emphasis on the 'new', because it is through experimentation that a contemporary artist can produce 'new' works (Malik 2015). It can, of course, be argued that each artwork has an aspect of experimentation in it, for it to be considered a good work. There are media that are visibly experimental and these media are those that cannot be easily commodified, such as performance art, relational aesthetics and participative art. In Robyn Cook's DPhil thesis, she discusses at length these experimental practices, opposing them to artworks that have an existing commercial market. The definitions of contemporary art and experimental art do not offer a concrete delineation of where experimental art starts and ends. However, it is not important to have an exact definition, as this thesis is far more interested in examining the institution's ability to support varying artistic practices, than offering a detailed account of experimental art. Attesting to this is art critic and philosopher Boris Groys who warns against definitions thus:

> [E]very attempt to formulate a theoretical definition of art has provoked an attempt by the artists to produce an artwork that would escape this definition, and so on. (2013:1).

Groys argues that contemporary art is: "[A] field strictly structured according to the logic of contradiction" (2013:2). If contemporary art is contradictory, and according to Malik constantly searching for the 'new', experimental art is to be seen within the 'new'.

Following Bourdieu's notion of autonomous art as art that is not governed by commercial interests, one should look at the artists who have been working at the Bag Factory, some of whom have gained commercial success. These artists can be seen as making sellable art, which makes their practice seem heteronomous. In order to unpack how privilege begets autonomy and plays itself within the local contemporary art context, this thesis looks at the Bag Factory's commercially successful alumni William Kentridge, Blessing Ngobeni and Benon Lutaaya. William Kentridge (born 1955) is an old white artist who has benefitted from systematic privilege through apartheid. Blessing Ngobeni (born 1985) is a young black artist who started practising in democratic South Africa. Benon Lutaaya (born 1985) is Ugandan-born, relocated to Johannesburg after being an artist-in-residence at the Bag Factory. Ngobeni and Lutaaya relied on the Bag Factory in order to mitigate meritocracy, whereas Kentridge benefited from apartheid. Though, they are all commercially successful, Kentridge's work is considered autonomous/experimental, whereas Ngobeni and Lutaaya's artworks are considered heteronomous/sellable art. Lutaaya is notable because, through his commercial success, for the past two years he has funded a local resident at the Bag Factory Artists' Studios[22]. The difference between the Ugandan and South African art contexts do not make for a fair comparison of Lutaaya's practice so no further detail is included. He is mentioned here because of the importance of the grant that he initiated. Lutaaya's grant and the Bag Factory mitigate meritocracy. Bag Factory give young artists an opportunity to practise without the constraints of their economic backgrounds which, in turn, improves their practice and gives them access to the Bag Factory's network of artists, curators and collectors. Blessing Ngobeni has also initiated a studio award for emerging artists, which held an exhibition at the Room Gallery in 2016. Going back to Vishmidt's (2016) loss of autonomy that is brought about by 'encountering objectivity', the Bag Factory softens the blow of the initial loss of autonomy by allowing artists to practise without external influences. In this case it is a space to practise without economic pressure. Ngobeni and Lutaaya are responding to

[22] This year's call for applications for funding specified that the applicant be female. She will receive a studio and material stipend, an international residency with flight ticket and stipend, a solo exhibition at Lizamore Gallery and a booth at the Turbine Art Fair with the two runners-up.

Koloane's generosity. The founding of the Bag Factory was an act of generosity because the founding artists could have found a space and opened a studio that was not open to the public, only serving their individual interests. Koloane's opening the studio and managing it for a few years at the beginning, was an act of generosity.

William Kentridge operates in both the heteronomous and autonomous fields. Kentridge is represented by Marian Goodman, a well-respected international commercial gallery with spaces in New York, London and Paris. He is also represented by the Goodman gallery, one of the oldest contemporary art galleries in this country. He obtained a Politics and African Studies degree in 1976 from the University of Witwatersrand. He then studied at the Johannesburg Art Foundation between 1976 and 1978 and also studied Drama at l'École Jacques LeCoq in Paris. He has been awarded numerous honorary doctorates—from Rhodes University, University of Witwatersrand, Yale University, London University and the Royal College of Art. His biography includes a large number of internationally-recognised group exhibitions such as Documenta (1997, 2003, 2012), and the Venice biennale (1993, 1999, 2005). These highlight the international network that Kentridge's work is circulating in. Going back to Bordieu's notion of 'industrialised art' which is art that is sellable and therefore heterenomous, Kentridge's work is definitely commercial if we only consider success through sales by his galleries and at art auction.

There is a difference between how William Kentridge's and Blessing Ngobeni's and Benon Lutaaya's work is canonised, even though in a simple reading of commercialised practice they are all successful within the art market[23]. There is, of course, the international market and the local market, as well as the legitimising institutions of these markets, which are art critics, art historians, independently-curated exhibitions, commercial galleries, art fairs, biennales and public museums. These two artists, who are alumni of the Bag Factory Artists' Studios, are examples describing the complexity of autonomy and heteronomy in contemporary art. Bourdieu writes that:

[23] William Kentridge's auction sales reach into the millions for his drawings. https://www.straussart.co.za/artists/view/william-kentridge/live

> The literary or artistic fields are at all times the sites of a struggle between the two principles of hierarchisation: the heteronomous principle, favorable to those who dominate the field economically and politically (e.g bourgeois art) and the autonomous principle (e.g. art for art's sake), which those of its advocates who are least endowed with specific capital tend to identify with degree of independence from the economy, seeing temporal failure as a sign of election and success as a sign of compromise (1993: 40).

That said, the fact that his work is also included in critical international exhibitions listed above says that Kentridge's work is autonomous*,* because it has been recognised by public museums and art historians. This reading would, however, be very simplistic as it does not recognise the complexity of the art market. The editor of e–flux journal, Anton Vidokle, summarises this complexity in his article *Art Without Market, Art Without Education: Political Economy of Art* (2013), by saying that:

> The market of art is not merely a bunch of dealers and cigar-smoking connoisseurs, trading exquisite objects for money behind closed doors. Rather, it is a vast and complex international industry of overlapping institutions, which jointly produce artworks' economic value and support a wide range of activities and occupations, including training, research, development, production, display, documentation, criticism, marketing, promotion, financing, historicising, publishing and so forth. The standardisation of art greatly simplifies all of these transactions (2013:7-8).

This means that what may be considered the critical side of contemporary art—the museums, independent curators, art critics, art historians—feed the market that leads to the artist's financially profiting from complex transactions. In Kentridge's practice it is hard to draw a clear line between autonomous and heterenomous. Bourdieu's reasoning of these boundaries makes them perhaps easier to differentiate if one bases autonomy and heteronomy on extremely opposing artistic practices, such as paintings and participative art, where the paintings can be considered easily commodifiable objects and participative art as ephemeral objects

that negate the economy. That does not mean that participative art is not part of the economy but that the trading in it does not include commercial galleries and auction houses. This leads to the conclusion that what seems critical—publication, exhibitions at public museums, biennales and so forth, goes hand-in-hand with commercial gain by the gallery and the artist. Therefore, Kentridge's practice is autonomous as he is able to gain autonomy through economic privilege, firstly through the apartheid system and now, as a player within the international art world.

Kentridge, therefore, has been legitimised commercially through commercial representation as well as critical acclaim seen through his participation in biennales and his work being subject of art-historical texts. It could be argued that Kentridge's commercial and critical acclaim is achieved through privilege, through apartheid. Going back to meritocracy—where merit in Kentridge's case is critical acclaim achieved through systematic privilege, attained first through the education that he could afford, when access to this education in apartheid South Africa was reserved to white people. And second, he had the ability to experiment in his artistic practice, due to his access to platforms that encouraged this experimentation: that is biennales and independently curated exhibitions etc. That Kentridge recently founded an independent space called Centre for the Less of a Good Idea in Johannesburg's Maboneng, means that the art industry can read his entire production as part and parcel of his experimentation. This further speaks of his autonomous practice.

In summary Bourdieu writes that:

> Those who do manage to stay in the risky positions long enough to receive the symbolic profit they can bring, are indeed mainly drawn from the most privileged categories, who have also had the advantage of not having to devote time and energy to secondary 'bread-and-butter' activities… We also find that the least well-off writers resign themselves more readily to 'industrial literature', in which writing becomes a job like any other (Bourdieu 1993:68).

Blessing Ngobeni was born in 1985 in Tzaneen, Limpopo, and lives in Johannesburg. Ngobeni's biography on the Everard Read Gallery website reads like a rags-to-riches story, riddled with his personal life challenges and very little on his work. The biography does not read like other artists' biographies. This I assume is done to garner sympathy from Everard Read collectors, but his colleague William Kentridge's biography is a professional one, only mentioning his achievements[24]. Ngobeni's work operates mainly within the local art market, with his work only receiving commercial success. Even within the local market, his work has not been written about in art-historical texts. His economic disposition is used for gaining sympathy and the conceptual framework is ignored. The critique of black artists' conceptual framework being ignored in the local market has been a point of discussion many times. Recently, Same Mdluli criticised the removal of agency, and by extension creative autonomy, when it comes to black artists. She mentioned this in relation to the exhibition *Black Modernism* that took place in 2016 at the Wits Art Museum. Thembinkosi Goniwe's text *Blame It On Art History* (2009) says that black artists need to be written into history not only in newspaper and magazine articles but in academic art-historical texts (2009:25).

This relates back to what Bourdieu expresses:

> The more autonomous the field becomes, the more favourable the symbolic power balance is to the most autonomous producers, and the more clear-cut is the division between the field of restricted production, in which the producers produce for other producers, and the field of large-scale production (*la grande production*), which is *symbolically* excluded and discredited. (This symbolically dominant definition is the one that the historians of art and literature *unconsciously* adopt when they exclude from their object of study writers and artists who produced for the market and have often fallen into oblivion). Because it is a good measure of the degree of autonomy, and therefore of presumed adherence to the disinterested values

[24] It must be pointed out that the difference in Ngobeni's and Kentridge's biographies is due to Everard Read's way of working that differs from other galleries, such as Goodman gallery and Marian Goodman.

> which constitute the specific law of the field, the degree of the public success is no doubt the main differentiating factor (Bourdieu, 1993:39).

The comparison between Kentridge and Ngobeni seems extreme, in terms of the age gap between them and that there are no similarities within their practices. The context for Kentridge is that of Flaubert who 'came into the world with money', which bought him an education and exposure to the mechanism of the art industry, and even bought the critics who legitimised his autonomous products (Bourdieu 1993:35). This is exactly what notions such as meritocracy undermine, because Kentridge's practice is not read within the systematic structure that produces its merit when compared to the socio-economic conditions that led Ngobeni's practice to be concerned with bread-and-butter activities. This leads to Ngobeni being excluded from the critical sphere, where his work would be included in curated exhibitions and art historical texts. This thesis does not try to prove that Ngobeni's practice is autonomous, but that the risk associated with producing autonomous art is ultimately linked to privilege. Ngobeni and Lutaaya are reliant on the Bag Factory in contrast to Kentridge, who has access to a wider network of institutions. This section focuses on artistic autonomy and the art industry's relative autonomy that can be read in relation to Groys's notion of the 'field of contradictions' (2013:2), where things are not so clearly delineated.

Now that it has been shown how artistic autonomy is seen and the role that privilege (through apartheid) played in gaining autonomy, institutional autonomy is discussed. The importance of institutional autonomy, the ability of the institution to decide on its own organising logic without external influence, is linked to artistic autonomy because it benefits the individual. It can be argued that institutional autonomy is able to mitigate the loss of autonomy seen when 'encountering objectivity' (Vishmidt, 2016). The loss of institutional autonomy is visible through the practices that the institution supports. The power dynamics or the ability to take risk is unfavorable to those without economic privilege. The Bag Factory's independent selection committee for the open call applications mitigates a loss of autonomy brought by external influence. The Bag Factory gives autonomy to artists through its

focus on providing space to artists from different backgrounds, and allowing these artists to decide what they do with the networks they are exposed to during their residency. The support of varying artistic practices, even those that may not be considered experimental, is not a loss of autonomy but an exercise in institutional autonomy. That is, the autonomy to decide on programming without external influence. What is important in an institution like the Bag Factory is the autonomy that the selected artists receive when they are operating in the studio. Here the institution allows for autonomy to be exercised by the artist, who is supported by the institution.

That said, the Bag Factory does not have full autonomy, because the institution does not have control of the building it operates in. It is owned by the estate of deceased art patron Robert Loder. This results in a loss of autonomy, because the Bag Factory is influenced by Loder's estate, which has influence on what can be done to the building. For instance, the Bag Factory cannot sell the building to acquire a bigger building, should they want to expand, without getting permission from Loder's estate. The Bag Factory's selection committee is a gain in autonomy, because the staff does not have undue influence on the studios' programme. The staff are therefore concerned with administrating the studio and acquiring funding to continue running the programme. Importantly, the Bag Factory, though not fully autonomous as an institution, has the ability to decide without external influence; it enables artistic autonomy.

1.4. Conclusion

There are a few dimensions of autonomy; autonomy of the artist, exercised in creating the object; autonomy of the industry, using its own logic and standards (relative autonomy); and autonomy in self-organised art institutions, which, it is argued, allows for the mitigation of systematic bias and economic privilege. The autonomy of self-organised art institutions is important as it can foster experiments that are outside of the market. This is well articulated by Art Historian Sven Lütticken as: "[The] critique of the art object's autonomy was less a rejection of artistic

autonomy than a critique of the *uses* to which artworks are put: the economic and political interests they *serve*" (2012:3). In this sense, the autonomy, or the self-actualisation of institutions, allows varying degrees of autonomous zones that co-exist side by side, without undue influence from the market or external funders. Therefore, autonomy is a constant negotiation of one's intention and the capacity to act. The question becomes: If autonomy is fleeting, based on time and context, is it attainable and how relevant is it?

The example that has been discussed is not completely free of any external pressure. However, there are moments of experimentation that are encouraged through differing modes of grappling with the socio-economics. The Bag Factory Artists' Studios' autonomy is seen through the artists who practise without undue influence from the institution. The artists determine how they experiment and use the institution's network. This can be termed artistic autonomy. Importantly, the Bag Factory's selection committee opens its network to a multitude of different artists from varying backgrounds and artistic practice.

It is imperitive to hold on to this notion of autonomy, because to discard it as some unattainable goal, further implies that the loss becomes detrimental, where any shred of self-actualisation for the black practitioner is only attainable in the dream state. To discard it is to leave it in the hands of privilege, which is currently controlled by the market that already dictates and co-opts experimental practices. Institutional autonomy, which is the freedom for the institution to operate based on its own logic, is even more important as it implies a collective agreement on certain structural and organisational standards that are not easily dispensable, when compared to individual efforts. In Chapter 2, institutional autonomy will be unpacked, through looking at different self-organised art institutions and their temporary moments of autonomy.

Chapter 2: In search of clarity: defining nebulous self-organised art institutions

This chapter deals with the notion of 'filling in the void', articulated by Koyo Kouoh, curator and founder of the Raw Material Company, in her aptly titled text *Filling in the Void: The Emergence of Independent Contemporary Art Spaces in Africa*. In this text she argues that the core reason for "the establishment of these spaces (independent/artist-run) has been the need to address an artistic and critical void" (2012:17). The terms 'artist-run' or 'independent' art space are used almost interchangeably to describe institutions that 'fill in the void' on the African continent, as seen in the different texts[25] in the book edited by Koyo Kouoh, entitled *Condition Report: Symposium on Building Art institutions in Africa* (2012), which also includes Kouoh's *Filling in the Void* text. The book was published after a symposium that was held on 18-20 January, 2012 at the Raw Material Company, an independent space in Dakar, Senegal. The book is a great resource in understanding the differing contexts of self-organised art institutions operating on the continent. Though it is not comprehensive in representing art institutions all over the continent, it does give a broad overview of self-organised art institutions. In defining these institutions Kouoh writes:

> These independent initiatives set themselves apart from state-affiliated institutions, as well as from commercial (art) markets, by creating alternative models and platforms for negotiating art and history, and reflecting upon the archive, visual culture and cultural history (Kouoh, 2012;17).

These institutions exist to allow creative freedom to practitioners. This desire for freedom can be articulated as a search for autonomy. It is worth noting that the defining terms of these institutions set a tone for their differing programmes and

[25] These are some of texts that are included in the book that I reference within this thesis: "Imagined Communities" by Simon Njami; "The Story of my History of L'appartement 22" by Abdellah Karroum; "New Funding Models. A Message from New York" by Yona Becker; "Conditioned Networks" by Juan Gaitán; "We want to take part" by Katharina von Ruckteschell; "Art without Education" by Anton Vidokle.

focus. For the sake of using a consistent term, these spaces are referred to as self-organised. A number of self-organised art institutions are used, such as the Raw Material Company; the Centre for Contemporary Art, Lagos (CCA, Lagos); doual'art; Sober & Lonely Institute of Contemporary Art (SLICA; Keleketla! Library; Center for Historical Reenactments (CHR) and Nothing Gets Organised (NGO), in order to deal comparatively with the nuances of their own defining terms (calling themselves independent spaces, artist-run and so forth) and to show that the nuances illustrate the notion of political autonomy. Sven Lütticken uses Sylvère Lotringer's definition of political autonomy that is:

> [T]he desire to allow differences to deepen at the base without trying to synthesise them from above, to stress similar attitudes without imposing a 'general line', to allow parts to co-exist side by side, in their singularity (Lotringer in Lütticken, 2012:1).

This chapter demonstrates where institutions lose their autonomy, where and how the external influence creates friction with the institution's initial intent. The purpose of this chapter is to show the differences between institutions through exposing their limitations and strengths, while grappling with notions of autonomy.

2.1. Artist-run spaces

> Artist-run spaces fit all kinds of models. They are testing grounds and springboards to the commercial art world, intimate gatherings in apartments, places for reading groups and shared meals. They are little pockets of activity that serve particular audiences at particular times, filling gaps and holes with all that the art-world fails to provide. Sometimes they are meant to be temporary, and other times they can grow to become professionalised institutions that a later generation of artists define themselves against (Kennedy, 2012:4).

The quotation above was taken from *The Artist-run Space of the Future,* a

compendium edited by Christopher Kennedy. Kennedy describes the malleability of artist-run spaces and their varying actions responding to 'filling in the void' within the art industry.

Robyn Cook, founder of SLICA[26], published an essay taken from her doctoral thesis on artist-run initiatives[27], *The Parking Gallery: Experimental Practice and the Artist-run Initiative in South Africa* (2016), which foregrounds the visual artist in the strict sense of the word, as the founder for them to call their organisation an artist-run space or initiative. This indicates a focus on the artist running the space's interest in practice and experimentation and, to be blunt, it is a space for the artist to engage with like-minded practitioners. Depending on the artist's interests, the institution ends up being open to a few. This does not mean that the programme is as narcissistic as it sounds, but that the artist will determine the direction of the organisation. Cook's DPhil thesis (2016) argues for the support of experimental practices, which she calls autonomous practices, mainly fostered by artist-run spaces because of their disinterest in commodifying objects. For example, SLICA was initiated by Lauren von Gogh and Robyn Cook, who were interested in the notions of telepathy, collaborative and relational practices[28]. Such kinds of practice demonstrate autonomy because they are not concerned with eligibility to the market, however these institutions defer their costs to the artist. In this case, it is artists with economic privilege who are able to participate in institutions such as SLICA.

The work of SLICA can be related to what artist and writer Chad Roussow echoes, in his introductory text about another organisation, blank projects (2005–2011), which is now defunct. In their fourth year's anniversary catalogue, he wrote: "It is a space where artists can produce a project" (Roussow 2009). It should be mentioned that Roussow's definition does not describe blank projects' programme, which was an exhibition space open to young artists to experiment, in a time where there were very few exhibition spaces in Cape Town that did not charge artists to hold

[26] it was established in 2011 and it is currently in stasis with a library in a Visual Arts Network of South Africa (VANSA)'s cupboard,
[27] Cook uses the term artist-run initiative in her doctoral thesis.
[28] They have engaged with "the possibilities of telepathic communication in the production of art works and curatorial exercises" (Art Africa, 2012), and held several telepathic marathons where participants join the race without physically beingin the same location.

exhibitions. Rather, it refers primarily to how artist-led institutions are framed. He defines them as:

> Project spaces occupy a strange position in contemporary art practice. They are not galleries, though they may look like a traditional white cube with clean walls and open space. They are not studios, though they often display the same openness and experimentation that marks a working space. They are run by artists, but they are not art. The role of a project space changes with the need of each show, which can make them hard to define. Sometimes they are clean, sometimes messy. Sometimes they are rigid, sometimes fluid. Sometimes they are fraught with complexity, sometimes they are just an empty space. The essence of a project space, however, is simply defined by its name. It is a space where artists can produce a project (Rossouw, 2009).

Expanding on Roussow's point in her thesis, Cook discusses the challenges and importance of artist-run initiatives. She writes that their relevance is for promoting experimental and tentative practices, where process and relational aesthetics are more important than the finished product that commercial galleries sell. The challenges that these institutions face include sustainability, where little funding is available, especially within the local art context. However, with the malleability of the artist-run space, challenges of funding are often mitigated by the interest in low-cost operations. This is certainly true for SLICA, where Cook speaks of the loss of spontaneity when there is external funding, due to the need to always account for every cent spent. Based on the scale and scope of the initiative, in-kind, support can sustain some of these engagements, allowing the institution to exist for a short period of time riding on the 'labour of love' as a great resource. In-kind support is only sustainable for short periods of time. However, the drawback is that only artists with the ability to sustain their production costs are able to participate in this type of institution.

Artist-run spaces have been criticised for being springboards for artists to be noticed by commercial galleries, losing the initial impetus of the 1960s moment in Europe

and United States of America, where risky media were encouraged (Drabble 2013). It is important to keep in mind that the malleability of these initiatives makes them relevant, as it allows a great degree of spontaneity and agility that can result in a great degree of autonomy as they 'fill in the void' for practices that have not yet been canonised, giving space to young artists. Cook speaks of the loss of spontaneity that is brought about by having to account for funds received from external sources. This is a moment when the institution loses its autonomy, as it then starts to respond to external requirements instead of its own internal logic.

2.2. Independent art spaces

This section focuses on three West African independent institutions, doual'art in Douala, CCA, Lagos and the Raw Material Company in Dakar, by looking at how they operate closest to white-cube galleries. These institutions "fill in the void" of lack of contemporary exhibition spaces across the board—museum and independent spaces—while maintaining autonomy from commercial interests. Social economist Marylin Douola Manga Bell and cultural producer and curator Didier Schaub, founded doual'art in 1991; Bisi Silva founded CCA, Lagos in 2007; and Koyo Kouoh founded the Raw Material Company in 2008. These institutions mainly focus on discourse and experimental practices. They hold symposia, exhibitions and residencies that attempt to fill in the void left by academic programmes and public museums in their differing contexts. The context differs from South Africa, where there is a higher number of commercial galleries, public museums and sporadic self-organised art initiatives. These institutions use the term 'independent' instead of 'artist-run' presumably because the founders are not artists. Importantly, they also operate independently of the government and commercial art market (Kouoh, 2012:17).

There is a certain accountability in being an institution that initiates and hones contemporary art discourse and strong exhibition practice, such as these institutions, that differs from SLICA's projects, which were geared mainly towards relational

practices[29]. This accountability also means that if doual'art, CCA, Lagos and Raw Material Company stop existing, the 'void' they initially filled will leave a crater within the art community, because in most of the cities where these organisations operate, there are no replacements for their programme. These institutions often play the role of a museum (through well-researched curatorial projects and solo exhibitions) and experiment by showcasing media that have not yet been canonised within their context. Douala, Lagos and Dakar lack public museums and galleries that showcase critical contemporary-art projects. Therefore, experimentation in their context differs to SLICA's experimentation, because South Africa has a few ailing public museums and commercial galleries and a small number of art critics, meaning that there is a higher number of contemporary exhibitions in comparison. This is not to say that SLICA does not offer a space for experimentation that is needed by the artistic community. But this gap can be filled with relative ease in comparison to the more formalised organisations mentioned. SLICA's focus is on presenting works in progress and relational practices, which are practices not geared towards making and exhibiting objects, but rather to create a space for relation to take place between people. This means that exhibition space is not a necessity, but that convening an audience is more important, which can take place almost anywhere.

Following the importance that Cook places on relation practices, doual'art, CCA, Lagos and the Raw Material Company can be seen as somewhat conservative, as their exhibitions place more emphasis on the white cube presentation and practices already canonised outside of their context. For example, practices such as video and photography are no longer considered experimental in the South African context, particularly because there is a well-articulated art-historical discourse around these media. CCA, Lagos writes about these media as experimental because the audiences were new to their presentation at the institution. The Lagos Photo Festival, an annual photography event, was initiated by the African Artists' Foundation (AAF),

[29] Robyn Cook's description of relational practices "Within this paradigm, audience participation and the creation of conditions for social interstice occupy primacy over that of making, wherein the art 'produced' takes on the form of a dialogue, an event, a workshop, a meeting, a game, and so on; often appearing to be 'work-in-progress' rather than a completed object (Bishop 2004:53). In turn, the artistic requirements of 'exhibition space' shift radically where, counter to standardised showroom formats, the practice demands environments that are flexible, multi-functional, and better suited to the promotion of dialogue than the display of objects."

a non-profit organisation founded in 2007 by Azu Nwagbogu. It has created greater awareness of photography in Lagos as a worthwhile medium compared to painting and sculpture. In 2010, CCA, Lagos initiated the roaming Àsìkò School, responding to a void resulting from the lack of art schools in most countries on the continent, and a lack of critical engagement with contemporary art discourse in the academy. It also places emphasis on local context and how it affects the discourse which usually comes from Europe and America and has a completely different context. Only a few countries have critical art education, South Africa and Ghana being among the few. Àsìkò is:

> using the format of part art workshop, part residency and part art academy, over the course of 30 days. The art school programme focuses partially on technique and primarily on methodology, critical thinking, and the implementation of conceptual ideas (CCA, Lagos).

Àsìkò: On the Future of Artistic and Curatorial Pedagogies in Africa (2017) is a publication that marks six successful programmes of the school that took place in Lagos, Dakar, Accra, Maputo and Addis Ababa, between 2011 and 2016. The school responds to a lack of critical academic programmes on the continent and also provides an opportunity for young practitioners to network. Autonomy for CCA, Lagos is marked by the ability to respond proactively to elements of the programme that don't work well, as there is no bureaucracy such as most formalised academic programmes have to deal with. However, CCA, Lagos still needs to acquire funds for the facilitators of the programme, such as reputable artists Wangechi Mutu, Julie Mehretu and curators including Zoe Witley and artists' collective Raqs Media Collective.

These three institutions have initiated projects that can be termed new institutionalism. The notion of new institutionalism may be another way of keeping the revolutionary aspect of these institutions. Curator Claire Doherty wrote that:

> New Institutionalism responds to (some might even say assimilates) the working methods of artistic practice. Furthermore, artists run initiatives, while

> maintaining a belief in the gallery, museum or arts centre and, by association, their buildings, as a necessary locus of, or platform for art (Doherty 2004:1).

Why suggest that these independent art spaces have adopted new institutionalism, which is a concept in response to stale European institutions? Doherty quoted Charles Esche (director of Van Abbemusuem in Eindhoven in the Netherlands), who may offer a response:

> Now, the term 'art' might be starting to describe that space in society for experimentation, questioning and discovery that religion, science and philosophy have occupied, sporadically, in former times. It has become an active space rather than one of passive observation. Therefore, the institutions to foster it have to be part community centre, part laboratory and part academy, with less need for the established showroom function.

It can be argued that these institutions and the curators who run them are responding to a void comparably to the Bag Factory. Where, David Koloane focused not only on his individual practice, but was concerned about how black artists were canonised and ultimately judged within conditions that were unfavourable to them. He responded through taking the role of writer, curator, facilitator and educator. The loss of autonomy for CCA, Lagos may be seen in the need to acquire funding in a country that doesn't yet place much importance on the practices that the institution supports, leading Silva to seek funding from foreign institutions and having to make concessions in order to secure funds for the institution. Because the institution has no commercial interest, it is impossible for Silva to self-fund the projects. The reputation of Silva as an international curator means that her international network can support CCA, Lagos. Similarly to the example of the Bag Factory, the artists that are participants in Àsìkò's programme may have a greater degree of autonomy than the organisers of the institution. The participants have to find funds for their participation, accommodation, flights and costs for the six-week program.

As part of this master's project's practical component, a round-table discussion was convened with young artists, held at Keleketla! Library in June, 2017[30]. Nyakallo Maleke, who was part of the discussion, was also a participant at Àsìkò, 2016 in Addis Ababa. Maleke spoke of the need to raise funds for her participation in the programme, for which her family supported a car-wash fund-raising project. The point is that both the Àsìkò participants and CCA, Lagos fund-raise, in order to realise the project. CCA, Lagos shares its network of funders and provides necessary documentation for the participants' funding application. The loss of autonomy experienced during the funding phase of the project is balanced during the six-week programme, making it a *temporary autonomous zone*. That Àsìkò is a roaming school, and it has to continually respond to each context, allows for a great degree of autonomy because of the ability to re-evaluate intention versus reality, where detrimental concessions were made and how to mitigate them in future reiterations of the programme.

Doual'art also initiated a project on top of the exhibition and residency programme. The sculptural triennale Salon Urbain de Douala (SUD) held its first event in 2007, which mainly engages with the city through installing public sculptures and projects that respond to the socio-economic issues in the city. The sculptures and installations from the triennale have been left to the city, giving Douala public art. The establishment of SUD fills in the void of mega international exhibitions and introduces international artists and their practice to Douala. The first edition in 2007 was not structured, as they were not yet sure what they were doing. Simon Njami curated the 2010 edition, with the 2013 edition being curated by Elvira Dyangani Ose, Koyo Kouoh, Gabriela Salgado and Didier Schaub. The recent edition of 2017 was curated by Cécile Bourne-Farrell. The curators are mentioned because mega shows are measured through the appointed curator. Similar to CCA, Lagos, doul'art fills in the void of white cube presentation in its exhibition space, but has greater experimentation through its cyclical project, SUD. Here, the failures and successes are evaluated in relation to its intention, which was not only to fill in the void of mega exhibitions that are site specific, but also to respond to the socio-economic

[30] This will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4

situation within the city. The involvement of urban planners suggests that the project is meant to respond to a real need of infrastructure, with the community that they are intervening in. Here, Enwezor's argument for art that has a function within society is apt (2008:212). In his text *The Postcolonial Constellations: Contemporary Art in a State of Permanent Transition,* Enwezor argues for the African artifact to enter the halls of art, where the fact that it had a function within society should not diminish its worth within the discourse of contemporary art. It is not necessary to argue that art has function within society beyond aesthetic value, as many writers have done so very eloquently, such as Claire Bishop in her seminal book *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (2012). SUD's importance is shown in its impact on the everyday life of the community it affects, albeit temporarily, as some of the projects cannot exist without their initiators.

In the case of the Raw Material Company, Kouoh makes a case for the independence of the institution from the local state, and its instrumentalisation of contemporary art institutions for the state. For Kouoh, autonomy is articulated by self-determination without influence from the local state. She links this autonomy through a decoupling from funding from the local state. The major flaw in her argument is that she takes for granted, or downplays, the instrumentalisation of art institutions by foreign states, through their foreign mission organisations, such as the Goethe Institut[31], which was the funder for the *Condition Report* symposium and publication. The 'void' that is filled by the Raw Material Company's providing contemporary art discourse and exhibition space in Dakar, is given a lot of importance. The major loss of autonomy, through being entangled with foreign state organisations, can be argued to give freedom in programming, in comparison to local government. *Precarious Imagining,* an exhibition held at the Raw Material Company on 11 May, 2014, dealt with homosexuality and the fact that it is illegal in 38 of 54 African countries. Senegal is among the countries where it is illegal. On 31 May, 2014, the exhibition had to be closed in response to an order from the government

[31] Kouoh downplays the role of "soft power" by foreign state organisations because the text "We want to take part" by director of Goethe Institut Sao Paolo, Katharina von Ruckteschell, writes about their reason for funding the arts. Chapter 3 argues for the loss of autonomy through external funding and deals with the notion of "soft power" in great detail.

that was pressured by Muslim fundamentalists[32]. In this case the loss of autonomy is weighed against the censorship from the local government.

Boris Groys in his book *Art Power* writes about the antagonistic impulse that is symptomatic of contemporary art (2008). That is, the impulse to always provide a counter-argument to every situation. Though, there is a loss of autonomy through external funding at the Raw Material Company, is the gain through upholding discursive space for political issues worth it? Of course it is. However the claim for criticality by Kouoh should not downplay the intentions of the foreign state missions, especially as Von Ruckteshell writes unapologetically about it.

Though, doual'art, CCA, Lagos and the Raw Material Company may bear the loss of autonomy in order to keep open a space for exhibition and discourse, it is still imperative that the loss of autonomy is not downplayed and written about in its utopian sense. Of course, the criticality should not only remain in the performance of proclamations about loss of autonomy, but should be met with propositions and experimentation of alternative models.

2.3. Alternative art spaces

Curator and academic Portia Malatjie, in the essay *Alternative/Experimental Art Spaces in Johannesburg,* uses the term alternative art space:

> …to refer to spaces that, for the most part, challenge the notion of the white cube, that is frequently adopted by commercial art galleries and other exhibition spaces. White cube gallery spaces may come with certain limiting or infringing ideologies, to which artists might not want to adhere, and alternative spaces provide artists with the opportunity to work outside such institutional constraints (Malatjie 2013:367).

Here Malatjie is concerned with the white cube and its lack of neutrality in imposing a specific language for exhibition displays, as well as the difficulty in gaining access to

[32] Other exhibitions in Dakar that dealt with homosexuality were also closed.

these spaces. Therefore, the white cube galleries, which are mainly commercial galleries, are exclusive and restrictive, because they cater to a buying audience. The alternative art space then becomes the space to experiment in institutionality, as well as other forms of practices that are not profitable for commercial galleries. Malatjie argues that SLICA, Center for Historical Reenactments and Keleketla! Library are alternative art spaces. Autonomy is about responding to one's own will without external influence. The alternative reacts against the status quo that is commercial galleries and, as argued in Chapter 1, the boundary between autonomous and heteronomous does not exist in clear terms.

A concept that binds all these terms, and at times is used to define them, is experimentation. There is experimentation on the artistic level and experimentation on the institutional model. Some institutions focus on one or the other or both. For Keleketla! the experimentation is seen in the dissolving of boundaries between visual art and music, and working mainly as cultural producers and facilitators. Their programme can be termed relational, because they hardly showcase objects on the wall but they push the envelope of relational practice, as they do not rely solely on legitimising mechanisms within the visual arts.

> Within this paradigm, audience participation and the creation of conditions for social interstice, occupy primacy over that of making, wherein the art 'produced' takes the form of a dialogue, an event, a workshop, a meeting, a game, and so on; often appearing to be 'work-in-progress' rather than a completed object (Bishop 2004:53).

In turn, the artistic requirements of 'exhibition space' shift radically where, counter to standardised showroom formats, the practice demands environments that are flexible, multi-functional, and better suited to the promotion of dialogue than the display of objects (Cook 2016:10). This refers to the white cube's power to sanction anything that takes place within its walls as art, as well as the role of critics and curators to legitimise the criticality of artistic practices (O' Doherty 1999: 79).

Keleketla Media Arts Project, commonly known as Keleketla! Library, is an art institution founded by artists Malose Malahlela and Rangoato Hlasane, in 2008 at the Drill Hall in Johannesburg. Keleketla! Library's programme includes an after school programme (2008–2014) for childen living in the vicinity of the Drill Hall in the inner city of Johannesburg, which is close to both the largest taxi rank in the city and a library, which are no longer operational, since their move in 2014. Keleketla! Library was influenced by Medu Art Ensemble[33]. This is seen in their interest in culture and defining their roles as 'cultural producers' and the notion of community through programmes such as *Skaftien* (2011–2013) and *Stokvel* (2009–2010). *Thath'i Cover Okestra* is an ongoing project, a collaborative kwaito music performance that investigates the genre's meaning today. Recently opened shebeen, Madibuseng (2016), which hosts Cunty Power (a safe space party for all femmes particularly non–binary and trans women, hosted by Fela Gucci and artist Tabita Rezaire) has been operating at the new space at the King Kong Building in Troyeville. This notion of the community, which is seen in supporting the Cunty Power party, the after-school programme or providing micro-grants for other projects, is instrumental in experimenting in forms of organising and of constituting a collaborative audience.

Malatjie also argues that the location of alternative space is, in itself, part of the experience. For example, Keleketla! is now in the east, not far from the gentrified Maboneng Precinct. Previously, its library was located in the Johannesburg city centre, from 2008 to 2014. Another organization, CHR was located in the city centre of Johannesburg, also not far from Maboneng. Bag Factory is located in Fordsburg, which is close to Newtown, an area that was earmarked by the current government as a cultural precinct, due to Market Theatre complex and Museum Africa being located there. The cultural precinct did not take off as anticipated but the cultural and creative hub initiative continues, which can be seen in the new state-of-the-art building of the Market Theatre Foundation, which includes Market Photo Workshop's gallery and photographic school programme. The locations of these

[33] Medu Art Ensemble was a collective of exiled 'cultural workers' that were operating in Botswana from 1977 until 1985. The collective was a made up of visual art, theatre, literature, music and photography. Thami Mnyele a visual artist and member of the collective from 1978 was killed by the Afrikaans government with a letter bomb in 1985 that killed eleven other people. The collective ceased to exist immediately after the bomb. Medu worked collectively and were activists against the apartheid system as well as white galleries that exploited black artists.

institutions demonstrate the role that art plays in gentrification. Consequently, gentrification is also something that these institutions have to deal with, as the different waves of urban regeneration impact their surroundings. As mentioned in Chapter 1, Robert Loder's ownership of the Bag Factory means that the institution is unable to gain from the contribution it is making to increasing the value of the property. For CHR, Ngcobo spoke about the institution's awareness of its impact on the value of the building they occupied. The Drill Hall, where Keleketla! Library operated, had hopes that gentrification might reach them and turn the historic building into a cultural hub, like Maboneng. The Johannesburg municipality has been establishing Newtown as a cultural hub for two decades.

Based on the desirability of the institution they may form part of the gentrification or be moved elsewhere to make way for more desirable institutions. This idea of culture's positive impact on urban areas and their value is based on Richard Florida who is written about by Sam Wetherell, who writes that:

> Fifteen years ago, he [Florida] argued that an influx of what he called the 'creative classes'—artists, hipsters, tech workers—was sparking economic growth in places like the Bay Area. Their tolerance, flexibility and eccentricity dissolved the rigid structures of industrial production and replaced them with the kinds of workplaces and neighborhoods that attracted more young people and, importantly, more investment (Florida in Wetherell, 2014:1).

Gentrification exploits the activity brought by alternative art spaces, to drive up property values of areas that were previously undesirable. In an interview with Gabi Ngcobo, she says she is weary of Nothing Gets Organised (NGO), a recently initiated self-organised institution in Johannesburg, also being gentrified, due to its proximity to already gentrified Maboneng. However, the fact that the founders of NGO own the property where it is operating, means that they are able to profit from the increase in property values and also directly influence the process of gentrification. Another major loss of autonomy is that as these institutions increase the value of properties that are undesirable by always having to operate from properties that have low rent, they are unable to profit from their contribution in monetary terms

when they are priced out of the neighborhood.

The term, alternative art space, speaks of the need to experiment and to be autonomous, even though its major rhetoric 'them against us'— commercial galleries against alternative spaces—makes it seem a reactionary mode of working. It is worth noting that these institutions do not refer to themselves as alternative. It is Malatjie who theorises this term in relation these institutions, which takes away the institutions' self-determination as seen to be practicing in reaction by theorizing that these institutions are reacting to commercial practice, instead of responding to their own will which is better articulated in the notion of "fill in the void".

2.4. Collectives and collaboration

> The artists' collective [is defined] as any association of individuals with an artistic and cultural purpose, whether those associations are ephemeral and related to a specific project or are permanent and make reference to an organisation or collective structure (Dyangani Ose 2014:25).

Collectives within the country have a historical precedence, notably Medu Art Ensemble (1977–1985). David Koloane, in an interview, described how after attending the Culture and Resistance Festival in Gaborone, Botswana in 1982, most artists were encouraged to work in collectives as well as create what was termed Resistance Art: art that carried a political message against the apartheid system (2017). Another, notable art collective is Gugulective, established in 2006 in Cape Town's Gugulethu township. It was highly successful in making visible the disparity between art life in the township and the city (Lemu, 2016). While it was in operation, the collective used KwaMlali, a shebeen in Gugulethu, as their space for experimental practice. Gabi Ngcobo, artist and curator, worked on a few projects with Gugulective and she later co-founded CHR in 2010. Kemang Wa Lehulere, a member of Gugulective, joined Ngcobo as co-founder of CHR.

To tease out the complexity of autonomy I will look at Center for Historical Reenactments (CHR), an institution that was conceptualised by international curator

and artist Gabi Ngcobo and curator and writer Sohrab Mohebbi in 2010. The institution describes itself as a 'collaborative platform' that had a programme focused mainly on a research-based curatorial practice, with a core membership that included well-known artist Kemang Wa Lehulere, performance artist and academic Donna Kukama and Gabi Ngcobo[34]. In relation to the white cube, Ngcobo speaks about "looking outside of the window" of August House, where the institution was operating. August House is a building in Johannesburg's CBD that was mainly used by artists as studio and living spaces. It is located on End Street, which is very close to recently gentrified art precinct Maboneng but at the time of CHR, August House had not yet been renovated. August House currently includes artists' studios and exhibition spaces. The decision to look outside, rather than within the white cube, is something that academic and curator Portia Malatjie writes about in her essay on alternative spaces (2013). Malatjie argues that alternative spaces often negate the very notion of the white cube and its lack of neutrality in choosing not to present works that are reminiscent of commercialised practice, but to experiment with other modes of presentation (Malatjie 2013). For CHR, their practice then focused on other forms of presentation that were experimenting with notions of histories (Gule 2015).

CHR's programme was for the super insiders, as those invited to participate had to speak directly to the collective's interest. The insider responds to programming whose audience is fellow art-producers (researchers, critics, curators, artists), who produce similar products which are experimental. Fraser summarises this notion as: "The 'specific principle of legitimacy' of relatively autonomous fields, in which producers produce for the recognition and evaluation of other producers—institutionalised in mechanisms such as peer-review—tends to generate increasingly specialised forms of production and consumption" (Fraser, 2011: 3). In an interview, Ngcobo says that they positioned themselves in such a way that they did not need to directly apply for funding, but rather they were invited to receive funding or be part of projects that had funding (Ngcobo, personal interview 2016, 1 March). This belies the biographies of the artists within the collective. Ngcobo had been practising

[34] Sohrab Mohebbi did not move to Johannesburg, so his participation is seen in the conceptual phase of the institution. There have been other members who have been part of CHR, such as Jabu Perreira, but they are not in high rotation as the three mentioned as the core members. (CHR website)

internationally as a curator, which means she had a vast network; Wa Lehulere's career was on the rise as an international young artist; and Kukama was also an artist with a substantial network, which was a major resource. So these networks were the resources they could tap into for their programme. This meant that CHR was operating using their 'symbolic capital'. According to Bourdieu, this is marked by a form of disinterestedness that negates the need for economic profit (Bourdieu, 1993:39). That they were not interested in producing 'industrialised' objects, further makes a case for their autonomous project.

The impending death of CHR also allowed a certain freedom in their practice. CHR allowed them to ponder their varying interests in history and how history is conjured up. This conjuring of history was used mainly as a research space, more than a presentation of their research. Here the profit from their labour was never meant to be seen through CHR as an institution. Also, the two-year lifespan allowed for a certain level of carefreeness, or disinterest, to borrow Bourdieu's words. The profit is mainly seen in Ngcobo's curatorial practice. She has been invited to international art institutions to speak on experimenting in institutionality. Here, the loss of autonomy cannot be read through the encounter of the context, as downtown Johannesburg, with its socio-economic issues, was the living archive that CHR tapped into, to think through the notion of histories. The illegibility of CHR at the time of operation proved its experimentation, as only the few could understand the notions that they were dealing with, which agrees with Bourdieu's notion of exclusivity within the arts.

In an interview between Hakim Bey and Hans Ulrich Obrist, Bey speaks about TAZ and the lifespan of comuning being not longer than a year and half. This short lifespan is something, he says, that also applies to institutions (Obrist, 2010). If we use TAZ as an ideal of experimental and productive lifespan of a collective or institution, then CHR succeeded in anticipating its 'paradoxical-counter-productivity', and committed institutional suicide [35] in 2012. Hakim Bey uses Ivan Illach's paradoxical-counter-productivity concept to describe that moment when an institution becomes institutionalised to a point where it is counter- productive, when

[35] CHR decided to end the institution after two years in operation; they have used the term institutional suicide because it was a death that was committed by the institution, instead of succumbing to external pressures.

it starts monopolising the industry or sector, and starts being more concerned with its survival and less with its initial intentions. In other words, "the institution approaches rigidity and monopoly: it begins to have the opposite effect from its original purpose. Societies founded for 'freedom' become authoritarian, etc." (Bey, n.d). CHR was able to avoid its 'paradoxical-counter-productivity' by ending the institution. The archive of CHR as an institution is now housed at Nothing Gets Organised (NGO). Gabi Ngcobo, artist and curator Sinethemba Twalo, and well-known artist Dineo Seshee Bopape, founded the institution in 2016. CHR achieved autonomy because of the considered lifespan of the institution. Furthermore, the impending end of the institution meant that the only concern was experimentation.

Though collective organisations vary in form, the collective voice is called in order to deal with issues that are harder for an individual to tackle. It therefore deals with issues that are socio-economic and stem from systematic bias. Such was the case in the formation of Gugulective and Medu Art Ensemble. Collective organisations bring layered processes because of the multitude of perspectives. These formations remain the most relevant forms of organising, as they often lead to organisations such as labour unions that may not be experimental institutions but support and uphold the individuals' autonomy.

2.5. Self-organised art institutions

As already discussed, artist-run space focuses on artist-led initiatives. Independent art space is a decoupling from external influence, be it market related or state funded. Alternative art spaces are in opposition to already-established institutional models. This section argues for the use of the term self-organised art institutions as a term that encompasses artist-led initiatives, independent, alternative and collective institutions that respond to the differing 'voids' that Kouoh writes about. It further, includes institutions that vary in complexity and lifespan, are art-related but not exclusive to visual art. The use of 'self-organisation' is based on artists' collective

Superflex's definition used in Chapter 1[36]. Self-organisation points to complexity that is not informed by an outside force; the complexity is created by a spontaneous response to challenges.

The book *Self-Organisation/Counter-Economic Strategies* (2005), is a compendium of economic strategies that seek to exist outside of capitalism. Most self-organised art institutions want autonomy and to exist outside of the market. They may not always want to exist outside of capitalism. The different alternative models introduced by Superflex are intriguing in that they open up possibilities for adaptation that can be used by institutions that want to operate autonomously. Operating outside capitalism is a form of political dissent. This book informs the use of self-organisations within the arts, such as in the book *Self-Organised*, published in 2013.

The term, self-organised art institutions, is used to acknowledge the different models of responding to the 'void' within the art industry. Particularly interesting are institutional models that morph and shift and recalibrate, based on external pressure and its growing internal logic. This term is less concerned with whether the institution is initiated and led by artists, curators, art administrators or cultural producers, but rather that its initiation is meant to 'fill in the void' within the arts.

> Self-organisation in the arts has come to mean both a process of self-determined organising (as opposed to being organised by someone else) and an entity, an organisation of subjects, created by the participants on their own terms (as opposed to one created for them to operate within) (Drabble 2013:19).

Self-determined organisation is the perfect definition of an organisation that is concerned with the notion of autonomy. In 2016, Gabi Ngcobo founded another institution in Johannesburg city centre, with artist and curator Sinethemba Twalo

[36] As a reminder, the definition is "The term self-organization is borrowed from systems theory and the natural sciences, where it describes systems whose internal organisation tends to increase in complexity without being guided by an outside source. In recent years it has been used in relation to certain kinds of social groups or networks; in this context, the term does not have a strict definition, but broadly speaking it refers to groups that are independent of institutional or corporate structures, are non-hierarchical, are open and operate participatory decision-making processes (Superflex, 2006:5).

and well-known artist Dineo Seshee Bopape. The recent self-organised[37] art institution, Nothing Gets Organised (NGO), has a different set of dynamics because the trio collectively owns the building where the institution operates. However, the commitment they have made in owning the space is turned upside down by the refusal to fall into becoming an 'event venue'[38] through a predictable programme. This makes it a space that falls within 'autonomous practices' as NGO also refuses external influence, either through funding or producing an expected programme and satisfying its audience. It is perhaps too soon to write concretely about this institution and its lack of programming and falling in with expectations. But, "In this shift, working self-organised becomes about a collective work mode, indebted to spontaneity, shifting the term inclusiveness to the level of form rather than motivation" (Borden 2013:41).

2.6. Conclusion

This chapter has been difficult in that the terms that needed defining were found to be porous, much like contemporary art's indeterminacy. Though, each term in definition is porous, each institution's programme articulates particular affinities and differences that make it possible to differentiate the institutions. This chapter makes it easier to see where institutions lose their autonomy. It makes it easier to see where and how the external influence creates friction with the institution's initial intent.

[37] In an interview with NGO member Sinethemba Twalo he said that they were concerned with the notion of self-organisation for the institution, 28 August 2016.
[38] Interview with Gabi Ngcobo, 1 March 2017

Chapter 3: Current funding models and the resulting loss of autonomy

This chapter discusses current funding avenues available for visual arts practitioners and self-organised institutions, and how autonomy is gained and lost through subtle and overt influence from external funders.

The chapter demonstrates the limitations of external funding and its influence on institutions through self-censorship, and the wider implications of enabling *soft power* without being critical of foreign missions. The section below proposes that the models adopted for self-organised art institutions should be revised in relation to their sustainability and ability to foster autonomous practices at individual and institutional level.

3.1. Local state funding in South Africa

There are currently a number of options for obtaining funding within South Africa. Financial assistance can be accessed from government from national government departments, provincial governments and municipalities. The government agencies most effective in funding the arts are the National Arts Council (NAC) and the National Lottery Distributing Trust Fund (NLDTF).This was found in the research report conducted for the Department of Arts and Culture by The Human Sciences Research Council African Micro-Economic Research Umbrella (AMERU), University of the Witwatersrand, in 2010[39]. The research was conducted in order to make informed recommendations for the visual arts industry (Research Report, 2010:1). It was found that the NLDTF has been under-spending. However, the report does not disclose the amount. The NLDTF reported in its 2016–2017 annual report that R422 436 259 was allocated to Arts, Culture and Heritage and R520 278 664 by National

[39] This remains one of the most informative reports conducted on the visual arts sector. Though annual reports for specific organisations exist, they do not have the detail required to make them useful for this research.

Lotteries Commission 2017:48. However, there is no detail as to the exact amount of money spent on visual arts, which makes this figure ineffective in seeing if there has been improvement in NLDTF's spending in the visual arts. NAC's 2016–2017 annual report shows a 6 per cent increase in its total budget, to R102 054 327 (2017:70-73). Only R5 279 329.58 of its budget was spent on the visual arts, which is a decrease compared to the R5 640 699.24 reported to have been spent during 2008–2009. Even with an increase in its total budget this did not increase the allocation for visual arts. Visual arts still remain one of sectors that receive the least allocation from NAC.

Keleketla! Library has lamented that the response to applications and the release of funds from the National Lottery Distributing Trust Fund are slow (Malahlela, 2016). This, coupled with the necessary detailed administration of the funds awarded, means that the institution applying for these funds needs to have support structures in place in order to manage the expenditure[40]. This is a major drawback for art institutions that do not have the necessary personnel in place. The National Arts Council is one of the most effective funding bodies as most of its budget is spent. However, this budget is considerably smaller than that of the NLDTF. Business Arts South Africa (BASA) also offers some grants. Its budget is much smaller than the NAC and therefore does not reach as far. Also, its focus is limited to making links between art and business.

In the essay *Bigger Than the Tick Box: Defining Interdisciplinary Art/s Education to Funders in South Africa* (2014), Malose Malahlela and Rangoate Hlasane (of Keleketla! Library) speak about the difficulty of making funding applications and the language applicants are expected to use, in order to suit funders' requirements[41]. Keleketla! Library describes how they refused to fit into conventional institutional expectations, while having to use a language that puts the work they do into the box of charitable work, which has limited their funding avenues. Kekeletla! Library is a non-profit organisation, which means that they should be eligible to apply for large

[40] Personal communication, 3 March 2016.
[41] *Creating Spaces: Non-Formal Art/s Education and Vocational Training for Artists in Africa between Cultural Policies and Cultural Funding* (2014), edited by Nicola al-Samarai.

amounts of funding. However, the administration of such an endeavour would require that they be well staffed, in order to be able to report on the use of the funds (and somehow meet the funder's expectation on the use of the funds within this). Further requirements, such as reporting on the number of people visiting an institution, are also difficult to manage. It is in focusing on the funding application and reporting that the institutions' autonomy is lost, as programming takes a back seat. Robyn Cook from SLICA confirmed that during a period when they were receiving funding from the University of Johannesburg, most of their time was spent making sure that the funds were spent according to the funding regulations, rather than on the projects at hand.

Anton Vidokle explicitly notes how funding applications impact on self–organised art institutions (even though he is writing from a Euro-American base, he raises important points) In *Writing on Art Without Education,* he says:

> This also has to do with funding: most alternative spaces these days receive funding from the same sources as commercial and state institutions. Through their grant applications, fundraising, auctions, sales of artists' editions and support from wealthy individuals or corporations, they have no choice but to assume a certain vocabulary that looks and feels professional by corporate standards. It would be naïve to think that this does not affect their programming, mandate, criteria or any other aspect of their activities (2013:106).

On the other hand, the Bag Factory receives its funding from NLDFT and other donors. Bag Factory's main focus is providing studios and does not infringe on the autonomy of the artists working there. The organisation is also a non-profit with an administrative staff to apply and administer the funds received. This shows that the programming and funding model should be complimentary in order to retain relative autonomy. The funding from NLDFT allows the Bag Factory to provide studio space to lesser-known artists and give them the support that they would not have otherwise.

3.2. Patronage and Private funding

Patronage is another source of funding that has been somewhat successful in South Africa. However, this requires that an institution or its director has a relationship with the patron. The major limitation is that the patron may pull funds out if their conditions are not met, or if they feel the institution no longer represents their interests. The report for the Department of Arts and Culture indicates that there is not much prominent sponsorship within the visual arts and that none of it has contributed to independent art institutions. The report states:

> Overall sponsorship of the visual arts by the corporate sector can be estimated at between R10 and R15 million per annum—a significant portion of this being accounted for by First National Bank's sponsorship of the Joburg Art Fair, and the support of Spier Holdings for the Africa Art Centre programmes, which include the Spier Contemporary Art Competition. (2010:192).

There is also the heavy advertising and PR that sponsorships entail, whereby the event loses its own name. The major limitation of corporate sponsorship is that the art or project must reflect the values of the company that is providing the funding. This was seen recently when First National Bank asked Commune1 gallery to remove an artwork by Ayanda Mabulu that was deemed controversial (Mail & Guardian, 27 September, 2013). This is exactly the infringement on autonomy that this research is concerned with.

Co-founder and European patron, the late Robert Loder, owned the building that the Bag Factory operates from. This is problematic because one of the oldest self-organised art institution, that has been operating for more than twenty six years, is receiving patronage for its most valuable resource. The Bag Factory's motive is to provide working space for artists. If, for whatever reason, Loder's estate disagrees with the institution and how it is operating, it may be held to ransom in fear of losing the building. This is a major loss of autonomy because concessions have to be made to appease the patron. Keleketla! Library also operates from a building where it does not have to pay rent. The loss of autonomy for Keleketla! is through the constant

need to maintain the relationship with their patron. Their programming does not rely heavily on having their own building, though this allows for spontaneous programming. Should the infringement on their autonomy become intolerable they can move, as they moved from Drill Hall.

3.3. Foreign Funding in South Africa

Condition Report: Symposium on Building Art Institutions in Africa held at the Raw Material Company in Dakar, Senegal in 2013, was funded by the German Goethe-Institut. Juan A. Gaitán's *Conditioned Networks* (2013), a text, published in the *Condition Report* book, introduces the approach of cultural diplomacy (England, France and Germany), which was established in Latin America in the 1940s as a way of strengthening ties with the region. He writes that foreign organisations allow for self-organised art institutions' autonomy in their programming by giving carte blanche to these spaces—the opposite of the expectations that local state funding comes with (2005: 90-91). Gaitán does not offer more information on cultural diplomacy and its current interest in funding art projects in non-western countries. His text only highlights what self-organised art institutions gain[42], which he claims to be temporary autonomous zones, from accepting funding from foreign states, without questioning the intentions of the external funders (especially in the case of the symposium and publication, which was funded by the Goethe-Institut). Gaitán's text may thus be seen as a kind of self-censorship, as outlined by Yona Becker, in *New Funding Models*, included in the same publication *Condition Report* (2013). It also included an essay from the main foreign funder. Becker writes that receiving external funding requires maintaining relations with the funders, which results in a tailoring of the programme. In Gaitan's text, it is in toning down his criticism of the external funders' intentions for funding such a symposium. It could be argued that the publication includes contradictory voices and therefore it is critical of its funder.

[42] "in these cases, to put it bluntly (and also to accept the fact that we operate within a capitalist system), foreign capital translates into the acquisition of temporary autonomous zones." (Gaitán, 2013:92)

However, this critical tone does not mean that the external funder, the Goethe-Institut, does not exercise nor benefit from this seemingly self-critical production.

The South African local art scene is made up of three main foreign funding bodies. The Goethe-Institut is one of the most prominent and accessible funders of independent art institutions on the continent[43]. Another foreign cultural agency is Pro Helvetia, the Swiss Arts Council[44]. This organisation currently funds projects for institutions, as well as advocates cultural exchange between South Africa and Switzerland, through funding residencies and research within the Southern Africa region. The French Institut is much more prominent in Francophone countries and does not have a huge visible program in South Africa (in comparison to the Goethe-Institut and Pro Helvetia). Also operating in South Africa are: The British Council, the United Kingdom's cultural organisation which funds projects and cultural exchanges between the United Kingdom and South Africa; The Prince Claus Fund which, unlike those already mentioned, operates from the Netherlands and notably has a mobility fund. The Prince Claus Fund provides an award of €100 000[45]. There are some other countries that have agreements with South Africa and offer some grants, but these foreign missions do not play a major role within the visual arts.

Foreign funding institutions exercise what Joseph Nye, Harvard professor and former Assistant Secretary of Defense in the Clinton Administration, coined *soft power*. This term is defined as:

> [T]he ability to persuade rather than coerce through elements of 'hard' power such as the threat of a strong military. It is made up of many different elements that, when combined efficiently, can be wielded to produce great positive effects for the governments that use them (Hoogwaerts 2012:1).

[43] This is visible through the funding of the symposium and book on art institutions in Africa edited by Koyo Kouoh, *Condition Report* (2013), as well as the book including Keleketla! Library's text discussed above.
[44] Joseph Gaylard, who is former director of the advocacy organisation VANSA and member of the team that wrote the 2010 Research report for the Department of Arts and Culture, currently head Pro Helvetia Southern Region.
[45] This award has been received by Achille Mbembe (historian working at University of Witwatersrand), Chimurenga (publication founded by Ntone Edjabe operating from Cape Town), cartoonist Zapiro (Jonathan Shapiro). Other South African laureates include Zanele Muholi, Santu Mofokeng, David Koloane, District Six Museum and Bush Radio.

Leanne Hoogwaerts's paper, *What role do museums and art institutions play in international relations today and specifically in the development of what Joseph Nye called 'soft power'?* (2012), deals with soft power by using two case studies into cultural diplomacy. Quoting Nye, Hoogwaerts writes that "In Nye's view, a country increases its chances of developing favorable relations when it embodies and promotes values that can be universalized" (2012:1). She further writes that soft power is tricky as it encompasses many intangible elements[46], such as maintaining relations which can take years to develop. One of the case studies is about the British Museum's *Forgotten Empire: the World of Ancient Persia* exhibition, hosted in 2005. The exhibition took place when there was political tension regarding Iran's nuclear programme. The exhibition included loans made from two Iranian museums: the National Museum in Tehran and the Persepolis Museum. In exchange, the British Museum would lend "the Cyrus Cylinder, an object of great importance to Iran" (Hoogwaerts 2012:6). When the Cyrus Cylinder finally reached Iran in 2009, "it provided impetus to resume other discussions" proving that culture can keep doors open when diplomats have failed (Hoogwaerts 2012:7). Though soft power is explained in relation to public museums, in contexts where there is a lack of museums, reputable artists and curators can still be used by foreign state missions for soft power.

Achille Mbembe, in an interview conducted by Vivian Paulissen published on Chimurenga's website, speaks of the power dynamics that favour the foreign mission and its undue influence on the cultural industry, even when the funding is not substantial (2009). He also speaks of resources wasted in trying to obtain the funds, and the hopelessness that reliance on foreign mission funders has created on the continent. This power dynamic can be related to Leanne Hoogwaerts's soft power (2012), through her argument that foreign cultural organisations are political instruments. This argument is made in relation to the British Museum's hosting a Persian exhibition and consequently allowing for talks to be held between the UK and Iran, due to the cultural diplomacy that led to exhibition being negotiated to

[46] "Soft power predominantly relies on three resources: "its culture (in places where it is attractive to others), its political values (when it lives up to them at home and abroad), and its foreign policies (when they are seen as legitimate and having moral authority)" (Hoogwaerts 2012:1).

fruition. Pius Knüsel, former director of Pro Helvetia, the Swiss Arts Council is more direct about what culture is used for by politicians in his text *How Free is Autonomous?* (2009), where he writes:

> So it has come to pass, that old masters and experimental videos, folk dancing and conceptual theatre provide a decorative backdrop for politics, and are broadly implemented for its own purposes. And not just in Switzerland: France's new cultural policy has revived the principle of the nation, of the *exception culturelle*, and is cutting the budgets of programmes that do not fit the bill; the government of the United Kingdom is using the British Council as a weapon in the battle against Islamists; and the German Foreign Minister, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, uses cultural exchange as a platform for the country's self assertion, with the Goethe-Institute, the German Academic Exchange Service and other institutions taken for granted as instruments of German foreign policy. (Domestically, it's all about standing up to Berlin.) The United States is again sending its 'Young Lions,' up-and-coming jazz talent, on musical missions, while China reckons in terms of cultural units per capita (Knüsel 2009: 14).

Though Knüsel's text was written in response to Swiss law on the promotion of culture, it rings true of what culture is used for by governments, especially considering Gaitán's one-sided reading of foreign missions. Further, in the *Condition Report* book, Katharina von Ruckteschell's (current director of Goethe-Institut, Sao Paolo) text, *We Want To Take Part* (2013), responds to the question of why foreign institutions are interested in funding art in Africa and the non-west. She writes that Africa has inexhaustible resources and that the tested method for the German government to gain access is through culture, as it enables their soft power, to create a form of trust between Germany and Africa (Ruckteschell, 2013: 96). Ruckteschell's unapologetic text highlights the political element that these foreign organisations have in funding art and she continues to write that the funding does not come from a completely altruistic space (2013; 96). Art funding from the government is limited in Africa. However, the extent to which self-organised art

institutions accept the implications that funding from foreign states comes with, is not always clear. Ruckteschell's article raises a number of questions. If the funding is not altruistic and this is a way of maintaining some ties to Africa, what exactly are the underlying political allegiances of those ties? Why, for example, are self-organised art institutions not critical of foreign powers and only critical of local government? Such support can result in the cultural sector being a pawn in greater political machinations. Without advocating throwing the baby out with the bathwater, and cognisant of the many great projects that have been funded by foreign states, it appears that organisations should be cautious about unquestioning acceptance of funding, particularly as Achille Mbembe notes, if it is not a large sum in the first place. And the 2010 Department of Arts and Culture Research Report confirms that foreign funding bodies accounted for only 22 per cent of total funding in the visual arts for the 2008-9 financial year (2010:191).

Chimurenga is a non-profit institution that has been one of the recipients of foreign funding. Chimurenga is a pan-African platform that publishes the Chimurenga magazine and *The Chronic*, a quarterly newspaper. Ntone Edjabe founded the platform in 2002 and it is located in Cape Town at the Pan-African Market on Long Street. In 2008, Ntone Edjabe and composer Neo Muyanga initiated the Pan-African Space Station (PASS) which is an online radio station and a pop-up studio. Tagores was a jazz bar in Observatory, Cape Town founded by Ntone Edjabe who was also the resident DJ until its closure in 2016. Chimurenga is mainly a literary platform but, importantly, PASS becomes the space for experimentation that can be fed back into the newspaper. An interview with Ntone Edjabe is included in the online publication.

The magazine and newspaper are sold to the public and are the products that give the institution its value. This research is mainly interested in discussing the Pan-African Space Station (PASS), founded by Ntone Edjabe, editor of Chimurenga and composer Neo Muyanga. PASS is an offshoot of Chimurenga that administers the experimental platform. PASS hosts an internet-based radio station. Talks are curated by collaborators of Chimurenga and aired on the radio. Pop-up events are held which recently included a curriculum for the Raw Material Company's academy.

Chimurenga conceptualised the curriculum and Neo Muyanga was one of the facilitators. PASS's autonomy is seen through the programme, which does not have the deliverables that the publication adheres to through the response to its readership. The Chimurenga and PASS networks, which include funders and collaborators, are shared. Chimurenga is heteronomous; it is concerned with access to a wider audience, whereas PASS is autonomous, as it is concerned with discourse and it is made accessible on the internet as well as a pop up event.

Chimurenga receives funding from foreign mission organisations, even though the publications are for sale. Notably, it received The Prince Claus Award of €100 000 which is around a million Rands. Chimurenga currently receives its funding from Pro Helvetia and The Heinrich Böll Foundation, an independent German organisation that promotes human rights, democracy and gender equality. Chimurenga's autonomy is clearly seen in its pop-up radio station PASS, which is used as the autonomous wing of the organisation. The funding of PASS is administered by Chimurenga, which allows it autonomy in that it does not have deliverables beyond the intervention of the pop up radio when invited. While, Chimurenga is seen to be influenced by external funders now that it attracts external funders. On 19 February, 2018, Ntone Edjabe was interviewed for the book that forms the practical component of this thesis. Edjabe clarified the use of PASS as a mobile editorial wing of Chimurenga. Edjabe stated that PASS receives far more funding than *The Chronic*, the newspaper publication of Chimurenga. PASS is an intervention that becomes a research tool for *The Chronic*. Chimurenga published two *The Chronic* issues that dealt with the topic of soft power and arts patronage. They were *Soft Power: Desire Machines and the Production of Africa Rising* (2015) and *The Philanthropic Complex* (2013). Ironically, both issues were funded by the Goethe-Institut among other funders. Edjabe speaks of the power of art interventions or, in this case, of performing criticism with seriousness and cynicism. The counter-argument could be that external funders are not interested in influencing programming, particularly in the case of Chimurenga publishing two newspaper issues that are critical of its funders. Surely the funders are not interested in influence but provide the resources for such projects to thrive. Self-censorship has already been proved in the example

of Juan Gaitan and other curators writing in the *Condition Report* book. The negotiation of undue influence from the funder and the critical performance of the recipient, both in a subtle manner, demonstrate a saying in Khelobedu (a language spoken in Limpopo) 'o loma o khe fodisa' which translates as 'you bite while blowing air so that whoever you are biting doesn't recognise the damage'. Chimurenga, through PASS, has found a way to balance the loss of autonomy that may be visible through *The Chronic* newspaper.

Keleketla! Library received funding from the NLDTF and used the funds to publish an education supplement book entitled 56 Years to the Treason Trial. In the article *Bigger Than the Tick Box: Defining Interdisciplinary Art/s Education to Funders in South Africa* (2014), they wrote about the difficulty of administering funds and continuing subsequent applications to receive more funds. They have received funding from foreign missions such as Pro Helvetia, the British Council and Goethe-Institut. What is notable about Keleketla! Library is its interest in finding alternative forms of funding for the organisations and the community of artists it supports, which is discussed in depth below. In a personal interview, Gabi Ngcobo from CHR says that they have not applied for funding, but external funders have approached them to fund the projects they were running (Ngcobo, personal interview 2016, 1 March). Ngcobo says that this changed the power dynamics and allowed them to be in a place of power, and therefore operating autonomously without undue influence from the funders. This approach relies heavily on an existing network and a strong symbolic capital that can be traded in lieu of money. The symbolic capital of the core members of CHR is high and it should not be taken for granted that it is the symbolic capital that allowed CHR to operate without needing to apply for external funding. Though, the power dynamics may be balanced it does not mean that over time and the power dynamics do not shift.

Soft power may seem an extreme objective to claim for foreign missions, even though Ruckteshell wrote that is their intention. However it is difficult to pinpoint how soft power is used. The funding criteria is therefore not scrutinisable on each project funded, but funding for the arts is done in order to keep a door open for the

use soft power. Moses März, in his article *The Institute* (2015), published in the The Chronic *Soft Power* issue*,* writes about the Goethe-Institut in Abidjan, in 2010, when the foreign mission's real intentions were contradictory at best. Self-reflexivity was shown through the support of a film showing the German genocide in Namibia and the director of Goethe-Institut discussed tolerance and democracy (2015:41-42). The notion of upholding democracy is also the Heinrich Böll Foundation's mission. The self-censorship, when it comes to foreign missions, speaks of a complacency with the foreign mission's agenda.

3.4. Self-funding

In the article *The Story of my History of L'appartement 22,*[47] Abdellah Karroum speaks of a notion of rapture, writing that rapture should not only be located in individual artistic practice, but also from funding art centres, that have a condition placed on their funding (2013:29). *L'appartement 22* is self-funded and is only able to exist when funding is available, resulting in an intermittent programme, based on Karroum's ability to sustain the institution. Though, this type of funding allows autonomy, it is inaccessible to artists who do not have economic privilege. Karroum is a reputable curator who is using self-funding *L'appartement 22* as part of his curatorial practice. He is, therefore, able to use the money he receives from working to fund the project.

In 2006, the Parking Gallery was founded by Simon Gush. It operated on self-funding for only a year and held exhibitions in the storage room of Gush's apartment block Gush, in a personal communication, admits that the admin involved in installing each exhibition and paying for all the required installation material, as well as buying refreshments, became exhausting after a while. He then closed the institution when he left the country (Gush, personal communication 2016, 9 March). In 2012, Simon

[47] "Route 3: Rupture is an essential part of any creative process, within the creative project itself, in its process. In ancient poetry, each verse was broken down into two parts, even in its own production. Future potential also lies in that necessary break. Where there is a break combined with a principle of movement back and forth between knowledge and experience, between heedfullness and adventurousness. These territories are not exactly opposites, but they do leave room for a certain amount of movement. It is a matter of spaces. But the succession of verses repeats the idea, with a new meaning and an image forming in the imagination, inspired by the external world or feelings within the body" (Karroum, 2013: 29).

Gush and Ruth Sacks reopened the gallery in partnership with VANSA. The programme at the new Parking Gallery included a weekly talks programme and included a number of exhibitions. VANSA provided them with an exhibition space and some administrative support. Parking Gallery closed again in 2015 after running the institution became exhausting or rather when the labour of love runs out.

This form of funding is difficult when you are not economically privileged. Otherwise, the programming is halted until there is funding. Of course, not all projects require finances, but these types of programmes are only able to host projects that have already received funding. This pushes up the cost to the artist. However, this is one of the widely used ways of operating when the founder subsidises the institution. Rangoato Hlasane, co-founder of Keleketla! Library, calls it a 'labour of love' as it usually requires in-kind support from one's network. SLICA, Keleketla! Library, and possibly all of the institutions mentioned within the thesis, began operating from self-funding and in-kind support. It is also the most unsustainable form of funding and, as Hlasane said in an interview, you run out of it and that is the reason most institutions have closed down (Hlasane, personal interview 2017, 4 June).

3.5. New funding Models

In the text *New Funding Models,* Yona Becker presents her strategies, on alternative funding models where her self-organised art space, called *Third Streaming,* generates income from providing an advisory service to non-profit arts organisations and foundations. She also explains that further income is made through space rentals, online stores and art sales. *Third Streaming* is therefore able to exist without relying on external funders. This funding model speaks to the ability to generate funding internally, which leads to an institution's financial freedom. In turn, this then allows for an autonomous programme. Becker cautions that depending on funding from foreign cultural institutions is another form of self-censorship, because maintaining relations with external funders demands tailoring the programme to fall

within what the funders are interested in and avoiding projects that may offend the funders (2013:81).

Becker's model is similar to what Avril Joffe reports in her book *The Cultural and Creative Economy in Africa: Challenges and Innovations* (2013). She found that the most common model for institutions without external funding was to make money through selling merchandise or by having coffee shops or restaurants as part of the institution. For example, The Book Café in Zimbabwe uses the business model of selling merchandise and food as a way of sustaining the institution's programme that involves performing arts, debates, poetry and other events (Joffe, 2013:15). This model of funding is sustainable and offers access to funds without the time limitations that external funding imposes. From observation, the necessary start-up capital may not be easily accessible without business models, which force the institution to be business savvy. This may be an obstacle for most institutions, as it requires decent business know-how and the capacity to run a functioning model. Within the latter, there are self-organised art institutions that sell artworks at exhibitions to raise the funds for running the space, as well as making money for the artists. This model's pitfall, is that the programming is dictated by works that are most likely to sell and therefore have the same in-built traps seen in commercial galleries (and being dependent on local galleries for support). They stand the chance of losing any independence that they may claim to have from commercial practice (Kouoh 2012:17). Joffe also notes that governments in most countries do not play a pivotal role in the funding of the visual arts

3.5.1. Fundraising projects

With various forms of patronage and donation, from the formal to regulated informality, it seems pertinent to look at John Searle's deconstruction of an institution and the gift economy in Lewis Hyde's *The Gift* (1983). This is done to tease out other formations that can inspire different self-organisations and another conception of funding.

To this, I will first look at John Searle's essay *What is an institution?* written in 2005. With the economic community in mind, Searle says that an institution exists because it is recognised collectively, by a society. As such, certain positions, such as presidencies, come into effect solely because it is agreed that the position holds symbolic power. Unlike a medical doctor, who proves that he/she is a doctor by performing certain functions, the president is first recognised as having power, which gives him/her the symbolic power to act as a president (Searle, 2005:9). Searle argues this is the case for institutions as well, saying that institutions exist because, collectively, they are recognised into being (Searle 2005:10). Searle makes another example of the church. Its existence is based on a group of people believing that the church has symbolic power. This is similar to the recognition we give to government. There are signifiers that are used to enable us to easily distinguish those that have had power bestowed upon them. In the case of the church the pope wears a mitre and robe. Similarly, in the case of an institution it is recognised by the government, through registration numbers and other signifiers that serve as proof that the institution functions for whoever recognises its power.

The people or community that recognises institutions into being is the audience that the institution serves. Marion von Osten's essay entitled *Producing Publics—Making Worlds! On The Relationship Between The Art Public And The Counterpublic* (2011), she articulates the different stages of European exhibition practices since the nineteenth century, when the bourgeois 'public' was the main focus, up until feminist and antiracist artists started staging exhibitions that imagined a counterpublic. Her writing on 'public/s' mainly references Michael Warner's seminal text *Publics and Counterpublics,* and she writes that:

> Michael Warner is interested in pointing out that publics evolve in practice and in context, and do not satisfy universal expectations but identification-related ones. In other words, the production of a public always goes hand in hand with specific subject positions, which are brought about in the process (Von Osten, 2011: 63).

This is of particular interest here if one starts to think about the different 'publics' that the self-organised art institutions invoke. Keleketla! Library, hosting the Cunty Power party, has been able to convene a counterpublic to Keleketla!. The public that is addressed by the institution will also be different to the current white upper-middle class that is seen at most contemporary art exhibitions. Even in the self-organised art institutions, the white upper-middle class children represent their parents, even though they seek a more alternative exhibition programme.

It is interesting to think about Searle's essay in relation to the symbolic power that art institutions have, specifically in South Africa. There is currently no overarching conclusive study of audiences, in terms of the demographics for various different self-organised art institutions. However, the research report conducted for the Department of Arts and Culture (2011) provides information that the audiences for most art institutions (mainly museums) in South Africa, are mainly made up of international tourists (Research Report, 2011:69)[48]. Around 50 per cent of the black population visits exhibitions (ibid). This number mainly consists of school groups that visit museums. The report further states that the current art audience is small and the majority of South Africans do not recognise art or art institutions in the same manner as Europeans or North Americans (Research Report, 2011:69). If we agree with Searle's logic of recognising institutions into being, then we must pay close attention to the local audience; who they are and what it is that would increase the audience numbers. South African art institutions need to cultivate audiences that will recognise them into being and further sustain the institutions beyond being merely an audience that plays no role beyond spectatorship.

Searle's deconstruction of the institution helps to get a handle on the fundamentals of an institution. With this knowledge of what an institution is made up of, one can, potentially, construct models that could be recognised by the local audience, who could then be invested in the institution's sustainability. Even though this text was written for the economic community by an American, the examples of institutions that Searle gives are very similar to local art institutions, especially when one

[48] This is overtly evident in holiday cities such as Cape Town and Durban.

considers how the power of the church is recognised into being; its usefulness is determined by the congregation that it serves. This text allows for an institution to understand its constituents and what form is most suitable for it. This approach of institutional recognition by a community can be linked to the notion of the gift economy. The gift economy is defined as "…a system in which exchange of goods was not a mechanical but moral transaction, bringing about and maintaining human, personal, relationships between individuals and groups" (Evans-Pritchard, 1954:ix). In the basic form of a gift economy, there is an exchange of goods. When the gift that is given creates a contract, as the receiver accepts it, there is an expectation that the gift will return. In more complex systems, the giver may not receive the return gift from the person they gave it to.

For the purposes of research, the highly complex form of the gift economy, described by Bronislaw Malinowski's anthropological research on the Trobriand islands (an archipelago off the east coast of New Guinea) is most pertinent. Mauss discusses Malinowski's research: "Describing the whole system of inter-tribal and intra-tribal commerce known as the *kula,*" (Mauss, 1954:19), where gifts of "… armshells pass regularly from west to east, and the necklaces from east to west." (Mauss, 1954: 21). When a necklace is given, the receiver is obliged to return the gift in good faith; the *Kula* should not be kept by one man for too long and should be given away within a year or two. The hoarding or profiting from gifts was considered shameful. This exchange meant that the gift was never received from the giver, removing the direct exchange and expectation that is found in close-knit gift exchange, where you know the people that you are in a process of exchange with. When the gift is given, there is a ceremony that marks the occasion and when one accepts the gift, one accepts the challenge of moving the gift along. Mauss explains that the Trobrianders had a sophisticated understanding of economy within their system of barter and would negotiate, as well as use shells as currency. He explains that the gift economy was a system that allowed them to dispel surplus. This surplus resource not only refers to monetary surplus but also other resources, according to how time and skill are dispelled.

Lewis Hyde's work takes the idea of the gift economy further than Mauss's focus on anthropological research. Hyde uses a myriad of sources to highlight the gift economy and its inner workings. The first chapter of *The Gift* is anecdotal, employing narrative form to deal with research, from folktales and anthropological research, looking at the same references as Marcel Mauss's *Gift* (1954) and Hyde (2002:20). Hyde addresses the gift in art and the manner in which the ability to create an artwork is bestowed on the artist[49] who uses skills to clarify and articulate the gift they have been given. He agrees with Mauss that the gift economy creates social cohesion as it creates the space for relationships to form outside of a capitalist economy, where relationships are mainly transactional (Hyde, 2002:xxiv).

There are local gift economies, such as the beer drink in Bolobedu, Limpopo. The beer drink is a fortnightly event wherein a group of women, from the same region, take turns in hosting the beer drink. As the host, you brew beer and sell drinks and food, while a traditional song and dance by female and male groups takes place. This keeps moving within the group of women, allowing the gift to circulate within the community. Surplus funds are expelled through spending on highly aesthetic traditional clothes that are made by the community, and in the consumption of food and alcohol, during the event. In this example of a gift economy, one can imagine fostering a community that exists outside of capitalism, where money that has been earned from the market is used within the arts. The gift, therefore, could move from the artist, to the institution, to the audience. If we look at the gifts that were exchanged in the communities that Mauss and Hyde discussed, we realise that the gift was something intrinsically local, not foreign. This locally sourced gift would be shared within the community as they recognised its importance. Hyde acknowledges the limitation of gift economy in that it is something that functions well in small groups. With this in mind, how does one find ways to apply the gift economy to the art industry in a way that is functional? (Hyde, 2002:91).

[49] "There are several distinct senses of a "gift" that lie behind these ideas, but common to each of them is the notion that a gift is a thing we do not get by our own efforts. We cannot buy it; we cannot acquire it through an act of will. It is bestowed upon us." (Evans-Pritchard, 1954: pxxii)

As previously mentioned, Keleketla! Library has been thinking about informal economies in hosting of *Skaftien*, which is a micro grant system inspired by a similar model called *Feast* in Brooklyn. Keleketla! hosted a *Stokvel #1* at Rangoato Hlasane's home in 2009, to raise funds for the organisation's resource centre. The Stokvel included a group exhibition, music played by DJ's, and table soccer. Food and drink were sold. The Stokvel had an audience of 50 people of which Hlasane writes that "a large number of the audience does not frequent art exhibitions", which led to Hlasane seeing it as a successful endeavour. The second Stokvel was held at Drill Hall's Point Blank gallery also in 2009, it was different to the usual stokvel which collects money, but it fell within the ideology of collectively pulling together resources. *Stokvel #2* was a collaborative session between Keleketla! Library and Allied Media Conference-Detroit where they discussed and exchanged Hip Hop beats via Skype. The session lasted the entire day and the end result was an exchange around music. They produced fourteen tracks of music. This Stokvel reimagined the traditional stokvel and experimented with the notion of self-organisation and counter-economic strategies[50].

Robyn Cook in her DPhil thesis writes about the Stokvel in relation to crowdfunding. This is a false reading of the Stokvel, as crowdfunding is a donor system where the recipient of the funds gives something in return as a form of gratitude. The donors do not give with the expectation of receiving. It is more giving aid which is discussed in detail in the following section. Stokvel is based on a closed membership where every member is both recipient and giver. It is better defined as a savings tool than a crowdfunding.

Hyde also discusses the issue of funding in the arts and its many faces over the years. He specifically refers to the United States funding models from the cold war, when the government used culture as a weapon against the Soviet Union, by illustrating the freedoms enjoyed in the USA by artists who could create as they pleased. Once the war was over, the government cut its funding from the arts (until John Kennedy

[50] Superflex writes that "[self-organisation] it refers to groups that are independent of institutional or corporate structures, are non-hierarchical, open and operate participatory decision-making processes. The counter-economic strategies discussed here are radical alternatives to classical capitalist economic organisations that exploit, or have been produced by, the existing global economic system." (Superflex, 2006:5).

became president and reinstated arts funding). Hyde highlights patronage, specifically the philanthropy of Nelson Rockefeller, who was instrumental in funding American arts before doing so gained popularity in Europe (Hyde, 2002:290). What Hyde demonstrates is that funding models changed according to government and individual interests.

> More broadly, where church or crown or private endowments do not meet our needs, we may turn to what might be called 'democratic patronage'. Public education, public hospitals, public libraries, pure science, the arts and the humanities: in the last century, all of these have been underwritten by democratic communities that tax themselves to support things of value that would not otherwise thrive (Hyde 2002: 288).

The drawback of democratic patronage is that it limits the autonomy of its institutions, in that they will always need to be accountable for the spending and the relevance of their projects and funding.

The challenge, outlined in these texts, is to create a community for an art institution. It is this limitation of the gift economy that provides a good starting point in exposing the need to recognise other conceptions of economy and community. This idea can be explored when conceiving of a community that is invested in an institution and plays a larger role beyond spectatorship. For example, Hakim Bey's notion of temporary autonomous zones, discussed above, looks at different moments where autonomy can be accessed such as a dinner party. He emphasises that these moments are fleeting. Accepting the temporariness of autonomy provides an opening for exploring ways that the agility of the non-permanent, and the possibilities of radical ephemeral actions, can be achieved as part of an institution's programme and running.

The important aspect of the bourgeoisie, sekhapa or church 'public' is that they see the value of each differing institution. If a self-organised art institution's public is not the classic white upper-middle-class, then the structure should also be cognisant of its public's organising logics and its value system. The bourgeois public sees art as

knowledge production for the discerning, enlightened few. Even the European new institutionalism, as open as it may be to other publics, such as the growing immigrant community, does not mean that its programming is geared for this public. Perhaps they may see themselves represented in the artworks in the exhibition space, but there is usually the assumption that immigrants value the artworks presented at this institution, which may be a Kunsthalle type institution situated in the neighbourhood where immigrants live. The point is—all too often the assumption is made that exhibition displays representation of the marginalised while friendlier-looking gallery assistants are the radical makeovers institutions need to attract a more diverse public. The value of Jesus within the church is not a question for believers; they even go a step further and constantly evangelise to grow the church. One wonders if the desire for a more diverse and larger public is the new look of critical and politically correct institutions. The institution should really make sure its structure speaks of its real intention. Of course, there are smaller, decentralised forms, such as the Apostolic Zionist church where small groups are formed, praising in nature, instead of forming one large group, and the congregation is always kept very small. This idea of scale and decentralisation is meaningful to keep in mind when thinking about places where funding is an issue. Where many small institutions exist, not for one cumulative goal in the form of being sections of one organisation, but rather in the notion of the archipelago, where the activities of each small institution adds up to a dynamic artistic landscape, leading back to the definition of political autonomy by Sylvère Lotringer used in Sven Lütticken's article *Autonomy After the Fact:*

> [S]tress[ing] similar attitudes without imposing a 'general line', to allow parts to co-exist side by side, in their singularity (Lotringer in Lütticken 2012:1).

The auction is a popular fundraising event where artists are invited to donate artworks that are then auctioned to raise funds for the institution. Though, this model has proven successful with residency and exhibition programmes, asking donations from artists, its operation is dependent on the market. Legitimacy is required to translate the object to one that is desirable and with bankable value. If

the argument has been that autonomous practices operate outside the market it also does not make logical sense that the funding of these institutions should rely on the logic of the art market. Also, if the institution's focus is not tangible objects or sellable objects, it becomes a difficult conundrum.

In Chapter 2, the compendium *Artist-run Spaces of the Future* (2012), briefly refers to the different models of artist-run spaces in the United States. These range from small spaces, such as the apartment gallery—which is created in someone's home through converting a living room or bedroom into a space for exhibition, talks and other events—to non-profit organisations, residencies and shared workspace. Another notable alternative funding model is the Tanda, locally known as the Stokvel where a group agrees on a figure that is given to the people within the group. This has been used as a saving tool to raise large capital.

The compendium discusses alternative funding models such as Sunday Soup, Stock, STEW and Feast. These models are events where a meal ticket is sold and the customers receive proposals from artists or projects that need funding. They then vote and give the proceeds of the event to the winning presentation. Some of them will then host another event where the winning project exhibits the work, funded by the proceeds. Feast, in Brooklyn, inspired Keleketla! Library's *Skaftien,* where a meal ticket was sold and the attendees listened to presentations. Each person voted and the proceeds were then given to the winning presentation. It is worth mentioning that Keleketla! Library has not used the *Skaftien* as a fund-raising tool for its own programme, but used it to support other art initiatives.

The funding models that have been introduced here are limited and require a real study in order for them to be viable and sustainable within the arts. Experimentation at an institutional level would allow for thorough investigation of the possibilities that these models may have for the arts.

3.6. Conclusion

This chapter demonstrates self-censorship introduced by external funders which causes a loss of autonomy. The power dynamics are at times weighed more towards the funder, and that in turn compromises the institution. The notion of soft power makes self-organisations complicit with the foreign government's agenda. However, the alternative models proposed are rudimentary and require more research and experimentation to get them to a point where they may be viable. That said, it is still imperative to problematise the entanglement with external funders and the language that is used to speak of autonomy does not mean complete freedom. As Chapter 1 situates autonomy with economic privilege, this chapter makes clear the entanglement and contradictions that are created by the need for external funding.

Chapter 4: Practical component

This chapter provides the conceptual framework of the MA thesis practical component. While it is common to have a section explaining the practical component by discussing its stylistic choices, it is not the intention in this chapter. Therefore, this chapter only contextualises the practical component by providing insights into its conceptual framework.

The practical component takes the form of an online publication, consisting of one-to-one interviews with founders of the following self-organised institutions: Rangoato Hlasane and Malose Malahlela from Keleketla! Library; Gabi Ngcobo from the Centre for Historical Reenactments and Nothing Gets Organised; Sinethemba Twalo from Nothing Gets Organised; David Koloane from Bag Factory Artists' Studios; and Ntone Edjabe from Chimurenga. The selection of organisations was based on the fact that the institutions have different structural models and they differ in programming. The aim of the book is to highlight these differing models in order to inspire the initiation of institutions that encourage a greater degree of autonomy for black practitioners. The textual research contained in this thesis informed the questions and direction of the interviews with founders of the self-organised art institutions above. The practical component's intended audience is made up of young practitioners, who are interested in finding alternative modes of practice which may not fall within commercial practice. It is an introduction into different models and the challenges that are faced by self-organised art institutions within the local art context.

The research on autonomy informed the focus on institutions founded by black practitioners, because of the argument that autonomy is linked to economic privilege, dealt with in Chapter 1. The interviews have been instrumental in linking theory used to describe self-organised art institutions and the challenges that these organisation face while practising. The interviews shifted the research from purely desktop research to applicable theories that may have use outside the academy. The

intention to publish an online book[51] is meant to 'fill in the void' in accessible material about self-organised art institutions that speaks to institutional models and their varying practices. Various self-organised institutions are discussed in the *Condition report: Symposium on Building Art Institutions in Africa,* edited by Koyo Kouoh (2012). This remains the most focused publication on self-organised institutions and therefore this practical component serves as an addition to such publications. This practical component is not exhaustive but serves as introduction to different models, and the contradictions inherent in the practice of initiating and running self-organised institutions. At the very least, the online publication hints at the notion of reconsidering inherited models and being cognisant of the loss of autonomy which, it is argued, is largely tied to economic privilege.

The intention with the first round-table, entitled *Autonomy? round-table discussion session 1,* held at Keleketla! Library on 27 June, 2017, with young artists Mbali Khoza, Simnikiwe Buhlungu, Refiloe Namise, Tšhegofatso Mabaso, Nyakallo Maleke, Boitumelo Motau and Abri de Swardt[52], was to expose limitations of self-organised art institutions and to also to have a session where alternatives could be discussed. Upon reflection of the round table, it was apparent that the notion of autonomy, and of alternative tools of reconsidering the institutional and funding models, had not been considered by the participants before the discussion. In theory, young artists are not yet stuck in particular ways of operating and are agile enough to entertain alternatives. Even if that may not be the case, the autonomy round-table discussion was successful in making young artists aware of alternative funding models, or at least not to rely on existing models only. On further reflection, there should have been more time for the young artists to familiarise themselves with this research and the local art context, in order to respond thoughtfully with alternatives applicable to the local art environment. Unsatisfied with the first round-table, I was inspired by the NKA Journal round-table I and III (2008 and 2012), online discussions at which practitioners were invited to respond to a set topic. The NKA round-tables

[51] The printed book is only for the purpose of examination

[52] The invitation for the round-table discussion had been sent to young artists who had graduated from different institutions within Gauteng, but only Wits University graduates and Abri de Swardt, who is a sessional lecturer at Wits University, responded to the invitation.

were long and very informative, because the participants had had time to deliberate and respond. It was then decided to invite older practitioners to *Autonomy? round-table discussion session 2,* which was an online round-table that took place over a period of three months. Curator Khwezi Gule, artist and director of VANSA, Molemo Moiloa, and academic, DJ and co-founder of Keleketla! Library, Rangoato Hlasane, were invited to exchange and converse on the notion of autonomy and consider alternative models of self-organised art institutions, by responding to prompts. This was a successful round-table in comparison to the first, because a few meetings with Khwezi Gule had been held about this Masters thesis. Rangoato Hlasane has also had a few discussions, through the one-to-one interview and round-table discussion session 1. Molemo Moiloa is familiar with the topic of self-organised art institutions, through her directorship at VANSA and the involvement of the institution with independent spaces through the PAN!C website. The two round-table discussions are included in the online publication. While doing desktop research I came across and article by Sam Ndaba published in 1983 titled *Artists Need a Union*, the article serves an a way of setting the tone and tying the online publication to historical discussion on artistic autonomy. It is included in the online publication.

The accessibility of the book to a wider audience was inspired by *Staffrider* magazine (1978-1993) and the Medu Art Ensemble newsletters (1977−1985), two publications that were both informative and gave rise to political action. Though this book is not focused on politics, it still taps into grassroots formations that mitigate economic privilege through collective action. The online accessibility of the book *Self-organisation, counter-economic strategies*[53] (2006) and Hakim Bey's *Temporary Autonomous Zones* (1991)[54] served as an inspiration, as they speak to ideas around 'open source', which is defined thus:

> The term 'open source' refers to something people can modify and share because its design is publicly accessible… Open source projects, products, or initiatives embrace and celebrate principles of open exchange, collaborative

[53] See Superflex download link: http://superflex.net/tools/self-organisation-_counter-economic_strategies/image/5
[54] See website where Bey's book can be accessed: https://hermetic.com/bey/taz_cont

participation, rapid prototyping, transparency, meritocracy, and community-oriented development (Opensource, n.d).

The online publication will be accessible and downloadable through the PAN!C website's[5] library section. PAN!C is an acronym for Pan African Network of Independent Contemporaneity[55], a platform for independent contemporary art spaces on the African Continent, co-founded by VANSA and *centre d'Art Picha,* an independent institution in Lubumbashi, Democratic Republic of Congo.

Self-organised art institutions are by their nature experimental institutions and it was through the practice of making an online publication that would be accessible to a wider public, that I grappled with the disjuncture between theory and practice. Theory is usually over-zealous, imaginative and dare one say, utopian. Practice on the other hand forces one to consider real time application and implications of theory. It was logical that the idealism of the proposal to find alternative sustainable funding models, encountered objectivity through finding out about real implications and, that what seemed black and white from a distance was actually grey and entangled at a closer look. The online publication offers no solutions or alternatives, but calls for practitioners to keep autonomy as a goal, not because it is attainable but because the more we seek autonomy the more we resist unsustainable models of practising, that only cater to a few individuals. The one-to-one interviews and round-table discussions introduce a sober optimism around dismantling and decoupling from clunky models that do not serve us (speaking as a young female black art practitioner).

In conclusion, the online publication seeks to instigate Edouard Glissant's creole garden, "where, in contrast to the monocultural plantation, a diverse range of plants protect and support one another" (Loock, 2012).

[55] See website, with permission, here - https://www.panicplatform.net/index.html?showplace=&showinterest=

Conclusion

This Masters project entails a thesis and a book publication to be made freely available online. This thesis navigates the notion of autonomy in self-organised art institutions and the overt and subtle influence exerted by the external funder. It explores the tensions evident when applying the notion of autonomy in the context of South African art. It demonstrates that self-organised institutions mitigate meritocracy, systematic bias (brought by apartheid), through initiating these art institutions that are in themselves utopian. The difficulty in navigating autonomy, within the indeterminate contemporary art world means that contradictions, such as established artists being provided the financial tools to continue their practice, does not respond to the shortage of institutions dedicated to getting young artists to a point where they too can get to be established.

These contradictions are visible in the practical component, where the founders of the selected self-organised institutions navigate these conditions, while providing platforms that are crucial for the art industry. The introductory text included in the practical component refers back to the issues raised in the interviews and the two round-table discussions. This text reiterates a need to continue looking for sustainable funding models that can perpetuate the existence of such institutions. In tone, the thesis and practical component are extreme, though they claim to function for the same purpose. That is, where the thesis complicates the notion of autonomy through academic language and references conventions, the book complicates autonomy through the navigation of real-time challenges. Autonomy is elusive but should not be discarded because of its utopian stance.

Though the research was unable to come up with practical sustainable funding models, the interviews and round-tables display the need to keep experimenting, investigating and testing other forms of organising resources, such as that of the Keleketla! Library, through the *Skaftien* and *Stokvel* projects. New forms could allow practitioners to use their variously accessible resources in ways that do not follow current models that seem to fail to take cognisance of local environments. There is

still a need for research into finding practical models and testing whether these models are indeed sustainable within the local environment.

Local art practitioners are now experimenting with self-organisation. But it is hoped that further experimentation, on individual and institutional levels, will be instigated by making the experiences of self-organised founders available to a wider public. This Masters project hopes to encourage Edouard Glissant's creole garden, "where, in contrast to the monocultural plantation, a diverse range of plants protect and support one another" (Loock, 2012).

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Appendices

Email exchange regarding the upload of the online publication onto the PANI!C website.

From: **Molemo Moiloa** molemo@vansa.co.za

Subject: Re: - masters book upload

Date: 26 February 2018 at 12:08

To: Kabelo Malatsie kmalatsie@gmail.com

yes that should be possible, you can send as a pdf

Molemo Moiloa
Director | Visual Arts Network of South Africa
c: +27 (0) 72 355 4965 | t: 010 206 9012 | f: 086 662 2074 | e: molemo@vansa.co.za
www.vansa.co.za | www.artmap.co.za
13 Transwerke Building | 2 Sam Hancock Street | Constitution Hill
P O Box 53457 | Troyeville 2139 | Johannesburg | South Africa
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On Mon, Feb 26, 2018 at 11:11 AM, Kabelo Malatsie <kmalatsie@gmail.com> wrote:

Hi Molemo,

One last question: is it possible to have the masters book uploaded onto the Panic online library?

My best
Kabelo
On 20 Feb 2018, at 6:12 PM, Kabelo Malatsie <kmalatsie@gmail.com> wrote:

Thanks Molemo,

I will find a way.

Kabelo
On 19 Feb 2018, at 1:43 PM, Molemo Moiloa <molemo@vansa.co.za> wrote:

Hi Kabelo

Re publishing on VANSA website - we currently only publish opportunities and have quite a strict policy on this. So there isn't really a space in which it would fit. We are in the process of hosting a three day working session on 'organising' in subsaharan africa. And publishing our own research in the area. This would likely link up (which is what I had mentioned before) but its still awaiting funding outcomes which I don't think would suit your current deadlines. But we could certainly look at incorporating it once the project is in motion.
Perhaps something like Rera Letsema's tumblr?

Molemo Moiloa
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On Mon, Feb 19, 2018 at 1:32 PM, Kabelo Malatsie <kmalatsie@gmail.com> wrote:

Hello Molemo,

Also, on a different note. Would it be possible to publish my practical component on the VANSA website. I am expecting a super last minute dot com situation on my side so I would send it to you on 12 March. If it is possible, who on your team do I get in touch with?

Kabelo