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Master in History of Art (full time)

Research Report

Title:

Biennial Culture or Grassroots Globalisation? The challenge of the Picha art centre, as a tool for building local relevance for the *Rencontres Picha, Biennale de Lubumbashi*.

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Abstract:

This research aims to examine how the organisation of a biennial and its content could influence the modelling of an independent art centre. Using the concept coined by Arjun Appadurai, 'grassroots globalisation', this research unpacks the establishment of Picha art centre through its project *Rencontres Picha, Biennale de Lubumbashi* (2010-2013), a case study, in examining how specificities of the global south geopolitics may encourage alternative art institutions to emerge. By studying the first three years of *Picha* through the project *Rencontres Picha, Biennale de Lubumbashi* (2010-2013), this research investigates how the art centre was created as a tool to position the organisation within the global art discourse whilst maintaining its local relevance in Lubumbashi. It is located at the intersection of three areas of study: Biennial culture, alternative institution models, and global South strategies and politics.

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INTRODUCTION

1.1. Context of research

This research analyses the development of the Picha art centre, through the implementation of the project, the *Rencontres Picha, Biennale de Lubumbashi*[1] from 2010 to 2013. The analysis focusses on how programming based on grassroots needs and desires can create an international platform that can shape the structure of an arts organisation. This study aims to help understand, in context, the emergence of independent organisations such as Lubumbashi and, by extension, the emergence of organisations across the African continent. Condition Report: Symposium on Building Art Institutions in Africa, organised in 2010 in Dakar, and its publication, edited by the Cameroonian curator Koyo Kouoh, have pointed out some guidelines that will be used in the course of my research (2013).

Rencontres Picha, Biennale de Lubumbashi was founded in 2008 by a group of artists and writers from Lubumbashi operating as an arts collective named Vicanos Club. The members were: Douglas Masamuna (video artist), Sammy Baloji (photographer), Gulda El Magambo (photographer) and me, Patrick Mudekereza (writer).

In 2008 the collective produced the first edition of the biennial with the support of Hubert Maheux, the then director of the French Cultural Centre in Lubumbashi. The biennial entailed photographic exhibitions, screenings and video installations. As this edition was held before the establishment of the art centre, it is therefore not part of the period covered by this research which is really to look at biennial activities that happened under the auspices of the Picha Art Centre. Nevertheless, it is useful in giving the historical background of Picha so as to understand the motivations and influences that propelled its initiation.

[1] I am one of the co-founders of this art centre.

The second edition in October 2010 was run by a new organisation named Picha Association Sans But Lucratif (in short, Picha ASBL)[2] and no longer the Vicanos club. Its appointment of a prominent international curator Simon Njami as artistic director was considered a leap forward, and for that edition Picha was able to show works of 21 international artists[3]. These too were mainly photographs and video screenings and installations (including six new video works) in different public spaces in Lubumbashi. In addition to the different physical iterations, two workshops were organised and there was one publication, entitled *Rencontres Picha, Biennale de Lubumbashi 2010,* edited by Njami.

In October 2013, the third edition took place after being postponed for one year (reasons for this are unpacked in chapter III) and was curated by yet another internationally acclaimed curator, Elvira Dyangani Ose, then curator of international art at Tate Modern in London. Under the theme *Enthusiasm*, that edition showed an even bigger pool of artists, 29 in total[4], along with two other commissioned projects: an installation by Ângela Ferreira (Portugal) and an video by Bodil Furu (Norway), as well as a conference and workshops in nine venues within the city of Lubumbashi, the second largest in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Picha art centre was established in August 2010 around the time of the second edition of *Rencontres Picha, Biennale de Lubumbashi*. This meant that during its first years, its entire programming was inspired by the biennial. This programme included ephemeral exhibitions in public spaces, talks, screenings and concerts.

[2] The phrase association sans but lucratif, in short ASBL, is the legal mention accompanying the name of every non profit organisation according to Congolese law.

[3] Adama Bamba, Heeten Bhagat, Berry Bickle, Robert Cahen, Dimitri Fagbohoun, Jellel Gasteli, Dionisio González, David Jiménez, Mouna Karray, Kiripi Katembo, Kiluanji Kia Henda, Dorothee Kreutzfeldt, Gulda el Magambo, Douglas Masamuna, Pierrot Men, Myriam Mihindou, Moataz Nasr, Zineb Sedira, Georges Assani, Davis Kabala and Kevin Irungu.

[4] Sven Augustijnen, Moridja Kitenge Banza, Lard Buurman, Guy Tillim, Michael subotzky, Patrick Waterhouse, Hala Elkoussy, Ângela Ferreira, Bodil Furu, François-Xavier Gbré, Katia Kameli, Kiripi Katembo, Michele Magema, Nàstio Mosquito, Zanele Muholi, Vitshois Mwilambwe, Junior Nembwe, Georges Senga, Trinity Session, Fransix Tenda, Christian Tundula, Lawrence Abu Hamdan, Sidsel Meineche Hansen, Lorenza Pezzani and Oliver Rees.

After the third edition, the two projects: the art centre and the biennial, progressively started to have different lives leading up to the final separation or divorce in July 2015. The 4th edition of the biennial in October 2015, was advertised only as "Biennale[5] de Lubumbashi" without "Rencontres Picha" and in February 2016, Picha art centre was renamed *Waza centre d'art de Lubumbashi*.

1.2. Aim and rationale

It is the development of this art centre that this research focuses on: looking at its three first years (2010-2013) and where the overlapping establishment of the biennial and the art centre projects lie. The intention is to understand how the two missions were developed in a complementary way and how the different needs were negotiated within the same organisation, especially the need of the biennial to be a 'global' art event, and the need of the art centre to be a 'grassroots' initiative.

For the purpose of understanding these two missions, I will analyse two main aspects of the biennial which were required to implement concepts developed globally within a local context: first, the materialisation of curatorial concepts into the Lubumbashi landscape and second, the commissioning of projects produced in Lubumbashi by international artists. In all of this, Picha art centre played a key role in the setting up of the two editions and its post biennial programming.

By studying these two exhibitions, this research aims to understand the influence this biennial has had on the arts context in Lubumbashi and how the biennial culture became the key concept in shaping the operations of Picha. It also tries to understand how the biennial positioned the art centre within the art world, yet speaks to issues of place making, in other words, geopolitics[6].

[5] In this text, I use the word "biennale" in French to name the Lubumbashi biennial, as it was formally advertised. Despite the fact that many events use the Italian word "biennale" [bi.enˈnaːle] as a reference to the Venice Biennale, I will use the English word "biennial" to describe the format in general.

This research also has a strong personal component due to my involvement in these projects. In 2015, the project split. I chose to go with the art centre, which was renamed the Waza art centre, which I still run as the director. I am no longer involved with the biennial. On one hand, I need to close the chapter of having been part of a biennial that took place in the city where I grew up, and to which I am deeply connected as a person and as a professional. On the other side, I have to define a new relevance of the art centre that needs to capitalise both its local embeddedness and its international connections. This mix of rupture and continuity requires an assessment of what was done, how and why. My intention in doing so is beyond providing a judgement, but is to understand critically the motives, challenges, failures and successes. Such a statement could be a form of 'self-writing'; and doing this as an academic research allows me some sense of critical reflectivity as I have to look at the role I played, as well as understand the impact such a project has had on the development of the Lubumbashi art scene.

It is known that biennials have become increasingly important in the documentation of art history, especially in the history of exhibitions and their understandings of contemporary art. In their introduction to The Biennial Reader, editors Elena Filipovic, Marieke van Hal, and Solveig Øvstebø modify an assertion by Reesa Greenberg on museum and gallery exhibitions, and argue the biennial is "*the* medium through which most contemporary art comes to be known" (2010, p. 15). They emphasise the need to study biennials, what they call "biennalogy", as an important tool in the history of contemporary art for understanding the conception and the reception of art by analysing the site and context where it first gains public visibility, such as biennials and other large-scale perennial exhibitions (2010, p. 15).

However, there are still very few studies focused on the context of biennials in Africa, thus knowledge on the context of the production and dissemination of art in the African context remains very limited.

An example of this narrow knowledge is the exhibition 'Global Contemporary Art Worlds after 1989' by Zentrum für Kunst und Medien, the German Centre for Art and Media (Belting et al., 2013), which looked at the rise of new art worlds after 1989. The publication

it produced is, to my knowledge, one of the most documented researches on contemporary art from different parts of the world; it describes different "art regions" such as "Asia Pacific Art" and "contemparabia" and the "third world perspective" of the Havana Biennial, yet on the world map of African biennials it remains invisible, with the exception of the Dakar biennale in Senegal. Even well documented events such as Johannesburg or Marrakech biennials are not represented[6].

These limited studies have not covered the diverse typology of biennials in Africa. They mainly focus on the Dak'art and Johannesburg biennials, often describing the weakness of the local or national government to organise an event relevant for the audience, the development of the local art scene and relevant internationally at the same time (Busca, 2000; Duncan, 2001; Malaquais & Vincent, 2015; Vincent, 2008).

This study on the Lubumbashi Biennial seeks to broaden this understanding by looking at what could happen when artist-run spaces play the role usually devoted to public organisations and connect directly with international and local audiences.

By studying both the adaptation of the biennial format and the role of an art centre, I analyse how current discourses on art in Africa are shaped by the biennial culture and how this has an impact on the emergence of independent art centres.

1.3. Methodology

This research has been conducted by exploring, as its primary source, the archive of the *Rencontres Picha Biennale de Lubumbashi* and Picha art centre. The archive is quite disparate in nature because it is not kept in any particular order and constituted elements considered as personal. The biennial archive consists mainly of a book produced after the 2010 edition, sound recordings of the events from the 2013 edition (including opening speeches, artist talks, etc.), press releases, financial reports and various unpublished internal documents such as photos of events, communication material and administration documents such as contracts, letters and reports.

[6] For the publication, another more detailed map of Africa shows dots for Johannesburg, Cape Town, Luanda, Bamako, Sao Tome e Principe, Douala, Marrakesh and Oran. But the photo of maps in the exhibition has only Dak'art (p. 100-101).

I have had to consider what this archive really means for the "institution", taking into account in particular that so much is absent /missing and so I have had to find a way to reconfigure it. What is important about this archive of the biennial is that it enables me to understand its institutional framework, funding mechanisms, and international positioning in the art world. The archive then becomes a "tactical" tool, a term coined by Michel de Certeau in his book *The Practice of the Everyday* (1984), where he proposes the term as a counterpart to the notion of strategy, but in a personal framework of the "everyday user" rather than in an institutional framework.

It is important to understand also that the archive has been "refigured" as Carolyn Hamilton, Verne Harris and Graeme Reid suggest:

> The archive is being added to and subtracted from, and is in dynamic relation with its physical environment; organisational dynamics are ever shifting; and the archive is porous to societal processes and discourses (Hamilton et al., 2002, p. 7).

It is then important to be aware of the gaps in the archive. For instance, interaction between international art professionals and the local context could have been recorded with much more consideration. This interaction is largely missing from the archive because they were established in a personal interaction and not as a planned programme.

Using the approach of doing a textual analysis, I have examined various documents produced during the preparation and organising of the biennials and other activities of the art centre.

One gap was particularly difficult to fill: the voice of the spontaneous audience. As research conducted more than 3 years after, the spontaneous audience's voice cannot be heard. Few voice records in the archive gave me some insight of this audience, but they are also the voices of those who dared to take the microphone in public.

In order to address the gaps in the archives I have used the strategy of conducting interviews with artists who have done a residency or research trips to Lubumbashi as part of a biennial commissioning project, as a way of gaining deeper insight into peoples' participation in the programmes and to address issues not recorded in the currently configured archive. I interviewed Dorothee Kreutzfeldt (who worked with Picha in 2009 and

2010), Ângela Ferreira and Bodil Furu (who worked with Picha in 2013). My attempt to interview the two curators during the time of the research was not successful as one was unavailable for many months for family reasons and the other was busy at the time with exhibitions. However, the research has covered a lot of their writing on the experience of curating, including the one in Lubumbashi, in many books, articles, conferences and interviews. I believe through these forms I was able to engage their thinking, but also as people who worked quiet closely with them throughout the implementation of these projects, in turn I was able to gain more insight of their curatorial concept which has been useful in writing this thesis.

1.4. Chapter outlines

This research is structured into four chapters:

Chapter One: Historical background of the Lubumbashi biennial and Picha art centre. This chapter will provide an overview of the context of the creation of both the biennial and Picha. It will analyse the needs of such an event, the institutional framework in which it operates, the strategies used to get international visibility and the emergence of a particular discourse on this international positioning.

Chapter Two: Lubumbashi on the global art map, and global art on the Lubumbashi map: from the curatorial concept to its implementation in the local landscape. This chapter will examine the two international guest curators, Njami and Dyangani Ose's curatorial concepts Ose, and their materialisation in the exhibitions. Both concepts were conceived around the idea of rethinking the urban landscape. I will then question the implementation of their concepts in the particular context of Lubumbashi.

Chapter Three: Creation in context: the commissioned projects by international artists for *Rencontres Picha, Biennale de Lubumbashi.* This chapter will focus on commissioning projects and will analyse the process of the creation by international artists. I will look at

their particular interests and how the production of their artworks created relations and raised issues in the local context.

Chapter Four: The local reception and the international geopolitics. This chapter will analyse the reception of the local audience and how the experience of the biennial shaped the positioning of Picha as an art centre involved in arts worlds' exchanges.

1.5. Terms used

This research borrows terms and concepts from various fields such as philosophy, anthropology, art history, politics and management. Those terms could have a particular meaning that differs from one field to another or from one context to another. The reader should also be aware that some of the terms are used metaphorically to give a sense of ideas developed in a different language or informally. The research is not located in the area of cultural policy and creative economy. Although the financial aspect of the organisation of the biennial has been addressed in the next chapters, the analysis of the impact of the case studies in the policy making and the local economy would have required a completely different approach and extend the scope far beyond the limit of this research report,

Chapter I

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE RENCONTRES PICHA, BIENNALE DE LUBUMBASHI AND PICHA ART CENTRE

> Picha a été, et c'est à la fois son avantage et son inconvénient, inventée par ceux qui en sont les premiers consommateurs. Elle venait remplir un manque, combler un vide. Mais ce vide, ressenti par les fondateurs de la biennale, était-il partagé par le plus grand nombre ? Le sentiment qui a préludé à la mise en œuvre de la biennale n'était-il pas élitaire et réservé à quelques uns, dont le niveau de connaissance et d'expérience excédait le cadre lushois ? Et le fait qu'il n'existe – contrairement aux initiatives étatiques – aucun intermédiaire entre les producteurs et les consommateurs pouvait-il suffire à faire de cette manifestation quelque chose d'endogène ?[7] (Njami, 2012, p. 12)

This assertion of Njami's in his curatorial statement of the 2010 *Rencontres Picha, Biennale de Lubumbashi* highlights both the specificity of the project run as an independent initiative, and the challenge to include the biennial in its context by linking local public needs with concerns of the art world. In this statement he describes a triangle between the "producers" of an art event, usually the state or the city, in providing frameworks and infrastructure to develop the art scene, the "consumers" who are the artists and citizens and the "intermediary" who are the organisers of the event, biennial directors usually appointed by the "producers". In the case of Picha, the three roles seem to mingle into one: artists being in some instance the producer, the intermediary and the audience of the event.

Expanding on Njami's idea, one could say the status of "consumer", combined with the status of an initiator or "producer", gives the artists the legitimacy to define insightful guidelines to the project and appears as an opportunity offered by this format. On the other hand, the absence of an institutional umbrella of a pure "producer", such as a state, city or

[7] "Picha was, and that is both its advantage and its disadvantage, invented by those who are the primary consumers. It had to complete a lack, to fill a void. But this void felt by the founders of the Biennale, was it shared by the greatest number? The feeling that heralded the implementation of the Biennial was it not elitist and reserved for a few, whose level of knowledge and experience exceeded the framework of Lubumbashi? And does the only fact that there is not - in contrast to state initiatives - any intermediary between producers and consumers, make this event something endogenous?" My translation.

other public institution, raises the problem of the sustainability of the project. Such a producer would have brought more resources and at the same time could have defined a different vision. To this first dichotomy between consumer/producer, Njami adds the tension between local context and an event named "biennale" which claims an openness to the world, as a global event.

In this chapter, I want to relate the background to the project. In so doing I want to unpack the double position of consumer and producer that Njami points out, complicating this by describing how this double position is the principle within which Picha became established. I also want to unpack the conceptual framework of "grassroots globalisation" - as described by anthropologist Arjun Appadurai in his text 'Grassroots Globalization and the Research Imagination' (2000) - to analyse this project - and show how it provides a space to reflect on Picha's complex position in relation to the art world at large within its geographical context.

1.1. Historical background

Tracing the genesis of Picha is hard, as this name can refer to many different realities that are interconnected but have different histories. In the introduction of this research I have presented briefly the histories of the biennial (first edition in 2008) and the art centre (founded in 2010). They are my case studies and could be considered as two main components of a larger dynamic. A third component is a legal entity named Picha ASBL in 2009[8] , which carried both projects during the time, 2010 – 2013, I am focusing my research on. There were two ways of reconstructing this dynamic. One was to conduct interviews with the stakeholders such as founders of the organisation, artists involved in projects, partner organisations and audiences, and the other is to try to reconstruct a dismantled archive of the dynamic by gathering materials of the different projects organised from 2010 to 2013, especially those which were funded and have produced materials in the process of writing proposals/producing communication material/writing reports. The interview model could have been an interesting one, but would have also raised many other questions about

[8] The founding members of Picha ASBL are: Sammy Baloji, Patrick Mudekereza, Rosemary Tshawila, Tresor Makonga, Aimé Kalenda, Rosa Spaliviero and Alexandre Mulongo. They are both part of the team that organised the first edition of Rencontres Picha the year before. Gulda El Magambo and Douglas Masamuna didn't subscribe to the foundation of a new legal entity.

the legacy of Picha today, as the art centre and the biennial are now operating under two different legal entities. Given that this narrative can also change from one stakeholder to another, and my position of running one of its components after the split of the organisation does not give me enough distance to work through that diversity. I therefore chose to focus on the second approach as a way of unpacking the archive.

The first apparition of the name "Picha" was in a document written at the end of 2007 (Vicanos Club, 2007). The document was produced after meetings held at Halle de l'Etoile, the French cultural centre of Lubumbashi, by Douglas Masamuna (video artist), Sammy Baloji (photographer), Gulda El Magambo (photographer) and myself. The name "Picha" (image in Kiswahili, coming from the English word "picture") came to replace, in the earliest version of the document, the name "djicho miandjiko" (meaning more or less "writing with the eye"). The first versions of the document were intensively shared and commented among the participants of the meeting through emails during Douglas Masamuna's fundraising trip to Paris in December 2007. The document was a proposal for an event named "Recontres de l'image de Lubumbashi – Picha!" or in short "Rencontres Picha". The use of "rencontres" and not "festival" is inspired by the Rencontres de Bamako. Sammy Baloji and Gulda El Magambo participated in the 7th edition of Rencontres de Bamako (from 24 November to 23 December 2007) and both received important awards that year[9]. The word "biennale" was used only once in this document, as an adjective for the event that was intended to happen every second year and not as the format of an art exhibition. The first version of the document was produced after the professional week of the 7th Rencontres de Bamako. The focus on image in this project also recalls the Bamako event, with one major difference: besides the photo and video art workshops and exhibitions, there was a cinema screening programme as part of the main programme. The poster advertised these three components clearly: "photo, art vidéo, cinema"[10].

[9] In 2007, Sammy Baloji and Gulda El Magambo both received the Fondation Blachère award (Rencontres de Bamako, 2011) and Baloji also received the *Afrique en créations* award (Africultures, 2007)

[10] It is important to note other events created by photographers exhibited at Rencontres de Bamako such as Addis Foto Fest (founded in 2010 by Aicha Mulineh) and Gwanza, Harare month of photography (founded in 2000 by Calvin Dondo).



Figure 1: Poster of the first edition of the Rencontres Picha, Biennale de Lubumbashi in 2008

The 2007 document presented Rencontres Picha as an event hosted by Vicanos club which is described as an "association created in 1993 by young lushois (inhabitants of Lubumbashi) to present the endogenous vision of their realities through artistic creation and organisation of cultural events."[11] (Vicanos Club, 2007). As expressed here, Vicanos club aims to be a local organisation open to show its productions to a broader audience, including an international one. The name "Vicanos" is a contraction of two words in Latin: "vicus", meaning "village" and "noster" meaning "our" and could be translated as "our village" (Vicanos Club, 2005).

The use of the Latin to name the collective in the early 1990s could be seen as a part of the founder's openness to the world. He was, at that time, studying in a Catholic school in Lubumbashi[12]. This reference to the village, emphasised by the logo of the collective representing a flying hut, could be seen as a cliché of a certain perception of the local in an African context. However, the idea behind the name showed the possibility for the collective to host a variety of activities such as comic workshops, video productions, and music and theatre performances, as representative of the many activities/professions in a village. Vicanos as a creative village gained a certain level of recognition in the early 2000s, and some of the members started professional careers as artists or cultural actors, made possible by both access to local funding and connections with the international art scene.

The second apparition was the 2008 project Rencontres Picha organised is a hybrid of this collective through the organisation named "Halle de l'Etoile ASBL", a non-profit organisation under Congolese law in charge of programming for the Halle de l'Etoile, the French cultural centre. Even if it was legally independent, this organisation is under the supervision of Hubert Maheux, then French cultural attaché in Lubumbashi. The organisers of the 2008 Rencontres Picha were members of both the Vicanos Club and the Halle de l'Etoile ASBL[13].

[11] My translation of « L'association est née en 1993 de la volonté de quelques jeunes lushois de présenter une vision endogène de leurs réalités par la création artistique et l'organisation de manifestations culturelles. »

[12] The fouding members of Vicanos club, also named afterwards "collège des fondateurs" in the constitution, are all former pupils of Imara School, a Catholic school for boys. They are: Douglas Masamuna, Michel Kabangu, Christian Kapungaila, Sammy Baloji and Ange Olivier "Auda" Alombong. In 1993, the year of the creation of the collective, they are between 13 and 15 years old.

[13] At the time of the project, Gulda El Magambo is the President of Halle de l'Etoile ASBL, Patrick Mudekereza is the administrator and Sammy Baloji and Douglas Masamuna are members. The organisation was dissolved in 2013, leaving its responsibility to a team on individual contracts with the French embassy.

In many respects this project was a response to Njami's advice to Baloji and Magambo in 2007 in Bamako to push Congolese political leaders to develop this emerging art scene[14]. This advice was not answered exactly as suggested, as the initiative was taken by the artists themselves. The momentum was described by Magambo, in the Vicanos Club jargon called Sponge, as "*Pipol, tu* do !", "let's do [it?], guys[15] (Baloji & Mudekereza, 2012).

The first edition of Rencontres Picha was about this ambition of developing the local art scene. In the document, it states the project aims to:

> create a major event in the city of Lubumbashi, which aims to give local artists greater visibility (through the diffusion of audiovisual and photo artworks) in order to stimulate and professionalise local creation by organising workshop, training and encounters with local and international professionals or specialists[16] (Vicanos Club, 2007).

This statement locates the aim in the local context, the international exchanges being an opportunity for training and professionalisation.

An overview of the first edition of Rencontres Picha, as described in the Vicanos Club's report, can give an understanding of how this objective was implemented (Vicanos Club, 2009). The 10-day event was under the theme "image en puissance" describing a potential power of the emerging visual image art scene. It had six different components: a photo workshop, photo exhibitions, video art screenings, cinema screening, cinema competition

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[14] « Vas voir tes dirigeants politiques et demande-leur de se bouger au niveau culturel maintenant qu'ils ont des représentants ! » (Baloji & Mudekereza, 2012). « go to see your political leaders and ask them to push the cultural sector now they have valuable representatives », my translation.

[15] Spongué or sponge is the jargon used among Vicanos club members mixing Swahili, French and English. In the phrase "Tu do!" the first word is the Kiswahili for let's or we and the second is English.

[16] « Créer un événement d'envergure dans la ville de Lubumbashi, qui vise à donner une plus grande visibilité aux artistes locaux (par la diffusion des œuvres audiovisuelles et photographiques) et qui permet de stimuler et professionnaliser la création locale par l'organisation d'ateliers de formation et de rencontres avec des spécialistes ou des professionnels locaux et internationaux ». My translation.

and professional encounters. The photography workshop was run by Marie-Françoise Plissart, a Belgian photographer, with nine participants all from Lubumbashi.

The exhibitions were in four different venues and showed the work of six Congolese photographers: Sammy Baloji, Gulda El Magambo, Wa Kazadi Sikasso, Simon Mukunday, Jean Mbuyu and Baudouin Bikoko; six other African photographers: Mauro Pinto (Mozambique), Calvin Dondo (Zimbabwe), Andrew Tshabangu (South Africa), Serge Sita Valloni (Congo Brazzaville), Saïdou Dicko (Burkina Faso) and Bruno Boudjelal (Algeria); and two from Europe: the French Jérémie Bouillon and Marie-Françoise Plissart.

Video art was not so common in the local art scene. The programme presents 11 artists with a majority of European artists (the French Robert Cahen, the Belgian Mathias de Groof, etc.), a few Congolese such as Petna Ndaliko and Africans such as Berry Bickle and Heeten Bhagat (both from Zimbabwe).

The cinema, however, presents only an African programme with a very strong Congolese component (21 out of 35 films). Four Congolese directors were present and 43 screenings were organised, including three open air ones.

The cinema competition open to Congolese filmmakers received 30 applications, and a jury awarded *Le Rallye d'Hélène* (22', 2008) by Chouna Mangodo the prize in the documentary category, *Préjugés* (22', 2005) by Horeb Bulambo in fiction and *Mamy Wata* (6', 2005) by Franck Mukundayi in animation. The filmmakers live respectively in Kinshasa, Goma and Lubumbashi.

The professional encounters gathered representatives from eight organisations and collectives working in cinema and audiovisual productions in D.R.Congo. The meeting helped to formalised a network named "Réseau national de l'audiovisuel". Unfortunately the network has never organised any activity since this first gathering.

In brief, the focus on the local art scene, understood as the Congolese art scene, was respected in the programming and side events. The event served as a platform for training,

professionalisation and networking. In this sense, the "major event" was organised in the vein of what Njami called a process of "instrumentalising the event" in his interview with French critic Cédric Vincent (Njami, 2008). For Njami, an art event in Europe can allow itself to be "just an exhibition", while in Congo and by extension in Africa, where this kind of event does not have a "structural foundation", it should be a "permanent workshop filling diverse roles: a school, an information hub, a platform, etc" raising awareness of the work of the local art scene (Njami, 2008). So the considerable amount of money spent should raise awareness of the work of the local art scene, develop new professions, stimulate new ways of presenting artworks, and, more broadly, allow Africans to appreciate the contemporary creation. In chapter two, I explore how Njami's approach influenced the shaping of Picha, in the elaboration of the complementary roles of the art centre and the biennial. He describes two characteristics to be understood as complementary: the event that he calls "the firework" or the "sound box" on one hand and, on the other, the nurturing, invisible machine whose everyday work-in-progress and political game create a sustainable tool and give the event its essence.

It is also interesting to see how Njami describes, in the same interview, Bamako Encounters, the African Photographic Biennial in Mali, as a "hazardous transplant" ("greffe hasardeuse") to castigate how events are completely conceived in Europe and exported to Africa, as an organ coming from one body aiming to play a vital function in another body. This criticism of an event he had been curating for four editions from 2001 to 2007 should be read both as a questioning of Western (especially French) imperialism in Africa, and also a strong will to move towards new dynamics raised in Africa by Africans, the dynamics he describes as "l'Afrique par elle-même" (Africa by itself), paraphrasing a 1998 exhibition produced by Revue Noire journal and co-curated by Njami[17].

This commitment to reveal how Africa operates by itself, or in Magambo's words "*Pipol, tu do!*", could explain why Njami agreed to curate three art events organised by local organisations in 2010, after leaving his position of artistic director of the Bamako

[17] The exhibition held at the Maison Européenne de la Photographie in Paris in 1998 was based on the Anthology of African photography published by Revue Noire. A specific catalogue was published in 2003 as part of the Belgian iteration of this travelling exhibition with works by Seydou Keita, Malick Sidibé, Samuel Fosso, Mthelethu Methetwa, Azaglo, Sakaly… (Bouttiaux et al., 2003).

Encounters: The triennial *Salon Urbain de Douala* (SUD) organised by Marilyn Douala Bell and Didier Schaub, co-founders of Doual'art in Cameroon; the Luanda triennale organised by the Angolan artist Fernando Alvim and the Sindika Dokolo foundation and the Rencontres Picha, organised by the newly created Picha ASBL organisation. All three were organising their second edition that year.

He wrote a single review of all of them in a text published on the online version of the Revue Noire (Njami, 2011). In this poetic description, he expressed how he was touched by the organic and endogenous character of these three events in terms of how they reflected the notion of grassroots globalisation: their sense of freedom, the way passion and energy covered the lack of infrastructure, expertise and/or funding, the focus on the popular expression of social reality and citizenship, and the moment of sharing, the "communion", that resulted from those experiences.

Another important characteristic he pointed to describe these 2010 events is the way they stayed unadvertised and "didn't reach the ears of the nerve centre of the great art world mafia" and dared to follow their path beyond the yoke the art world has imposed and the rules it has defined, and "make an organic and endogenous event, a moment that is not only to be inscribed in an international art agenda, between Venice and Kassel, but a moment for (locals) first" (Njami, 2011). The two words "organic" and "endogenous" used in the original French version of the text, cover a meaning close to the English word "grassroots", that does not have a direct equivalent in French. I could then argue that Njami is describing events that are inscribed in the concept of grassroots globalisation as coined by Appadurai, which I unpack later in this chapter.

This way of defining priorities: first the locals, then the international art world, described the chronological path from the first to the second edition of *Rencontres Picha*, moving from a self-curated local art event to an international event by a prestigious guest curator. In that edition, the name has also changed to add the agreed formula "Biennale de Lubumbashi", as many cities aiming to reach the Venice/Kassel agenda used to brand their art events. The use of the word "biennial" or "triennial" is not innocent, even if it doesn't guarantee by itself the visibility expected. It expresses a clear ambition of being taken seriously, as

Dominique Malaquais said, “Before to be considered as a respectful country, one needed to build a stadium, today, one needs a biennial” (Malaquais, 2008). But in these three cases, the ambition is not held by the state or any public bodies, but by artists and cultural operators playing, and in a way expanding, their role in their societies. What Njami, after Jacques Rancière phrased as being “ordinary citizens”(Njami, 2013; Rancière, 2002).

Picha art centre was established in 2010 to fulfil its local mission. It was also the year the Rencontres Picha became much more international. The physical space opened on 1 August, two months before the launch of the second Rencontres Picha. A few months before that, however, Picha was already invited, as one of the eight other “African art centres”[18], to the exhibition *GEO-Graphics: A Map of Art Practices in Africa, Past and Present* at tbe Bozar Centre for Fine Arts in Brussels, with the contemporary component curated by Koyo Kouoh (Kouoh & Bouttiaux, 2010). This has an important meaning in terms of international recognition.

Picha art centre is hosted in a house in the city centre of Lubumbashi. It is the house where the two main founders of Picha ASBL lived, namely Sammy Baloji, the president of the organisation, for a few months, and myself, the general secretary, from the same date 1st August 2010 - until 2012. The renting contract specified its use for the “exclusive purpose of private accommodation” (Centre d’art Picha, 2010). The occupation of the space as a public venue was not official and no sign was advertised from outside the art centre before 2013. But it was well known in the art milieu as a place of gathering and its programme consisting of exhibitions, screenings and talks is open to the public.

So from 2010 to 2013, Picha was developing two programmes: the Rencontres Picha, Biennale de Lubumbashi and the Picha art centre. The differences and similarities of the two programmes are stated in the 2013 report as follows:

[18] The other African art centres were: Centre for Contemporary Art CCA Lagos, Rotonde des Arts (Abidjan), Doul’art (Douala), Centre for Contemporary art in East Africa CCEA (Nairobi), Raw Material Company (Dakar), Darb 1718 (Cairo), L’Appartement 22 (Casablanca).

> The art centre is inscribed in the logic of promoting local artistic dynamics and their embeddedness in the local social fabric while the biennial aims to create an alternative framework for the expression of international contemporary creation with a focus on African artists in order to dialogue with Lubumbashi audiences, by showing, in their city, artworks whose sensitivity is related to the burdens of the spaces where they live[19]. (Picha, 2013)

1.2. Grassroots globalisation as theoretical framework

In this description, both tools play a similar role towards locally embedded and alternative frameworks of expression. They could then be seen as an expression of what Arjun Appadurai calls the grassroots globalisation:

> A series of social forms has emerged to contest, interrogate, and reverse these developments and to create forms of knowledge transfer and social mobilization that proceed independently of the actions of corporate capital and the nation-state system (and its international affiliates and guarantors). These social forms rely on strategies, visions, and horizons for globalization on behalf of the poor that can be characterised as "grassroots globalization" (Appadurai, 2000).

Appadurai's text entitled *Grassroots globalization and the research imagination* was published in the journal Public Culture, which he co-founded in 1988. As mentioned in its footnote, it draws on two previous texts that are useful to read to have a clear view of his statement on this topic: The Research Ethic and the Spirit of Internationalism (Appadurai, 1997) and his initial Globalisation and the Research Imagination (Appadurai, 2000). It also largely expands the arguments of his seminal publication Modernity at Large (Appadurai, 1996), especially in the understanding of the global flux and the concept of locality.

[19] My translation of « Le centre d'art s'inscrit dans une logique de promotion des dynamiques artistiques locale ainsi que leur inscription dans le tissu social, alors que la biennale entend donner un cadre d'expression alternatif à la création contemporaine internationale avec un focus sur les artistes africains en permettant au public de Lubumbashi d'interagir, dans leur ville, avec des œuvres dont la sensibilité répond aux charges des espaces où ils vivent ».

The text is a critique of the way research institutions in the Western context, and especially in the United States, develop their understanding of globalisation through a parochial system of assessment where the new and the relevant knowledge is always "complied with the protocols of pedigree" of relations to "prior citational world and an imagined world of specialised professional readers and researchers" (Appadurai, 2000, p. 10) . This way of conducting research creates a growing disjuncture between the "globalisation of knowledge", based on the perspective of the social sciences in the West, and the "knowledge of globalisation", developed by scholars from many parts of the world who are working with very limited resources but are "profoundly involved in the social transformation sweeping their own societies" (2000, p. 14). One explanation of the parochial attitude of the research in the West and the gap it creates, that he also calls "apartheid", is the idea of a research ethic in the West that "detach morality and political interest from properly scholarly research" (2000, p. 14). For Appadurai, the genuine way of internationalising is to question the armature of the research ethic with scholars from other societies and traditions by opening a dialogue on what conventions and what communities of judgement and accountability are relevant in pursuing new knowledge.

This concept of grassroots globalisation by Appadurai is mainly conceived as a claim for more openness in the Western research world. But it is not limited to the research itself, as he recognises that academic are "only small part of this world-generating optic". He expands it to what he calls "symbolic analysts", a concept that includes "artists, journalists, diplomats, businessman and others". Grassroots globalisation can then be used a conceptual tool to question the art world and the way it can be confined in the production of its own "first-order, even parochial, world pictures". A connection with notions from the art field is clearly pointed out as a tool for the pushing towards a better understanding of grassroots globalisation. Appadurai calls for "the work of imagination", connected to the creative faculty, that could also become a critical part of the everyday life, and a form of labour.

> On the one hand, it is in and through the imagination that modern citizens are disciplined and controlled, by states, markets and other powerful interests. But it is

> also the faculty through which collective patterns of dissents and new designs for collective life emerge (Appadurai, 1999, p. 231)

In the course of this research, I could not find any use of the word 'grassroots' in the context of any biennial, despite many claims suggesting the need to have an event that emerged from the local setting or from the people. The closest idea I found was the 7th Sharjah biennial articulated on the concept of "belonging", expanding the identity and space to a more open notion of migration of cultures and ideas, which is closer to Appadurai's idea of diasporic public sphere and modernity at large than to the notion of grassroots globalisation. The biennial culture seems to avoid any reference to 'roots', preferring connections and flux from many locations. As cultural sociologist Pascal Gielen noted, the curatorial statements of biennials are intensively referring to, and as I quoted before, they are "flirting" with concepts coined by Gilles Deleuze, such as 'rhizomes', 'networks', 'nomadism' and 'escape routes'. The idea of 'roots' contained in the word "grassroots", becoming a suspect concept to use, or at least to complicate in 'rhizomes'. In its denial of any particularism of the local for the benefit of the connectedness, and even sameness, the biennial culture positions itself in a claim of universalism that could begin to understand the art experience as something easily duplicated from one place to another.

Biennial culture is then an important space of the "field of cultural production" to use the title of the book by Pierre Bourdieu (1993). The theory of field he has elaborated on in previous publications and applied to the art world is defined as a structured space with its own functioning laws of functioning and its own independent forces. This paradigm of cultural production is inscribed in a long history of the Western art world becoming autonomous from for example the state or religion. The question could then be: if there is one single "field" for cultural production or if, as art historian Hans Belting suggested, the global turn in contemporary art has moved from a single art world to a multiplicities of "art worlds". Answering this question by considering only biennial culture, one should notice a common understanding of the existence of one single field, stressed by the flow of curators and artists building content from one biennial to the other, the same funders or city policies, the same instances of legitimating such as the biennial foundation (Biennial Foundation, n.d.) and the International Biennial Association (IBA, n.d.). The denial of particularism is also

expressed by the little interest given to biennials described as regional or local such as the Biennale d'art Bantou Contemporain in Libreville and Kinshasa (Sylla, 1998) which is often ignored on the list of African biennials.

The aim of Picha's projects to create an "alternative frame for expression" for international contemporary artists could follow this description of imagination in the context of grassroots globalisation. In other words, Picha's projects try to create what Appadurai calls "the critical dialogue between world pictures" (Appadurai, 2000, p. 8). Reading Njami's question on the dichotomy between the local and the global approach in this prism raises the question of the disjuncture between the local and the global. As Appadurai states, there are complex links between events proximate in time even when they are significantly separated in space. That complexity explains the agency of projects that operate an "optical reversal" (2000, p. 8) and shows that "the more marginal regions of the world are not simply producers of data for the theory mills of the North" (1999, p. 230). That notion of geographies also needs to conceive areas and geographies in new ways. According to Appadurai, "areas are not facts but artifacts of our interests and our fantasies as well as of our needs to know, to remember, and to forget" (2000, p. 8). This way of defining locality in terms of intentionality is useful to understand in order to grasp the complexity of the flux in the grassroots globalisation, also coined as "production of locality" (1999, p. 231). Locality is then seen as a material, social and ideological project that is "produced, maintained and nurtured deliberately" (1999, p. 231).

So one could argue that the foundation of Picha as an arts festival aiming to give visibility to the local art scene and to professionalise it through international exchanges (the 2007 project), as well as the transformation of Picha into a combination of a local art centre and a biennial (the 2010 project), don't express a Janus-faced agenda. It has moved the scope of an art collective struggling to get a voice in its own environment to an event and an art centre with a big international recognition. And that recognition itself gives it a voice to articulate a vision of the local.

Njami's second part of the question challenges the role of independent artists, cultural actors and simple citizens who substitute the state public body as the organiser of a major event. He wonders if the consumer/producer shift is enough to create a dynamic shared by the people, an "endogenous" dynamic.

There is not a clear translation for the word "grassroots" in French and the word "endogène" used by Njami seems to be the closest one in this context. He is then asking if the internationalisation of Picha could be placed in a grassroots momentum or if it stays an elitist globalised project, just adding a new iteration in the mushrooming of biennials and art centres around the world.

Appadurai's concept of grassroots globalisation is also coined as "globalisation from below", which he differentiates from globalisation "from above", as defined by corporations, major multilateral agencies, policy experts, and national governments. This last phrase is constructed in apparent allusion to the expression "history from below", popularised by the British historian Edward Palmer Thompson, and which expresses the attempt to build the historical narrative from the perspective of the common people rather that the big names or the leaders (Thompson, 1963).

One could legitimately ask if the founders of Picha are representatives of the "common people", as Njami pointed out; their openness to the world by participating in biennials, conferences, etc. could suggest the contrary. But the question could also be seen as how the project aimed to raise the local voice in the international art world, and did so bypassing both the neoliberal agenda and state public decision-markers' projects. This is what Appadurai calls the "predatory mobility of unregulated capital" (and) the "predatory stability" of state institutions (2000, p. 6).

It is interesting to see Njami's articulation of the question, not saying "masses" or "from below" or "bottom-up" but asking in terms of the consumer becoming the producer. This distinction was made in the criticism of the mass communication research by Stuart Hall in his text Encoding / Decoding (Hall, 2001). Hall refers to the terms "producers" and "consumers" to replace what mass communication researchers name "sender" and

“receiver”, restraining the “receiver” in a passive role of recipient. He describes a circuit, non-linear, of interactions where the “consumer” is also playing a role in the meaning, by the act of decoding the message. The consumer is then able to choose between three positions: following the dominant-hegemonic meaning as conceived by the producer, negotiating a meaning by confronting its own local conditions, or politically being in opposition to the position he is intended to take by the message (2001, pp. 137–138).

Seen in that frame, Njami’s question is pointing out the possibility of an even stronger agency by the consumer becoming producer of the message, or here the artist/citizen becoming the organiser of an art event, to create a space of participation and emancipation from cultural hegemony[20]. Then the distance between their role as artists and the common people is not an obstacle but an opportunity, and they are what the Italian theorist Antonio Gramsci coined as “organic intellectual”, to describe the intellectual who has emerged from the common people to play a role among the people and not above them.

> The mode of being of the new intellectual can no longer consist of eloquence, which is an exterior and momentary mover of feelings and passions, but in active participation in practical life, as constructor [and] organizer, as "permanent persuader", not just simple orator (1971, pp. 9–10).

The action of the organic intellectual defined by his impulsion from and participation of the common people instead of the diverse public or financial instances could also push to develop international exchanges in an alternative way. He then fits the characteristic of grassroots globalisation.

It is also important to differentiate grassroots globalisation from notions like “glocalisation” coined by Neil Brenner (Brenner, 1999). Both terms describe the process of global flux that is not regulated by the nation-state but rather by more local powers. They both entail local territorial reconfiguration in parallel to globalisation in an up-down perspective. But that reterritorialisation in the glocal concept is also pushed by public bodies and finances, such

[20] Antonio Gramsci coined the notion of « cultural hegemony » to describe how states use cultural institutions to maintain power in capitalist societies.

as the policies of cities. So defined, glocalisation is not a counter-hegemonic approach to, nor a political criticism of globalisation. It is just describing a relative fixed spatial configuration in the deterritorialisation driven by globalisation.

One of the notions that illustrates the idea of glocalisation, and which is very interesting to look at in the context of the research, is "world cities", a concept which is also used by many cities as an argument for biennial projects.

> World cities are conceived as the territorially specific urban places within which various production processes that are crucial to globalisation occur, above all those associated with the producer and financial services industries upon which transnational capital is heavily dependent. (Brenner & Keil, 2006, p. 436).

It is then easy to understand the criticisms of the role of biennials in a claimed counter-hegemonic art world, Elena Filipovic, Marieke van Hal, and Solveig Øvstebø argue in their introduction, *Biennalogy,* to *The Biennial Reader:*

> For some sceptics, the world biennial has come to signify (…) a western typology whose proliferation has infiltrated even the most far-reaching parts of the world, where such events are little more than entertaining or commercially driven showcases designed to feed an ever expanding tourist industry (in other words, something not far from the art fair or Disneyland) (2010, p. 13)

To this very provoking criticism, one could also add notions such as "festivalism" (Schjedahl, 1999) and "biennial syndrome" (Clement, 2008). The word festivalism appeared in the New Yorker article by Peter Schjedahl castigating the "spectacularisation" of art in referring to the 1999 Venice Biennial curated by Harald Szeemann (Schjedahl, 1999). This expression has been coined, in a comparison with Stendhal syndrome by the American curator Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev in an interview with Tracey Clement where she is reviewing the 2008 Sydney biennial. The Stendhal Syndrome was named after the experience of Marie-Henri Beyle also known by his pen name Stendhal, a 19th century French writer who travelled to

Florence and became dizzy, disorientated and completely overwhelmed by art (Clement, 2008). In this interview Christov-Bakargiev said:

> I use the term to describe the situation where there is a biennale in almost in every city, so the good aspect of the Biennale Syndrome is of course that contemporary art gains a space in daily life, which in many ways was a utopian ideal, actually of the very radical 1960s, on the other hand, however, I think it is an expression of a crazy sort of disease of a consumer culture, where everything has been consumed. (Clement, 2008)

Addressing the issue in relation to North-South imbalance in the definition of art history, Anthony Gardner and Charles Green state:

> The still emerging field of biennial studies needs the perspectives of the South to complement – and even more, to challenge – those of the North, and to staunch the relegation of these major exhibitions and cultural histories to the outer edges of supposedly 'global' art histories (Gardner & Green, 2013).

A more articulated pro/contra discussion on globalisation and the biennial is the one between the curator Okwui Enwezor and the art historian George Baker. In his text with the evocative title *The Globalisation of the False: A Response to Okwui Enwezor*, Baker rejects the relevance of biennials in different contexts, even in the South and even in traumatised post-war or post-totalitarist regions. He rather describes them as "tools to cover over ruptures, to spread amnesia, to deny the magnitude of historical loss through a false euphoria of plentitude" (2010). For Baker, the problematic link between biennials and the celebration of a model of globalisation based on Americanisation and financialisation of the world reduces the capacity of the model to operate in post-conflicts burden regions. For Baker, the biennial culture is based on a false idea of what is the world, largely influenced by the neoliberal forces in Western countries, so regarding the world through those lenses is a process of both a "globalisation of the false" and a "falsification of the world" (2010).

There is, however, one common ground in the discussion between Baker and Enwezor that opens perspectives and also creates an interesting link with the concept of grassroots globalisation. It is the possibility of the “counter-hegemonic spectatorship” (), a new spectator whose gaze upon the mottled screen of modernity is counter-normative, and whose empowerment can give new perspective to the biennial, more towards the concept of Carnivalesque than the concept of Mega exhibition.

Chapter II

Lubumbashi on the global art map and global art on the Lubumbashi map: from the curatorial concept to its implementation in the local landscape

> You could say that precariousness was, in some instances, the organising principle, that creativity and imagination were necessary tools for knowledge and change. Art was a social act, made with and for its audience. They were experiences that proposed an exercise in participation, abolishing narratives of author versus spectator, organisers versus participants, turning all of us, curators, organisers, members of the press, local authorities and audiences alike, undeniably, to […] use Glissant's words, into the protagonists of a 'poetics of relation', a one-sole-social composition. (Dyangani Ose, 2014, p. 109).

In the quote above Elvira Dyangani Ose expresses her experience of curating the Rencontres Picha, Biennale de Lubumbashi in 2013. By mentioning the notions of precariousness, social commitment and participation, she describes three important aspects of the two editions of Rencontres Picha, Biennale de Lubumbashi (2013) I am studying. As she points out, the process was realised in a blurring of responsibilities and roles, and understanding the organisation is not dissociated from understanding the relationships and social commitment.

In this chapter, I want to analyse the process of organising the 2010 and 2013 editions of Rencontres Picha, Biennale de Lubumbashi by following how the curatorial concepts were specific to the context of Lubumbashi.

I will use the concept of the "poetics of relation" (Glissant, 1997) as a guide toward an alternative understanding of the encounter between the international art world and grassroots art initiatives.

1. Appointing a curator: "poetics of relations" rather than by CV; trust rather than by contract

An important moment in the process of organising a biennial is the announcement of its curator. In the case of Picha, this process was rather unorthodox because it followed a different route to the normal one of wide consultation but instead followed the route of a single motivation and a

biography of the chosen curator. This strategy presents a set of arguments as to why a particular curator ends up in a particular biennial at a particular moment.

For Rencontres Picha, Biennale de Lubumbashi, there was no press release or announcement nor any biography of Simon Njami and Elvira Dyangani Ose as part of the communication sent to the press or the public by the biennale office. The presentation of 2010 Rencontres Picha, Biennale de Lubumbashi, also used as a funding proposal, has no mention of a prior exhibition by Simon Njami. For the third edition, there is only the contact of Elvira Dyangani Ose, with both her personal email address and her affiliation to Tate Modern where she was working from 2011 to 2014.

One could argue that these biographies are easy to find on any search engine and there is no need to spell this out given their international positions and reputations relating to their work in contemporary art and in Africa, yet this could also be seen to express a lack of a systematic analysis in the process of appointing the biennale curator[21]. By looking at the nature of each of their work referred to in articles, there is a clear imbalance between those published by Western institutions such as Tate Modern, Centre Pompidou or Frankfurt Museum of Contemporary Art and those from independent art institutions in Africa. Not referring to their biographies could then be seen as a way of emphasising the familiarity already created between them and the project rather than their connection to the international art world.

An analysis of the way they got involved in the project can give a sense of those two aspects. As I explained in chapter one, Njami was involved in the project from the beginning as the instigator of the idea. His relationship with Baloji and Magambo was created in Bamako in 2007 and the Photoquai, the photo biennial in Paris organised for the first time by Musée du Quai Branly in 2007, also co-curated by Njami, was crucial also in negotiating the role of a curator in such an event and the necessity to have an emancipated space for a creation from Africa. Another meeting took place in Johannesburg in 2009, during a dinner with me about his exhibition *US* co-curated by him and Bettina Malcomes (Goodman Gallery, 2009). Most the meetings were informal and were only loosely communicated with the Picha members via email.

Elvira Dyangani Ose was co-curator of the 2010 Salon Urbain de Douala, with Koyo Kouoh, under the artistic direction of Simon Njami (Doual'art, n.d.). Hubert Maheux, who was the head of Halle de l'Etoile, the French cultural centre in Lubumbashi from 2003 to 2008, was then running the French cultural centre in Yaoundé and the Alliance Française in Douala. Through this exchange both Simon

[21] There is no bio of Simon Njami in the archive, but there is a short bio of Elvira Dyangani Ose sent in 2011, a few weeks after she agreed to curate the event.

Njami and Hubert Maheux saw Dyangani Ose as the right person to continue the artistic direction of the Rencontres Picha, biennale de Lubumbashi, and convinced the Picha team to appoint her[22]. The notification sent to her in March 2011 states the decision was made by the Picha team based on the strong recommendation of the previous curator.

In both cases, there is an assumed "poetics of relation" and trust rather than an assessment of the previous major exhibitions curated by the two artistic directors. This way of choosing prefigures the way curatorial roles have operated, as a partner in understanding a context and together creating an experience that responds to it. The capacity to understand and mingle with the Lubumbashi was as important as the curator's visibility and fame. Beyond the biography that everyone knows or could access, the relationship created between Picha and each of the curators was the basis of the work done together.

Furthermore, there was no contract signed between Picha and each curator. This fact is also an expression of that relation of trust and the breaking of the formal way of working between a curator and an institution. In a way, there were no clear expectations of a specific outcome other than doing together, the Magambo's phrase "pipol, tu do" (Let's make this happen, guys)(Baloji & Mudekereza, 2012)[23] as described in the previous chapter. There was neither a predefined role nor a separation of roles. That can also be seen in the shift between the naming of each responsibility. Baloji was in some documents referred to as "president", in others "co-director" with me; the curator, also named "artistic director" is sometimes referred to as "commissaire general", using the term used for his position at Rencontres de Bamako. The responsibilities are clearly less important than actions and what everyone could bring to the collective project.

2. The fragmentation of identities of the curators and claim for social commitment

The exhibition *Magiciens de la terre* (1989)[24] constituted a changing paradigm in opening the contemporary art scene to artists from various regions of the world such as Africa (Steeds & Lafuente, 2013). This new paradigm is what has been called by the German curator Hans Belting the

[22] The first contact with Elvira Dyangani Ose is made through Maheux in June 2010.

[23] The phrase is used in the 2010 catalogue to express the momentum of founding Picha, without having funding or a clear idea of what it requires to organise a biennial.

[24] Exhibition curated by Jean-Hubert Martin at Centre Georges Pompidou and Grande Halle de le Villette (Paris, France) from 18 May to 14 August 1989. It showcased 100 Western and non-Western contemporary artists and was advertised as "la première exposition véritablement internationale", the first really international exhibition.

"global turn in the art" or the "Global Contemporary", characterised by moving from an all-encompassing "art world" to the multiplicity of "art worlds" (Belting et al., 2013). If this helped to reduce what Okwui Enwezor called the "myopia" ruling curators' judgement before the 1990s (Enwezor, 2007), one could argue that it didn't really bring plurality in terms of institutions of legitimation, as I will develop in the last chapter of this research.

Since then two different trends carry this openness of the art world toward undocumented spaces: the rise of international curators originating from those regions involved in biennials and mega exhibitions in various cities and museums in the West, described by art critic Michael Brenson as the "curator's moment"[25] (Brenson, 1998), and the mushrooming of biennials in regions previously considered as peripheral, described by Ute Meta Bauer and Hou Hanru as "shifting gravity" [26](Bauer & Hanru, 2013).

In the context of Africa, figures such as Okwui Enwezor, Simon Njami, Elvira Dyangani Ose, Bisi Silva or Koyo Kouoh are now present in the international art scene curating biennials and mega exhibitions all over the world while biennials such as Dak'art, Bamako Encounters, Marrakesh and more ephemeral ones such as Cairo and Johannesburg have been considered as markers of the presence of Africa in the international art. But the two trends are interconnected as the African biennials usually appoint those African curators involved in Western institutions, seen as valuable mediators for both the Western museums and mega exhibitions interested in opening the scope of their artists, but also for the African projects that want to position themselves in the international art world.

This necessitate a critical discussion of the biographies of the two curators. As I mentioned above, they didn't have a great importance in the choice, but their biographies are important to understand the duality of their careers as part of both trends of the "curator's moment" and "shifting gravity".

The French newspaper Le Monde in 2015 published a biography of Njami entitled "Simon Njami, Africain mais pas que" meaning "Simon Njami, African but not only" (Azimi, 2015). The article describes both his commitment to Africa and his relationship with Europe: his birth in Lausanne in Switzerland in 1962, his life in France as a teenager passionately reading Boris Vian and Jean-Paul Sartre, and his ambitious project *Revue Noire* launched in 1991 with architect Jean-Loup Pivin. The

[25] Michael Brenson in the article The curator's moment is reviewing the conference on international art exhibitions held in August 1997 with 15 curators at the Rockefeller's Conference and Study centre in Bellagio, Italy.

[26] The publication Shifting Gravity edited by Ute Meta Bauer and Hou Hanru is produced after the World Biennial Forum held in Gwangju, South Korea in 2012.

article also related his choice to "be African", claiming this identity without allowing anyone to confine him to it. His major projects are inscribed in his plea for more consideration of African contemporary art such as Africa Remix at Centre Pompidou in 2005[27] and Divine Comedy Museum für Moderne Kunst in Frankfurt in 2014. He has also curated many projects and biennales in Africa such as Bamako Encounters from 2001 to 2007, Lubumbashi biennale in 2010. The article states as well that he "earns a portion of his income" from his advisor role for foundations based on the continent such as Fondation Donwahi in Abidjan and Fundacâo Sindika Dokolo in Luanda. He is very engaged in keeping a connection with the continent because he believes in the capacity to "move things from inside". This last trait, according to the journalist, distinguishes his approach from Enwezor's.

Elvira Dyangani Ose could also be described in the same terms than Njami, of being "African but not only". Her work as a curator specialising in Africa has been recognised by her appointment as the curator of International Art at Tate Modern from 2011 to 2014, with the duty of developing Tate's holding for art from Africa and its diaspora. As related by Tate's website, she was born in 1974 in Cordoba, Spain (Tate Modern, 2011). Her Spanish citizenship is often mentioned together with her origin from Equatorial Guinea, as in the press release of the Göteborg International Biennial for Contemporary Art, GIBCA, which she curated in 2015. She has curated in institutions in Spain such as Centro Atlántico de Arte Moderno, CAAM, (2004–2006) and at the Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo (2006–2008) and the *Arte Invisible* programme at ARCOmadrid (2009-2010). She has published and lectured on modern and contemporary African art and has contributed to art journals such as Nka and Atlántica. She was until recently a lecturer in Visual Cultures at Goldsmiths, University of London (GIBCA, 2015). Many of her projects involve African artists such as Nicholas Hlobo, Tracey Rose, Moshekwa Langa, Zanele Muholi and Mikhael Sutbotzky, African-American artists such as Carrie Mae Weems but also non African artists such as Alfredo Jaar, Lara Almárcegui, Ábalos & Herreros and Ricardo Basbaum.

The status of being from the African diaspora plays an important role in their projects and is part of many of their reflections. In her introductory essay to the exhibition Erase Me from Who I Am at CAAM, Las Palmas in 2006, Dyangani Ose starts by "for someone like me it is always a question of identity" (Dyangani Ose, 2008), pointing out the notion of "expérience vécue du Noir" coined by Frantz Fanon (1952, pp. 88–114), to express how confronting it was for her to grow up in a black minority culture but, at the same time, to receive an education "that in some respects was contrary

[27] The French journal did not notice that this exhibition is in fact a travelling exhibition which started at Museum Kunstpalast de Düsseldorf (Germany) in 2004 and then travelled to the Hayward Gallery in London at the Centre Georges-Pompidou in Paris, in 2005 to the Mori Art Museum in Tokyo and the Moderna Museet in Stockholm in 2006 and the Johannesburg Art Gallery from 24 June to 30 September 2007(Njami et al., 2007).

to that which she should have received at the source" (2008, p. 95). Similar questions are raised by Njami when he explains the ambivalence of the "*postcolonial* artist" (his emphasis), and as is usual in Njami's statements probably speaking also about himself, as a "salutary division" of his identity. For Njami, it is important to consider this ambivalence as part the way one describes himself to the world, and doing so is a "schizophrenic exercise", implying to face inward and outward in a "Janus-like attitude"[28] (Njami, 2013a). He illustrates this statement by using the example of the Negritude movement in the 1930s founded by African intellectuals in Paris, and quotes Jean-Paul Sartre in his preface to Léopold Sédar Senghor's *Anthologie de la Nouvelle Poésie Nègre et Malgache* (1948):

> The herald of the black soul has attended white schools, in accordance with the pitiless law which refuses all weapons to the oppressed except those that they steal from the oppressor; the clash with white culture has made his negritude pass from immediate existence to a reflected state. But at the same time he has more or less ceased to live it. In choosing to see what he is, he divides; he no longer coincides with himself. (Sartre, 1948)

The title of the Le Monde article, "Africain, mais pas que", is echoing the reflections above on the multiplicity, even contradiction, in the identities of Njami as well as Dyangani Ose. This aspect of their identity places their work in the context of what cultural studies theorists Stuart Hall and (Phillips, 1994) Paul du Gay call fragmentation and hybridity (Hall & Du Gay, 1996). Therefore, they operate in a particular situation by negotiating in quite complex political games where the act of representation is part of a challenge of exploring those fractured identities.

In this context, it is interesting to see the opinion of Enwezor who sees the "discursive proximity to Western mode of thoughts" (2010) as an opportunity to be used as a tool for mediation between peripheral spaces and the international art discourse. According to him, this process can "develop a greater proximity to the institutional patronage of international artistic spheres but also to acquire and master its language, to harvest its surplus resources, and ultimately to position and promote the periphery as a genuine destination of artistic modernity" (2010). Using Appadurai's concept of "diasporic public spheres"(2010, p. 438), he describes the involvement of the diasporas in this mediation role as "strategies for entering and leaving modernity" (2010, p. 440).

In the discussion presented in the previous chapter, the American art historian George Baker answers Enwezor's questions on the role of a curator from the Diaspora to mediate a respectful encounter of cultures through an exhibition project (Baker, 2010). He castigates the "rapaciousness proper to the ascendancy of the global curator"(2010, p. 450) whose position as a mediator is

[28] Referring to Janus, the Roman god represented with 2 faces, one looking to the front and the other to the back.

erasing or neglecting the role of institutional critique and artistic autonomy in the non-Western context.

I could argue that in cases like Rencontres Picha, Biennial de Lubumbashi, the two aspects of the mediation by a global curator and a project shaped as an institutional critique could operate together. And this is the way the concept of grassroots globalisation, in its paradoxical phrasing, starts to open both ways of this tension. Thinking through that idea, one can see the diasporic curator not as a powerful messenger from the West, but as a companion whose "discursive proximity to the West" can be used as a reversed weapon to establish a decentered discourse by assuming the fragmentary aspect of the local gaze and evoking the partial aspect of the Western one. As Njami stated, "the strength and weakness of any gaze consists in being fragmentary" (Njami, 2013a).

3. Precariousness: the curatorial concepts and their implementation

In her introduction to the section on her experience in Lubumbashi, Dyangani Ose states that her experience in Lubumbashi is "a once-in-a-life-time experience in [her] career as a curator" but she acknowledges the difficulty to use her academic research rhetoric to give an unbiased description of this experience (Dyangani Ose, 2014, p. 108). This assertion from someone with her background as researcher and curator could surprise, but it mainly shows the limits of the globalised production knowledge to grasp contexts such as the one of the Lubumbashi Biennial. As Appadurai noted, the globalisation of knowledge is based on protocols and a particular ethic that somehow unable to cease conceptually an important set of practices around the world (2000). By following the implementation of the curatorial concepts for the two editions of Rencontres Picha, it is interesting to see how they deliberately deviate from a certain kind of modus operandi and are open to local modes of living and thinking, organisational models and fit the limited resources available.

3.1. The second edition

As stated in its project document, the second edition of Rencontres Picha, Biennale de Lubumbashi in 2010 started as a project to be inscribed in the double celebration of the centenary of the city of Lubumbashi, founded in 1910, and 50 years of the independence of the Democratic Republic of Congo (Young, 2012). Sixteen other African countries were also celebrating their 50 years of independence in the same year which gave the celebration a Pan-African dimension.

The framework developed by Njami was articulated around two elements: the "psychoanalysis of the history", as concept, and the "visual cartography", as methodology to implement that concept (Picha, 2010). The project was not only to celebrate and think of the past, it aimed, following the

psychoanalysis method, to find in the past forgotten events, irrational drives that still define the present and project a certain future to the continent. The idea was to remap Lubumbashi, through the installation of art works in the urban landscape, and transform it as "Africa in miniature" (Picha, 2010), where both the dreams and the disillusions raised in the 50 years of independence could be traced.

The main exhibition which resulted was an outdoors exhibition with 32 photos by nine artists: Adama Bamba (Mali), Pierrot Men (Madagascar), Kiluanji Kia Henda (Angola), Jellel Gasteli (Tunisia), Zineb Sedira (Algeria), Kiripi Katembo Siku (D.R.Congo), Dionisio Gonzalez (Spain), David Jimenez (Spain) and Mouna Karray (Tunisia). The photos were mounted in 2m X 3m large billboards installed all over the city following three routes namely Memory, Power and Neutral Zone (Picha, 2011). Besides the photo installations, video art screenings were organised in front of key buildings in Lubumbashi: the courtyard of Lubumbashi National Museum, the front of the Justice Court, the wasteland remaining of the neutral zone, the parvis of Sainte Marie church, the façade of the ruins of the old Kamalondo theatre for Black people. Six video art works were commissioned for the project: *Candle in Dark Life* by Berry Bickle (Zimbabwe), *La Nuit* by Gulda El Magambo (D.R.Congo), *Sacrédieu* by Heeten Bhagat (Zimbabwe), *Suite et Fin* by Dorothee Kreutzfeldt (South Africa), *Dieu voit tout* by Robert Cahen (France) and *Caméléon* by Douglas Masamuna (D.R.Congo). The videos were part of Picha's *Lettres et Images* project produced from 2009 to 2010 which invited video artists to interact with local writers' texts. The writers were selected among the *Libr'écrire* (meaning "free writing") collective.



Figure 2: poster of the 2010 Rencontres Picha, Biennale de Lubumbashi



Figure 3: Screening of the video Candle in Dark Life (2009) by Berry Bickle in front the Justice Court, during the 2010 Rencontres Picha, Biennale de Lubumbashi



Figure 4: Billboard in Zone Industriel in Lubumbashi during the 2010 Rencontres Picha, Biennale de Lubumbashi, with the photo entitled Transit 2009 by Kiluanji Kia Henda

Four other exhibitions were organised as “cartes blanches” in more formal exhibition venues: *The Beautiful Time* exhibition of the photo series *Mémoires* by Sammy Baloji, produced by the Museum of African Arts (New York) was presented on the outside wall around the courtyard of the Lubumbashi National Museum; in the Dialogues gallery, the South African photographer Andrew Tshabangu curated a show by two Kenyan photographers, Davis Kabala and Kevin Irungu, organised with the support of Goethe Institut Nairobi; the French Cultural Centre Halle de l’Etoile hosted an exhibition of video art works from the French *Fonds National d’Art Contemporain*, the national collection of contemporary art; the School of Fine Art hosted a screening of videos from the collection of the Dutch Institute for Media Art (Nederlands Instituut voor Mediakunst-Montevideo).

There was also a video workshop run by the One Minutes Foundation based in the Netherland for 10 video artists from Lubumbashi and a professional meeting with the Lubumbashi artists and cultural producers.

By putting billboards and video art screenings presented to a spontaneous audience without further explanation, not even a caption, the main part project then becomes an invitation to a collective psychoanalysis around places with historical or social histories of tension in the city. This invitation to rethink the space could be seen as a session of free-association, the psychoanalysis technique which consists of suggesting, without any logical connection, an image or a word from the therapist’s proposition as a method to explore someone’s own unconscious mind. This way of experiencing an art exhibition fits this description of the free association by the British psychotherapist and essayist Adam Philips: “It would be like to live in a world in which everyone was able - had the capacity - to free-associate, to say whatever came into their mind at any given moment...like a collage” (Phillips, 1994). So the collage of a photo or a video artwork in the urban landscape triggers more collages of free-association in people’s mind.

There were very few reactions gathered from the audience about this experience. The Belgian architect and historian Johan Lagae, who also provided research material for the project, explained in a text entitled “Curating the city of Lubumbashi, DR Congo. On the “positionality” of architectural history in a postcolonial context” (Lagae, 2013) his personal feelings during the screenings. He was touched by the relationship between the engraved Latin words in the Justice Court building “Jus Justitia Lex” echoing in Berry Bickle’s video, *Candle in the dark life*, the apparition of words like “guerre” (war), “mort” (death) or “liberté” (freedom) written during the filmed performance of the writer Séraphin Bukasa. That created in him the image of a ghost hovering above the Justice Court in the same way the image was moving on top of the engraved letters (Lagae, 2013). In the same way, the video, the Echo, in which a young female Egyptian restaged a scene from Youssef Chahine’s

famous 1969 film *El Ard* which addressed the political situation in Egypt that has not improved for more than 60 years became something physical for him in this square with high buildings around it and "resonated in an unsettling way with the local Congolese situation, where one easily gets encapsulated by the feeling that nothing really seems to change" (Lagae, 2013).

Presenting this experience afterwards, Njami no longer referred in the publication to this notion of psychoanalysis that he had used about the project before. He possibly felt his responsibility being less one of a clinical therapist than as a participant in the experience itself[29]. The audience of the publication is also less aware of the context; focusing then on the artistic experience without providing clues to the context could reduce the understanding of the narration.

Going the same way as Dyangani Ose's statement quoted in the beginning of this chapter, he describes how a biennial in Lubumbashi, and in Africa in general, should be based on the human dimension of, to use Enwezor's description, all "the proposals and the disposals" , the curatorial approach developed to reach an audience who are not aware of the discourse and practices of contemporary art. That human dimension is a critical element of the event after its creation, that is not a "plan de développement theorisé" (theorised development plan), but a "surgissement" (sprout out) without a predefined schema (Njami, 2012). The biennial project is then located at the dividing line between the public and the private realm where a market or the courtyard of a house could be transformed into the manufacture of a particular aesthetic. He knows, having been there, that Picha art centre opened a few weeks before the launch of the 2010 edition, and is a literal manifestation of the blurring of the private and public space as it is also the house where Baloji and I were living. For Njami, it is crucial to expand the understanding of such an organisation, by considering and valuing its informal character, for "informal" is not "chaos". These alternative forms can be open hybrid spaces where artists could present their subjectivity without mediation (Njami, 2012).

Being the host of this event and participating in the conceptions of its critical thinking has been an important momentum for the first project run by the Picha art centre. From January 2011, the centre started to organise events, and stopped being just a gathering place and an office. These events were announced monthly as "programation mensuelle" (monthly programme) presented on flyers and sent via email to 500 recipients, both artists and potential audiences.

In 2011, the main project run by the art centre was a monthly event named *Close Openings / Vernissages fugaces* (meaning "fleeting openings" in French). Despite its bilingual name, the event

[29] He notes in the text the necessity to avoid being in the "posture of the prophet that separates someone from those with whom he wants to mingle".

was dedicated to local artists and local audiences. It was an installation in a neighbourhood where an artist lived and which was usually also the artist's working space. For an afternoon, neighbours and other audiences were invited to come and experience the link between the space and the neighbourhood, and so the open studio became an extension of the outside public space. For each event, there was a leaflet explaining the concept of the installation and a short biography of the artist. Each event ended with a party, sometimes a concert with a local musician. Twelve artists hosted a Close Opening / Vernissage Fugace event: "artiste conceptuel" (artiste conceptual) Jean Katambayi at Gécamines cite, perfomer and visual artist Trésor Malaya in Kalubwe, four female rural painters from Makwacha village, painter Bertin Mbaya in Ruashi, sculptor Daddy Tshikaya in Bel Air, video artist Eddy Mayaya in Gambela II, painter Costa Criticos in TabaCongo, sculptor Pecho Kamunga in Matshipisha, photographer Georges Senga in Makutano, painter Eddy Hetu in Bakoa, visual artist Ghislain Ditshekedi and "maquettiste" (model maker) Richard Kaumba at Mampala place.



Figure 5: Installation and performance by Jean Katambayi in his family compound for the close opening project in 2011

This project kept the flexibility of the "Hors les Murs" concept by Njami, and continued activating spaces. It also helped to start a dialogue with artists who then became active participants of the life of the art centre. As intimacy and everydayness were key elements of the celebration of their practice, the same values helped to shape their relationship with the art centre that was not seen as

an institution, but as a place of encounters, a home. The same feeling prevailed in the rest of the programme: Libr'écrire collective of writers organised meetings and "cartes blanches" (public readings of a selection of texts by authors followed by discussions), artist talks, screenings, concerts, etc. This feeling was accented by the fact that the place was actually a home that I continued to occupy alone after Baloji established himself in Belgium at the end of 2010. I stayed there until mid-2012.

In 2012, the project "Soirées thémathiques" would trigger more collaboration between artists who were invited to create an installation together at the art centre on different themes expressed in Kiswahili such as Congo ya Lumumba (Lumumba's Congo) and Kichua saa français (Re-imagining French language). The project was stopped after four months to dedicate more energy and resources to the upcoming edition of the biennial held in 2013.

3.2. The third edition

From 2010 to 2012, Picha grew in recognition with invitations to conferences such as Condition Report in 2010 in Dakar (Kouoh, 2013), Where we Meet in Berlin (IFA, n.d.) and the European Union Meeting in Kinshasa in 2011. The success of the 2010 biennial was notable for that recognition even beyond the art community.

In this context, Dyangani Ose, who was appointed artistic director of the third edition in March 2011, became in November of the same year curator for International art at London's Tate Modern with the mission to develop its African collection. The Tate's announcement of her appointment stated she was the "curator of the 2012 Lubumbashi Biennial" (Tate Modern, 2011).

More than the two first editions, the third edition scheduled for October 2012 was in the spotlight of the international art world. But Picha was still working in a precarious condition. As for the previous editions, Picha had no guarantee of any funding at the beginning of the project. The word "biennial" suggests prestige but did not have the finances that usually go with such an event.

The biennial's funding structure was relying on the philanthropy of the Lubumbashi-based Belgian mining magnate George Forrest, who announced in June 2012 that he would not fund the event which we think was because he was no longer running the company which had been taken over by his son.

This table shows the budget of the two first editions of Rencontres Picha and the ratio of the participation of George Forrest.

Edition of Rencontres Picha, Biennale de Lubumbashi	Total Direct income in USD	Estimation of the total budget (including costs directly by partners)	Contribution of George Forrest in USD	Percentage of Forrest's contribution
First edition in 2008[30]	49 930	74 754	25 000	50%
Second edition 2010[31]	140 000	170 000	50 000	36%

Forrest's contribution represented half of the income of the first edition and more than a third of the second edition. The expansion of the scope of the event becomes difficult without this key funder.

Even though it shows a radically different reality, it is useful to compare those numbers with the income of eight important biennials in different part of the world to see how challenging the adhesion to the status of biennials could be and what expectations it could bring from institutions like Tate Modern who usually operate in their framework.

The table below is compiled with research done by the Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts (IKSV) and shows the budget of one edition of eight biennials held between the end of 2009 and early 2011 (2013).

[30] Rapport financier Picha 2008

[31] Budget bataille Picha 2010, done just before the event to fit all the expenditure in the available fund. The real budget could be slightly different.

Biennial	Budget in EUR	Conversion to USD[32]
Istanbul (6th)	1 900 000	2 508 000
Berlin (8th)	3 085 000	4 072 200
Manifesta (8th)	3 187 863	4 207 979
Liverpool (6th)	4 890 000	6 454 800
Sydney (17th)	7 066 600	9 327 912
Gwangju (8th)	7 277 000	9 605 640
Lyon (10th)	7 780 000	10 269 600
Sao Paulo (29th)	16 162 600	21 334 632

The 2010 edition of Rencontres Picha, Biennale de Lubumbashi had a budget 18 times smaller than the 6th edition of Istanbul Biennial, and 152 times less than the 29th Sao Paulo one, both held in the same year. The ambitions could not be the same even if we all had the label "biennial". But the little budget was made even less by the withdrawal of the main sponsor and made the organisation of the event very difficult.

Dak'art, the African biennial of contemporary art achieved a hit of 1,2 million euros in 2006.

In July 2012, a letter from the organisation signed by Dyangani Ose, Baloji and me was sent to all the partners and participators announcing that "after serious consideration and discussion, we have decided that, for financial reasons alone, we have little choice but to postpone this edition of the Rencontres Picha - Biennale de Lubumbashi" and announced it for October 2013 (Baloji et al., 2012).

Despite the postponement, some events were still organised during the week planned for the professional week of the third biennial in 2012, which Dyangani Ose and her assistant Elise Atangana joined us for in Lubumbashi.

One event was the photographers' master class initiated by Simon Njami and organised by Goethe Institut Johannesburg which brought 10 photographers and five curators to Lubumbashi. The photographers were: Musa Xhumalo (South Africa), Thabiso Segkala (South Africa), Harandane Dicko (Mali), Fatoumata Diabate (Mali), Macline HIen (Ivory Cost), Goerges Senga (D.R.Congo), Mimi Cherono (Kenya), Patrick Wokmeni (Cameroun), Alaa Mohammed (Sudan) and Mario Macilao (Mozambique). The curators were: Simon Njami, Chris Dercon (Belgium, then director of Tate Modern), Frédérique Chapuis (France), Akinbodé Akinbiyi (Nigeria/UK) and Katrin Peters-Klaphake (Uganda/Germany). Another event was the exhibition *Depara, Night and Day in Kinshasa, 1951-1975*

[32] I have made the conversion with the annual rate EUR/USD in 2010 (OANDA, 2017)

produced by Revue Noire and exhibited at Halle de l'Etoile, the French cultural centre of Lubumbashi (Depara et al., 2011).

This gathering without celebrating the third edition of the Lubumbashi biennial was also an opportunity to brainstorm together about the biennial and its relevance in our context. A conference was organised at Park Hotel, where the guests were accommodated. The theme was *Why (not) a biennial? A family meeting.* Simon Njami and Elvira Dyangani Ose argued for the relevance of such an event in Lubumbashi. Dyangani Ose presented her intention to do a one-year-long biennial ending in a celebration of the work done all over the year and transforming the format into a "a workshop of workshops" (Dyangani Ose, 2012).

3.3. Concept of the 2013 event

In fact, the idea of having a family meeting with artists, organisers, funders, curators, press and audience, in order to redefine the way the event could be relevant and challenge its lack of funding fits the concept of Enthusiasm that was chosen by Dyangani Ose as the theme of the third edition of Rencontres Picha, Biennale de Lubumbashi.

The concept of "Enthusiasm" was coined by the French poststructuralist philosopher Jean-François Lyotard in his book *Enthusiasm: the Kantian critique of history* (Lyotard, 2009). According to Dyangani Ose, the project explores how "contemporary art practices have brought about the dissolution of Lyotard's paradigm of audience and participation" (2012). The project also aims to blur the line between art and non-art audiences by its incursion into the everyday experience. Therefore, it "features projects whose propose is to challenge, redefine and reshape our understanding of the urban space and the public sphere, by means of the social relations by which this space is produced" (2012). In the way it relates social relations, as attempted in many biennial and art events around the world to a particular local space, this concept is claiming a grassroots globalisation process.



Figure 6: Poster of 2013 Rencontres Picha, Biennale de Lubumbashi

George Van Den Abbeele who translated Lyotard's book in English also wrote the entry "enthusiasm" for the *Lyotard dictionary* publication (Sim, 2011). He describes enthusiasm as a "sense of the sublime" that spontaneously captures the attention of the people and leads to action:

> For Lyotard, the feeling of the sublime is therefore as political as it is aesthetic, and it comes to the fore especially in those historical moments that do not follow the scripting of what Lyotard elsewhere calls grand narratives. Such unsuspected and unpredictable 'events' open up or deliver (*Begebenheit*) the potential for vastly different political/historical outcomes by starkly revealing the incommensurability between phrases, whence a 'strong' sense of the sublime (Van Den Abbeele, 2011, p. 67).

This attention to "unsuspected events" rather than grand narrative as aesthetical and political triggers in society was the basis of Dyangani Ose's curatorial statement. In Condition Report: Symposium on Building Arts Institutions in Africa, a collection of essays from the symposium held in Dakar in 2012, she refers to this approach of the potential of art in society as "poetics of the infra-ordinary"(Dyangani Ose, 2013b) as an invitation to look in the habitual, the everyday as a potential of an activist narration.

This concept, elaborated before facing the lack of funding issue that led to postponing the event, resonated during the year before the new date, and was at some moments a recall of where the project could go, what it could bear and what it should assume as its position.

The idea of organising a "workshop of workshops" to be celebrated at the end was then implemented. "Workshop" was seen in the broader sense of all collaborations and discussion platforms between different guests or among people in Lubumbashi. The workshops were conceived to mirror the activities of the art centre and expand them by the intervention of international guests. The initial project planned four workshops: "A City" (architecture), "AtWork/Lettera27" (Literature), "History in Progress" (Photography) and "An experimental TV" (video). The literature workshop involved among others Chimurenga magazine although the video workshop with Daniel Miracle could not happen because of lack of funds. The architecture workshop was held in May 2013 with the Belgian art historian Johan Lagae from Ghent University and Marilyn Douala Bell, president of Doual'art (Cameroun). It serves as a starting point for the gathering of "parcours individualises" (personal routes) in the city of Lubumbashi by artists, activists and friends of the art centre. The photo workshop was conducted by Dutch photographer Andrea Stultiens. It was placed in frame of an existing project started in Uganda (Andrea Stultiens et al., 2011). It gathered 10 photographers and archivists who imagined different ways of using and activating a photographic archive. Both workshops were presented at the Fine Art School during the professional week of the third edition in

October 2013. Another outcome of this workshop was Johan Lagae and other workshop participants's guided tour which took the form of storytelling presented to guests of the professional week. This tour focused on the "power route" which Njami defined in the 2010 edition and so created a link between the two editions.

Two commissioning projects also built relationships and drew from the local collaborations and exchanges: *Entrer dans la Mine* (entering the mine) by the Portuguese artist Ângela Ferreira and *Code Minier* (Mining Law) by the Norwegian artist Bodil Furu. The third chapter of this research is dedicated to these creations and their impacts.

The conference "Art as social experience" was held at the *Centre des Jeunes de Lubumbashi* (youth centre), in Katuba, a popular neighbourhood. The conference attracted many cultural producers, researchers and directors of art centres such as Kwaku 'Castro' Kissiedu from Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) in Kumasi, Ghana; Sylvia Gicha from Kuona Trust, Nairobi, Kenya; Sara Hallett from the Bag Factory, Johannesburg, South Africa; Robina Nansubuga from 32 Degrees East, Kampala, Uganda; Yves Sambu, Collectif SADI, RD Congo; and Jürgen Bock from Associação Maumaus – Centro de Contaminação Visual, Lisbonne, Portugal. During the two days conference, each participant presented his organisation and its relationship with the social context of their environment.

The programme presented five photo exhibitions. These were organised in more formal venues, chosen thematically to echo the Lubumbashi context and be accessible to a large audience.

The series *Une vie après la mor*t by the Congolese photogragher Georges Senga, also present in the the two preceding editions, as a workshop participant in 2008 and as artist in 2010, opened the event in the vestibule of Lubumbashi City Hall. Starting the event with an official ceremony in this venue was an important political act. This series was a diptych of archival photos of Independence and Pan-African hero Patrice Emery Lumumba and the re-enactment of the same attitudes by his contemporary lookalike Kayembe Kilobo. Lumumba was killed in 1961 in Lubumbashi but no mausoleum or statue in the city recognises his legacy[33], the main square of the city centre is named after Moise Tshombe and features a monumental sculpture in tribute to this former secessionist president who was implicated in his assassination. This photo series shown for the first time in this venue bore a political dimension that echoed two other exhibitions of the biennial: South African Guy Tillim's *Avenue Lumumba* at the Lubumbashi National Museum explored the link between a colonial architecture that looks abandoned and the memory of independence heroes whose names, such as Lumumba, are given to the avenues. Using a controversial approach in his *mise en abyme*

[33] There is, however, an important avenue named after Lumumba, joining the airport to the city centre.

("image within an image/story within a story") of the colonial discourse, the video work *Spectres* by the Belgian Sven Augustijnen, screened for the first time in Congo during the event, followed the Belgian colonial officer Jacques Brassine in his obstinate attempt to relieve the Belgian government of responsibility in the death of Patrice Lumumba. These three pieces on Lumumba occupied an important role in the event and fuelled discussion among the audience.

The urban landscape was a second important issue in the works shown. The video screening of *How to perceive the landscape* produced by VideoBrasil and curated by Carlos Avila ended the event at Picha art centre, while South African Sabelo Mlangeni's *Ghost Towns*, *Black men in dress* and *Country girls* was shown in two rooms of the art centre. Dutch photographer Laard Buurman showed *City Junctions* at Halle de l'Etoile, the French cultural centre of Lubumbashi; South African photographer Michael Subotzky and British artist Patrick Waterhouse's collaboration *Ponte City* was installed in the courtyard of the fine art school, Katia Kameli's *Already installed* François-Xavier Gbré's *Mes Tissages Urbain* was shown at the Fine Art School.



Figure 7: Installation Ponte City by Mikhael Subotzky in the court of the fine art school during the 2013 Rencontres Picha, Biennale de Lubumbashi

On the last day of the professional week, a "causerie de cloture" (closure talk) happened at the Picha art centre. As part of the advertised public programme, it gathered the organisers, curators, artists,

press and also the audience to give feedback on the five days of the programme. It was a continuation of the conference W*hy (not) a biennial? A family meeting* organised one year before.

Two interventions were noticeable during this discussion. Mikhael Subotzky presented the experience as one of the most special in his life because of, and not despite, the instability, lack of funding and late planning. For him the instability of the organising structure, echoing physical instability of some of the exhibition venues and the negotiation of different kind of gatherings (rencontres in French) moved the experience of *Rencontres Picha, Biennale de Lubumbashi* from the spectacle of an event to the experience of the everyday. For him, instead of looking for perfection as one usually does with an institution that has solid sources of income to promote the arts, one has to integrate the instability and use it. He used the example of how he was still mounting the three banners of the Ponte City installation at the fine art school when the audience arrived. Suddenly he had to negotiate in an unstable and unplanned way which, in the end, created a setting more related to everyday life than to a formal biennale event (Subotzky, 2013).

Taking a different position, Marcel Yabili, who described himself as part of the "normal audience", deplored the fact the event didn't reach a large public and was more an exchange among the artistic community (Yabili, 2013). For him, this analysis is not a critique of the organisation but a consequence of an inherent difference in approach to contemporary art. He expressed the need to continue the relationship for a longer time. He wanted a permanent venue for international exhibitions (Yabili, 2013). Saying this in the art centre meant he was thinking of something bigger that could accommodate and operate for the "large public", probably something like a "contemporary art museum". This statement could be seen as taking a counterpoint from Subotzky's instability claim. It shows that in Lubumbashi, as everywhere a biennial is organised, there is what Caroline Jones calls, a "desire for world picture" (Jones, 2010).

That shows how short a one year-long biennial plan to create relationships and connections can be, even if one can assume that the energy and resources put into the professional week was not comparable with that put into the rest of the year. One should also notice that the presentation of the outcome of the workshop didn't occupy a very important place in the event in terms of space, budget and visibility despite the intention of seeing the professional week as a "workshop of workshops". This concept can be seen as both a logistics answer to the lack of resources and an intellectual disruption of the very idea of the biennial culture.

Dyangani Ose's answer points out an interesting aspect of the challenge that could not be answered in a five day celebration nor in one year of a series of workshops and residencies of artists who come for one-week long stays. It is a life commitment, an interesting challenge that becomes something

else than the profession of the independent curator, but a “mode de vivre” (way of living) and a commitment to a particular society (Dyangani Ose, 2013a).

In the same way *Close Openings/Vernissages Fugaces* responded to the second edition of the biennial, Picha art centre started, in collaboration with Visual Art Network South Africa, at the end of 2013 the Revolution Room project that “sought to explore the ways in which artists and residents co-lead projects that mediate and reflect concerns of people, history and place” (Middernacht et al., 2017).

4. **Participation: the agency of the mobile curator and the shaping of an institution**

In the 16th issue of the Open journal entitled “The Art Biennial as a Global Phenomenon”, the sociologist Pascal Gielen describes the motives of organising a biennial as a mix of cynicism and opportunism (Gielen, 2009). For him, global curators are “joyful riders” who understand the rule of the present-day art world and follow the trend of themed organisations dealing with social activism, political criticism or promoting ecology while receiving funds from public institutions and neoliberal companies that build the system their themes are criticising (2009).

It can be interesting to discuss the opportunistic and cynical dimension of the decision to name the event a biennial or the choice of a famous curator from the African diaspora, but this discussion is not really productive as it could lead to isolate the discourse to militancy for the local context which could deny the evidence of the globalisation. However, it seems to me very helpful to analyse the themed exhibition in its potential to shape not only the funding structure as suggested by Gielen, but the essence of an organisation.

Gielen points out the ambivalence of curatorial concepts that use terms like those from the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze: ‘nomadism’, ‘escape routes’, ‘non-hierarchical forms of organization’ while carried by strong institutions like museums that offers them the neutrality and the disconnectedness of their “inviolable white cubes”. He calls that tendency “flirting with Deleuze” (2009).

In the case of Rencontres Picha, Biennale de Lubumbashi, there is no similar flirting with Rancière or flirting with Lyotard, which both the setting and the content were triggered by but quickly moved away from to create their own ideas. Picha art centre played a role in rephrasing the concepts during the event and then into small longer terms projects which are not part of the global white cube, but start to speak to neighbours, as citizens. By doing so between two biennials, it started to “produce locality” and to challenge, using these ideas, the homogenised concept of how to experience art and

what is its transformative potential. In this sense, Picha art centre was not “flirting with Deleuze”, but living in these concepts and trying to adapt them and articulate how they made sense in the context.

To complement that, the curators of the Rencontres Picha were led by motives corresponding to this description by curator and writer Paul O’Neill:

> Globally mobile curators embraced the biennial model as a vehicle for both validating and contesting what constitutes the international art world, in order to explicate non-Western artistic practices that have been traditionally pushed to the margins. For its curators, the biennial model becomes a newly progressive and productive space for bringing together an increasingly diverse, transcultural and global art world at a single location and time (O’Neill, 2012).

Those two momentums, one bringing the local to challenge the global and the other operating in the reverse way, needs a flexible organisation framework, ready to be challenged and rebuilt permanently, that Gielen calls “post-institution”. So those two trends become the expression of a “schizophrenic longing”, between on one side “the mobility, horizontal openness, curiosity and innovative drive of the post-institution” and on the other “a predilection is emerging for the local imbedding, for the collective memory and for the durability once offered by the institution”, as Yabili’s claim for a museum of contemporary art has suggested.

The biggest challenge then becomes how to move from the looseness of the experience to its integration to a historicity without hindering its potential and adaptability. How to benefit from the institution’s capacity to “remember and forget” (Mary Douglas, 1886) and still be open to every individual force to participate and give sense to the event. Or, to use George Baker’s words that I will unpack later, how to sustain “the counter-hegemonic spectatorship”?

Chapter III

Creation in context: the commissioned projects by international artists for *Rencontres Picha, Biennale de Lubumbashi.*

> Whereas recent scholarship acknowledges international events in the 1990s – such as DAK'ART, the Biennale de l'Art Africain Contemporain – as the source of a significant shift in contemporary African art and aesthetics, I would propose instead that it is in local initiatives led by artist collectives – against cultural narratives and policies proposed by national institutions – that one can find the genesis for change and experimentation within the arts (Dyangani Ose, 2014).

This chapter aims to continue the issues raised in the previous chapters about how a flexible form of a grassroots art institution can become a space of development and experimentation. Here I will focus on the artistic production. I want to extend the analysis of the three years of Rencontres Picha, Biennale de Lubumbashi and Picha art centre from 2010 to 2013 to the projects commissioned for the propose of the biennial to international artists and implemented in the context of Lubumbashi. For those projects, Lubumbashi offered the conceptual and physical material, the collaborations for the production but also the venue for display and the meeting with an audience. There are three main projects in that category: the *Lettres et Images* video art series presented at the 2010 edition which presented six video artists working from the texts of the Libr'écrire collective of Lubumbashi-based writers, the *Code Minier* work by the Norwegian artist Bodil Furu and the installation *Entrer dans la Mine* by Portuguese artist Ângela Ferreira. The two last are part of the 2013 edition of the biennial. I have interviewed three artists and have gathered material from the process in Lubumbashi that will nuture my reflection on how this artistic production was nourished in one way, and in another way, impacted on Lubumbashi's art scene and helped audiences from other contexts understand the city. For this purpose, my interest in the art works goes beyond aesthetic judgement and aims to capture how the art work operated in a specific context from conception to its presentation, by following the organisation in its grassroots interconnections. In that sense, the approach developed by Alfred Gell in his book *Art and Agency* (1998) is interesting to guide this process. In its premise, it considers the art work as produced in "spectrum of internationalities" by different agents of what he calls an "art nexus", "a domain in which `objects' merge with `people' by virtue of the existence of social relations between persons and things, and persons and persons via things" (1998). This approach is defined as anthropological rather than sociological, and wants to

emancipate the notion of the artwork as defined by institutions, to focus on the relations that are created by objects with or between people. If the premises seem helpful for my study but the methodology developed is quite heavy, as the Dutch art historian Caroline van Eck expresses, the methodology becomes at some point a "deceptively complicated jeu d'esprit" (Carolyn van Eck, 2008). I will stick to the premise in order to understand the role the production of the two editions of the Rencontres Picha, Biennale de Lubumbashi, plays as part of the nexus of the "poetics of relations" under which the event operated.

1. Art practices in Africa from "festival decade" to independent biennials

The term "festival decade" is used by the magazine Chimurenga to name the period from the late 1960s to 1970s in Africa that saw the emergence of festivals in many countries run by newly independent African states: the first Festival Mondial des Arts Nègres FESMAN (Dakar, 1966), the second one named Second World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture FESTAC (Lagos, 1977), and between them the Festival Panafricain PANAF (Alger, 1969) and the Zaïre 1974 festival organised in Kinshasa as a side event to the "rumble in the jungle" fight between Mohammad Ali and George Foreman in October 1974 (Malaquais & Vincent, 2015), REF. Looking at the implementation of their Pan-African rationale and their programme, Dominique Malaquais and Cédirc Vincent described the festivals as a "depository of modern ideologies on national culture" (2015). Except the last one which is mostly known for its musical component[34], all the festivals show an exhibition of masks and statuary. The participants were national delegates from their countries with the mission to represent their national culture. But behind the national ideology, one can also see the celebration of the presidential figures of the hosting countries: Léopold Sédar Senghor and its "Négriture" in Senegal, Mobutu and its "Authenticité" in Zaïre, Olusengun Obasanjo in Nigeria, etc. It is easy to understand that the framework is built more for the celebration of national and Pan-African identity, incarnated by the powerful president in place, than on experimentation and alternative art practices.

The case of Dak'art, the "biennale africaine d'art contemporain" is slightly different, even if it is part of these ideological filiations and organisational frameworks. The idea of the event came from the advocacy of Senegalese artists in 1989. They took the pretext of the Senegalese constitution that says that the head of State is the "protecteur des arts" (protector of the arts) and convinced Abdou

[34] Malaquais and Vincent find,however, a visual similarity between FESMAN,PANAF and Zaïre '74 in the fact that "A mask highlighted in the first two festivals, notably on stamps and pamphlet covers, found its way onto furniture designed for the luxury lounge at the heart of the "Rumble" stadium, where VIPs mingled before the match".

Diouf, then president of Senegal, to launch the biennial event as a continuation of Senghor's project of creating in Senegal a hub for African art (Harney, 2004). Since its inception in 1990, it is under the management of the Senegalese Ministry of Arts and Culture and its main award is named "Prix Léopold Sédar Senghor". As the Italian anthropologist Iolanda Pensa notes in her PhD thesis *La Biennale de Dakar comme projet de coopération et de développement*, Senghor's role in the arts was invasive (2011, p. 232). The State was choosing artists to promote to reflect its own Négritude ideology and the Ecole de Dakar didn't show a lot of freedom of expression or experimentation. After Senghor, when the whole policy was changed and the infrastructure closed, the vibrant momentum of art started in Senegal with artists as founders of independent spaces, integrating international networks and even conceiving the idea of the Dak'art biennial before leaving its management to the state. Pensa's assessment of what the state has done with this last project is rude: according to her, Dak'art is a "mediocre exhibition of contemporary art" (2011, p. 75).

Pensa's analysis joins Dyangani Ose's point of view of the difference between state organised projects and artist-run initiatives in terms of openness to experimentation. It is interesting to see how projects such as Agit'art in Dakar (Murphy, 2016) and Bessenge City in Douala (Doual'art, n.d.) or subversive publications like Chimurenga in Cape Town have positioned different practices both at the very local level and at the international art scene in a way that any state institution would hardly be able to do. The art projects commissioned by the two editions of Rencontres Picha, Biennale de Lubumbashi that I am studying are part of this trend of project under the impulse of artist-run initiatives.

2. The artistic projects of commissioned by Rencontres Picha, Biennale de Lubumbashi

2.1. Suite et Fin by Dorothee Kreutzfeldt and the *Lettres et Images* project

Lettres et Images is a project in the same vein of a previous one of the Vicanos club collective, named *Poèmes Filmés* (filmed poetry). The Vicanos club had many departments (in French "branches" (Vicanos Club, 2005)). One named "audiovisual" gathered video artists and another named "publishing" gathered writers and comic artists. The *Poèmes Filmés* project was transdisciplinary and crossed the two departments. It was co-directed by a video artist and a poet.

In the case of the *Lettres et Images*, there was a writers' collective working permanently in Lubumbashi and a group of international artists gathered for a workshop in June 2009 in which pairs of video artists worked in tandem with local writers.

The pairs were: Heeten Bhagat (Zimbabwe) and Fiston Mwanza produced the video *Sacredieu*, Berry Bickle (Zimbabwe) and Séraphin Bukasa produced *Candle in Dark Life*, Robert Cahen (France) and I

produced *Dieu voit tout*, Dorothee Kreutzfeldt (South Africa) and Maëline Lelay/Ramcy Kabuya produced *Suite et Fin*, Douglas Masamuna (D.R.Congo) and Ladislas Maliza produced *Cameléon*, Gulda El Magambo (D.R.Congo) and Sumba Maly produced *La Nuit*. The six projects produced are very different and reflect the variety of practice of the group of video artists as well as the styles of the writers. One project is emblematic of this approach in the way it interacts with filming and with the work of the collective: the video *Suite et Fin* by Dorothee Kreutzfledt.

The abstract written by the artist, which was summarised in the 2010 edition publication, presents the encounter between the artist, the urban landscape, the text and the collective of writers as a collaborative collage toward a production of a multivocal statement. By starting with the quote: "Everything starts as something you don't understand" by Dan Atoe, the abstract places the lack of understanding as a humble way to start the collaboration. But the collage is not aimed to bring more clarity but to reveal the political and economic dimensions of public spaces and some of their invisible aspects, by cursing, teasing and enumerating places and personal and historical facts. The artist chose two texts: one by the writer and anthropologist Maëline Le Lay explaining the ambiguity of her position as being French in Congo and as an anthropologist in the writers' collective, and another text comprising fragments by Fiston Mwanza, Ramcy Kabuya, Séraphine Bukasa, Ben-Hur Kabengele, Maëline Le Lay and me. She also added a song by the musician Sando Marteau expressing the longing for the home of an exiled African. It is then built on three layers of editing based on the editing of texts that is part of the practice of the writers' collective method of "cutting and pasting, disjointed voices, crossing out and re-editing" which is continued in the editing of music and voices reading texts, and the editing of images shot in Lubumbashi. It also moves from French to Kiswahili. *Suite et Fin* became a 7 min long video that is "part conversation, part narration, the text folds onto itself, becomes a translation, repeats its beginning, reverses a point of view and ends close to where it begins" (Kreutzfeldt, 2009).

In the interview with her done for this research, Kreutzfeldt expresses her surprise to be selected for the video project, because she had never made a video art piece before this experience. But the reason Picha chose her followed the same logic of the choice of curators explained before, and is probably based on the experience of the collaboration between Congolese artists and the project she was running at that time, the Joubert Park Project. As the biography in the 2010 publication suggests, her work on the Drill Hall, an historical venue in Johannesburg's central business district, both as an artist and as a committed citizen involved in developing art practices, was more important than any work, even if none, in the medium of video. The outcome is, however, visually strong. For Kreutzfeldt it was more related to her painting practice than video art (Kreutzfeldt, 2017).

2.2. Code Minier by Bodil Furu

The commissioning of Bodil Furu to do the video project was a happy consequence of the postponement of the 2012 biennial and its transformation into a year-long programme of workshop and residency to be celebrated in October 2013. As she explained in the interview we did for this research, the initial proposal from Dyangani Ose was to come to Lubumbashi for the screening of two of her previous projects: Misty clouds (Furu, 2010) and Opera (Furu, 2008). Her trip in Lubumbashi to participate to the screenings was then transformed into an exploration of the region via the two lenses that she often uses in her practices: mining landscapes and the narratives from collective memory which relate the relationship between the landscape and people.

After one year spent between Lubumbashi and Oslo, she produced *Code Minier*, a 45 min video piece. The title refers to the law established in 2002 to attract foreign investors and multinationals in the mining sector in D.R. Congo. To express the complexities of the situation created by its implementation, it follows different characters: Patrice Kyoni, a relocated villager; Eric Monga, a Congolese businessman; Thérèse Lukenge, a politician; Pascal Musenge aka Chef Mpala, a traditional chief, etc. This documentary approach is complemented and complicated by the adding of fictional characters played by two actors from the Mulao theatre company expressing traditional beliefs and change in the daily life of normal citizens after the shift from State Company to private and multinationals mining companies.

2.3. Bodil Furu has been working continuously on this subject since then and has just released the video piece *Mangeurs de Cuivre*, a second project on the Congolese mining sector co-produced by Waza art centre, the new name of Picha art centre, and the Centre d'art Contemporain de Genève. This video premiered in November 2016 in Geneva at the Biennale de l'image and Movement, with the curatorial choices of Dyangani Ose.***Entrer dans la Mine* by Ângela Ferreira**

Entrer dans la mine is an installation by Ângela Ferreira, conceived as part of the 2013 edition of the *Rencontres Picha, Biennale de Lubumbashi*, and developed with the Lisbon-based German curator Jürgen Bock.

This installation was realised as a dialogue between the modernist architecture of the GPM petrol station in the centre of Lubumbashi becoming the plinth of a wooden sculpture by Ferreira inspired by Russian constructivism. The Gas Station was designed by the Belgian architect Claude Strebelle and Ferreira's sculpture is "quoting" a never built monument by Vladimir Tatlin, conceived as a celebration of the communist universalist utopia, with an inclination of 23.4º like the axis of the Earth.

The project wanted to highlight the exportation in African during the colonial time of the modern architecture which was conceived as a tool to split off the emancipation discourse that shaped it in the West. By installing the wooden sculpture on top of the modernist building, it wanted to celebrate "the unity of the social, the political and the art" (Bock & Ferreira, 2013). To reinforce this statement and root it in context, a third component is added to the installation, the song *Entrer dans la Mine*, sung in KiBemba, the main language spoken in the region pre-colonially. The song is a letter from a newly appointed miner to his mother back home in the village. He writes that he is going to die, buried as he is entering the mine. He is asking her to sprinkle flour on him as an ultimate blessing (Verbeek, 1992). This emotional farewell song was performed by Alain Lumbala Kazaku and Isis Keto, two singers from a Lubumbashi choir, as the inauguration of Ferreira's installation during the professional week of the biennial. They used the front structure of the gas station as a stage overlooking the road and the audience gathered at the station, while the cars were continuing to use the gas station. The filming of this performance was screened at the gas station for three weeks as part of the installation.

This experience in Lubumbashi was the catalyst for another project by the artist in Portugal entitled *Independence Cha Cha*, where Strebelle's building was used as a background screen of a video featuring a band and acrobats from Lubumbashi, playing the song by Joseph Kabasele written to celebrate the independence of Congo (Ferreira, 2014).

3. The commissioned projects as sites of experimentation

The context of artistic production in Africa seems to have experienced an important shift in the last two decades. As described above, a reduction of state intervention in the art scene, expressed mainly through artists and art collectives reinventing and redefining art events, festivals and biennials, has played an important role in the rise of experimental practices in the arts.

In many African contexts, such the context of Rencontres Picha, Biennale de Lubumbashi, the artistic production is developed outside institutions such as the museum or the academy. If that fragile institution framework has become a site for experimentation, it doesn't develop a parallel discourse and interpretative tools that, according to art critic Arthur Danto, "constitutes the artwork" (Danto, 1964). Dyangani Ose's optimistic view about experimental practices in the beginning of this chapter changes if one considers the critical and discursive writing that could help to grasp the development of an art scene in contemporary Africa. As Salah Hassan noted in his introduction to the curator's roundtable about the showcase of contemporary African art in Mega Shows:

> Today, the overall picture in Africa points toward a serious intellectual decline when compared with the optimism of the independence and decolonization movements and the rise in the 1960s and 1970s of a generation of modernists in literature and arts, such as Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Léopold Sédar Senghor and Wole Soyinka, who combined artistic and literary production with serious critical writings. With few exceptions, the current burgeoning of artistic and literary production… has not been matched with critical, discursive writing that help elucidate their complexity (Hassan, 2008, p. 154).

This "intellectual decline" seems to me more a question of a lack of academic rhetoric and methodology to grasp the connection between an art practice and all the interactions which made it possible. One could answer, following Appadurai's statement, that research in the West is obstructed by its own ethics and lack of intuition. In the specific case I am studying, the cause of the intellectual decline can be found in the way sociology of art as a discipline has conceived its methodology by relying on a notion of art through defined by Western art institutions. As I mentioned in chapter two, Picha was established in terms of relationships more than in term of formal responsibilities, therefore the role of the artists, like the role of the curators, is fleeting between various positions in the course of their interaction with the organisation and with the local context. Gell's assertion of theorising art through its agency is an interesting premise in the attempt to analyse the practices of artists involved in this project, as his theory wants to understand art "as a by-product of the mediation of social life" (1998) that goes beyond the aesthetic principles coined in the Western institutional culture. He then suggests to only use "mobilization of aesthetic principles (or something like them) in the course of social interaction" (1998).

The art nexus that he suggests is constituted by the artist, the artwork (index), the representation/concept (prototype), and the viewer (recipient); each element could play as an agent or a patient. Using a similar art nexus, one could imagine different pairs of agents/patients in the relation between the artists selected, Picha, as an interface between them and the local context, the urban space of Lubumbashi, the curators, the audience who attend the display of the artworks, etc. It is important to notice that this anthropological approach sees an artwork as "a person" (1998), with its own life and relations. So one could also consider the city of Lubumbashi and Picha as people involved as autonomous elements in this nexus of relationships.

It is interesting to map the reciprocal relation between the city and the artists. This relationship is mediated first by the curator who selects them to produce a work for the biennial and then by Picha art centre, but it also exists on its own. In the interviews with the three artists, one thing all three expressed was the feeling of strangeness regarding the invitation to Lubumbashi. For Bodil Furu and

Ferreira, who had never been in Congo or central Africa before, that strangeness was part of the attraction of this invitation. Ferreira explains the feeling of "oddness and connected" that propelled her not only to accept the invitation but also to work with her curator to fund the production of her project in Lubumbashi. The feeling of connectedness came from the image of Congo as a mining country, a subject she has been working on since many years.

> If I have to think of a country that epitomises the image of mining in my sense, I will say that the DRC is that country. If I have to think of a country that epitomises the horror of mining I will think of the DRC. If I have to think of a country that epitomises the wealth of mining, I will think of this country, South Africa. If I have to think of a country that epitomises the oil industry in Africa, I will say Nigeria. Because of that I was very curious, but not only because of that. There is also something about me that really wants to be engaging with real people on the ground (Ferreira, 2016).

She was also reassured by both the grassroots character of the organisation and the list of artists involved in previous editions of the event, and discovered the event was "switched on to the same people that (she is) switched on" (2016).

In the case of Furu, the commitment went far beyond the event. She has done now more than 10 trips to Lubumbashi and finished her second video art piece. She declares: "Congo has changed me both as artist and as a human being". She has "more projects to do in Lubumbashi than in Oslo" and has also "benefiting a lot for the international network made from (my) work in Lubumbashi, that is now my professional network".

For Kreutzfeldt, a biennial in Lubumbashi looked like an "impossible project" and she castigated the imbalance in the art world that makes such a project look impossible. She also appreciated the project's claim to organise a biennial as a provocation from a local context that wants to be elevated, "claiming a biennial is like putting a frame to the city".

Considering the relationship between artist and artwork in this context, Ferreira sees the low profile of the event as a good setting to develop the best of her creativity.

> I think I work better in low profile, less stressful situations (…) Lubumbashi was incredibly liberating because I could just be myself and represent myself (…) There are those two extremes of challenging situations that are more creative for me: when I am more under stress, I also do my best work, but the middle of the road it is tricky (2016)

In Lubumbashi she used mediums that she had never dealt with before such as live performance. The work achieved a complex and coherent mixture of archive, architecture, oral history,

performance and video organised around the wooden sculpture which is more iconic of Ferreira's practice. Her relationship with Picha was also made easier by the autonomous funding coming directly to her from the Portuguese government. This was also the case for Furu's project funded by Norwegian foundations such as the Office for Contemporary Arts (OCA). There was much less tensions on expectations. Picha was then in a role of accompanying the project by opening its network of artists, researchers, carpenters, etc. And it was not in a real "producer/commissioner" role.

Kreutzfeldt's project in 2009/2010 was different. It was commissioned by Picha from the fund of a private donor, George Forrest, and the French embassy. The administrative stress of the management of public co-operation money plus the expectation of something spectacular which could please a private donor put pressure on Picha. The organisation was new and felt the need to guide the project in an awkward way that could be seen as intrusive to the artist's freedom. Picha's own agency was also reduced. Kreutzfeldt was aware of the power of the French institute which was hosting the discussion during the workshop (Kreutzfeldt, 2017). The building, the institute's on-going activities and the presence of its staff created a heavy, omnipotent set up for the workshop. Some parts of the programme organised without consulting the artist, such as the long trip to Shilatembo, the place of Lumumba's assassination, could be seen as too suggestive for the video they had to produce. It is interesting to consider that no artist has used those footages in his video at the end.

But beyond that aspect, Kreutzfeldt liked the experience of the workshop with the video artists as well as with the collective of writers, and she opened up the project to texts by the entire collective. Working with video is unusual for her and she deviated from the feeling of incongruity of the medium by considering video as a succession of still images rather than a flow in a narrative (Kreutzfeldt, 2017).

One of Furu's big challenges was to deal with the languages, as she doesn't speak French or KiSwahili, the two most used languages in Lubumbashi. She had previously faced the same situation in making her previous film on coal mining in China. She developed an alternative way to immerse in the conversation by following intonation and other attitudes rather the meaning of words. She also developed a way of being absent, leaving the person speaking in a kind of self-reflective talk which nourished a lot her video. This position also shaped her relationship with her collaborators, such as writers Albert Kapepa and Claus Sinzomene and the film maker Douglas Masamuna. There was more of a need to build trust and create their ownership of the project in order for them to play their roles.

All three projects were displayed away from conventional exhibition spaces with a more spontaneous audience joining the group of artists, organisers and the faithful audience of regular openings. The public screenings of Kreutzfeldt's *Suite et Fin* has something surreal in its inscription on buildings in Lubumbashi and the way it become like "part of this space". *Code Minier* was premiered in the ruins of the old Kamalondo Theater which has a "perfect fantastic space" for experiencing the video, but not the best for having a discussion about it. Another screening was organised two weeks afterwards at Picha art centre for this purpose. The launch of *Entrer dans la Mine* at GPM gas station in the city centre of Lubumbashi had an emotional impact on the audience and was a surprise to drivers at the garage.

4. Autonomy and experimentation

Would these projects have been different if the biennial was run by a state public body? An easy answer could be that they would not exist in this context because all the public cultural institutions in Lubumbashi have almost no funds to develop these kind of projects and are not really involved in such practices in the community. But asking the question opens up various possibilities, Fesman in Dakar, Panaf in Algier, Zaire 74 in Kinshasa and Festac 77 in Lagos are some examples of the difficulty of balancing public policies and missions with the need to invest in experimental art practice. As I noted before, the festival decade events duplicated the Western ethnographic model of exhibitions under the label of new independence ideologies. The Johannesburg biennial was indeed considered as a machine to "create inequality", as noted by South African professor of journalism Jane Duncan. Despite the claim of serving the interests of 'excluded cultures and polities', the Johannesburg biennial, especially its second and last edition in 1997, was criticised for its lack of accessibility (Budney, 1998) London-based conceptual artist Rasheed Araeen even stated that the event has betrayed the "true aspirations of Africa" to please Western institutions (Araeen, 2000).

As I have mentioned above for the *Lettre et Images* project and its funding structure, the autonomy should not be taken for granted, and there is still a trap for an independent organisation to play the game of the Western organisations, especially in a power relation between funders and grantees. However, the projects are still more open to various possibilities of works and to respectful collaboration. The size, the structure and the dynamic of an artist-run initiative can establish a very emancipated relation with other artists and with art works. The relationship, as Gell's model suggested, has the potential of being reciprocal, the organisation can be shaped by the art work it helped to produce or the artist it hosted.

I strongly believe, following Dyangani Ose's statement, that there is a correlation between the institutional practices of organisations and the autonomy given to artists to produce the work which could explain different moments of burgeoning of experimental practices in the history of art in a particular context. In today's globalised art world, that experimentation also comes with a certain connectedness and the capacity to impulse exchanges that are not dependant on the art market or the state. As Appadurai suggested, the concept of grassroots globalisation could push independent art organisations to define their ethics and use their imagination to develop processes from the local to articulate their positionality in the (art) world.

By doing so, grassroots organisations can start a dialogue with art institutions in their context or abroad, as a way to open their practices, and give more space for the articulation of a counter discourse by capitalising their proximity to the intentionality of art practices in order to inscribe those practices in a historicity. This necessary process is what Brian Holmes calls to "exorcise the institutional form of transnational State capitalism" as a way of "reinventing artistic autonomy". This "theatrical, psychic and stylistic exorcism" is only possible with "sophisticated and concentrated art" that could carry the ambition of constructing "expressive machine" for the "collective imaginary" (Holmes, 2004), or to put it in Appadurai's words, this process could use the "work of imagination" as a tool for "new forms of civic association and collaboration, (…) across national boundaries" (1999).

Chapter IV

Local reception and international geopolitics

> The questions raised by the audience was full of relevance : why are you putting photos at this place while it is so dirty? Do you work for the government? Did we really need to answer?[35] (Njami, 2011).

> I do think the responsibility of the curators insofar as working with art and idea that are made elsewhere, is interpretative as well as performative. It is important to find curatorial device to activate works that by virtue of its critical difference is resistant to easy translation (Enwezor, 2007).

In this last chapter, I faced the task of analysing the reception of Rencontres Picha, Biennale de Lubumbashi by its audience in the local context. I will do so by confronting the commitment to develop a grassroots initiative and the need for an articulated global discourse. As I demonstrated before, the Rencontres Picha and Picha art centre stated their intention, not only to speak to, but also to build meaning by drawing from the local context and audiences. However, they have to expand themselves in that positioning with ideas that shape the art world in general and the biennial culture in particular, by the choice of curators, the selection of artists, the relationship with funders and other biennials.

In the quote introducing this chapter Njami, reviewing the 2010 edition of the event that he curated, reported on two questions asked about the billboards of photos in Lubumbashi streets. As trivial as they seem, they point out two very crucial notions in this process of meeting the audience through such a project: what is the appropriate place to experience the art, and what is the responsibility of art in the public realm?

[35] « Les questions soulevées ne manquaient pas de pertinence : pourquoi mettez-vous des photos ici alors que c'est sale ? Travaillez-vous pour le gouvernement ? Et il fallait répondre ». My translation.

I placed his dialogue, in a kind of reverse shot filming scene, with the quote by Enwezor claiming a need for translation as a tool to deploy towards an audience for artworks that crosses a cultural boundary. I totally accept responsibility that this tension is artificial and does not carry the context Enwezor was referring to, about the rise of African artists in mega exhibition in Europe and North America. I am now using it to describe the context of international artists exhibiting in Lubumbashi.

Describing the African context, Njami argues "artistic production (should) be in resonance with the preoccupations of the people" and have an "ambition for the people" (ambition populaire) (Njami, 2012). In that sense, he sees a biennial as a disposal to create a framework for grassroots globalisation. Dyangani Ose argues the event was done "with and for the audience" (Dyangani Ose, 2014). But how did the audience grasp it?

The way the event interacted with "the people" is fleeting and, as I said before, no particular record of the audience's feelings was organised. Kreutzfeldt spoke of people finding the screenings quite "absurd" in the way they appeared in the space (Kreutzfeldt, 2017). The team putting up the posters representing an image of a road from "Objects in the mirror are closer than they appear" by Tunisian photographer Jellel Gasteli, faced many reactions from passers-by asking if they were about new roads to be built by the Chinese[36].

The comments we heard about are obviously anecdotal but they express the encounter of an audience with a format they will never go see in a museum. What these stories do not tell is the reaction after the initial surprise. Repeated viewers, say from those who pass the same billboard daily could change the opinion from strangeness to other types of questionings and connections.

However, it is important to note the audience of Rencontres Picha, Biennale de Lubumbashi was mainly local artists and art professionals. As stated in the report of the 2013 edition, the seven openings attracted an "average of 80 participants, mainly local professionals" (Picha, 2013). That number should include the 25 international guests. Even if we multiply the 80 visits of the opening by the 15 days the exhibition was open to imagine the extreme case of having the same number of visitors in the days after the opening, we are still far from the

[36] In 2009, the Congolese government signed an agreement with China to build roads in exchange of the exploitation of its mineral resources, what is known as "contrat chinois" (Chinese contract) or "deal of the century"

hundreds of thousands of visitors attending Liverpool, Sao Paulo or Gwangju[37]. The experience becomes quite intimate and open to discussion between the participants and the artist, but at the same time, it creates a division between the artist community and the "normal audience" to use Yabili's term (Yabili, 2013). The normal audience could then feel excluded by the language, attitude and values presented as obvious by the art community, and the system of perception and practices sociologist Pierre Bourdieu coined as "habitus"[38] of the art world (Bourdieu, 1993). This dividing line has sometimes been visible as a physical barrier as in the concert in the La Kenya neighbourhood when a security line isolated guests from the rest of the audience[39]. This could begin to make Njami's questioning about the elitist nature of such an events, described in chapter one, appear legitimate. But multiple counter examples exist when the event was actually able to create a connection in unexpected spaces. During the professional week of the 2010 edition, the screening in the wasteland of the Zone Neutre, the former dividing line between the white and the black parts of the city during the colonial period, attracted a number of inhabitants from Kamalondo neighbourhood to become a unique gathering which transcended language, understanding and misunderstanding moved by the simple openness of a group of artists and a spontaneous audience happy to have this abandoned field occupied and activated by video artworks. The discussions in the Maison des Jeunes (youth centre) in Katuba neighbourhood on "art as social practices" also triggered unexpected encounters between art managers, artists and social activists and a group of children who come to participate.

The events described above are momentary to move beyond the encounter and to start to build a relationship between participating artists and professionals and the "normal audience". However, in the case of commissioned projects analysed in chapter two, there was a longer time commitment between the artists and the context. Ferriera's installation of

[37] In 2010, the Liverpool biennial had 628 000 visitors for 72 open days, the Sao Paulo had 535 000 for 49 days, and Gwangju 492 000 for 66 days (Instanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts, 2013).

[38] Bourdieu defines habitus as the system of "durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them. Objectively "regulated" and "regular" without being in any way the product of obedience to rules, they can be collectively orchestrated without being the product of the organizing action of a conductor" (1990, p. 53).

[39] I analysed this event in an article published for the Urban manifesto published by Bozar, Brussels fine art centre, as a failure to use art as a relationship builder (Mudekereza, 2014)

Ferreira for instance took many weeks to be finished and during that time, the sellers at the gas station, some regular customers and the neighbours developed a feeling of being part of the production. There was also a larger number and variety of professionals such as carpenters, electricians, archivists and singers involved. The establishment of human proximity with an artist whose practice is concerned a lot with interconnectedness, such as Ferreira, become a crucial aspect of its creation and activation in the public space.

The naming “professional week” expresses a different attitude. It suggests a particular gathering of professionals and talks in the language of their “habitus”. Artists and professionals attending only the professional week are then in a kind of bubble where they will see the city only from the prism of the event and most of the time meet only other professionals and art lovers in the local context. The Turkish curator Vasif Kortun described this superficial relationship between the artist and the city hosting a biennial in these terms: " Local monopolies, the biennial artist syndrome, the bird’s eye view of the city from the five star hotel: via the highway, from airport, to the site, back to the airport, feel-good syndrome"(2002, p. 94).

It becomes clear, when one analyses the biennial culture through the intense mobility around the world of a small number of artists, curators, critics, art managers and other professionals, that the very notion of professional week could not give a better glimpse inside cities hosting a biennial than a tour operator of particular sites decided by the curator, or already known as having an interest to the art world.

This is probably what Caroline Jones noted when she described the relationship between biennial and the local context as “fundamentally insecure” (2010, p. 74).

As this research has demonstrated, the experience of Rencontres Picha, Biennale de Lubumbashi shows the necessity to integrate the local in the shaping of the event and beyond that, in the shaping of its arts organisation. In this context, the understanding of the local cannot be dissociated from the expression of differences. Philosophers Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt have defined the local as “the social machine that creates and recreates identities and differences” (Hardt & Negri, 2001). Commenting on that definition, art historians Tere Vaden and Mika Hannula note that the local is never neutral and natural, but

“processual, political and ethical”, joining Appadurai’s notion of the “production of the local”.

Picha was then established as an interface between the art world with its field of cultural production and the local seen as a political construction in this dialogue. As I noted above, the very idea of the professional week for international guests and local professionals is difficult to conceal within this position and requires that the project has life before and after this week to have something embedded in the local to feed in the dialogue. It also needs a critical mass of committed local professionals to articulate an alternative to the homogenised model of an art event. Picha art centre was then established as a counterpart to the biennial, to mirror some of the projects and to articulate a local grammar to the biennial. The two elements, art centre and biennial, are conceived to respond to each other as a gearing.

It could be fallacious to see the local as the space of integrity and the art world as an impure intrusion. As Negri and Hardt expressed in their book *The Empire*, the local can also be an opportunity for globalised neo-liberal forces seeking for differences. As there is a cynical way to impose the globalised art world, the universalism concept, there is also a cynical way of imposing the idea of purity and essentiality in the local. Building an art centre like Picha presupposes the idea of “non-naïve locality” that is, according to Vaden and Hannula, a “locality that does not give an unquestioned, transcendental status, purity or originality to any area or mode of presentation” (2003). Projects such as *close opening/vernissage fugace* in 2011 and Revolution Room were extending and complicating the two editions of the biennial by following its “hors les murs” (out of the walls) approach of exhibition conceived by Njami and the “enthusiasm” of Diangani Ose’s. They were not only duplicating or translating curatorial approaches to local artists; they were also testing some new ways of intervention, new places and new words. One example is the cartography of the 2010 edition of the biennial which used a top-down model with scientific research by Belgian architect Johan Lagae with routes defined by two French urbanists Tristan Guilloux and Jean-Christophe Lanquetin. For the biennial edition, the route defined by these three European experts become the historical and physical structure of the city used to present the artworks “as a sheet of tracing paper” (Njami, 2012, p. 17). The approach of the Close Openings events was more of a bottom-up understanding of the public space, working with

artists and communities in a neighbourhood to choose the space of the installation, and taking the time to collect narratives from different participants on issues such as participative governance as experienced during Trésor Malaya's installation "A quoi ça sert?" (what is the point?) in February 2011 or ending up in a night-long discussion on the relationship between sciences and nostalgia like with Jean Katambayi's installation in January 2011. Although those interventions were ephemeral, they were established in a grammar not only based on art world habitus, but also directly appealing for the "normal audience", not only as a space of sensitivity but also as a knowledge-sharing tool. In the same way, projects such as La fin des Haricots by Patrick Ken Kalala, part of the Revolution Room project in the village of relocated farmers in the mining town of Fungurume, show the possibility of an immersive approach to developing a work which shows the tension in a community torn between humanitarian aid and struggle for rights against a multinational company.

This approach could be named "participatory practices", as defined by Claire Bishop (2006) or even following the trend of "relational aesthetics", coined by Nicolas Bourriaud (2002), but these qualifications arose from specific historical and art historical backgrounds which don't entirely give justice to this experience.

The ethical and political aims of the non-naïve locality or non-naïve localism is to counter the imbalance in the relationship between the appreciations of art developed in Western cultures through major policies of art educations, museums, criticism etc and the unquestioned imposition of these cultural values as universal. Discussing the question of the relationship between social classes and artistic tastes, Bourdieu has coined the concept of cultural capital and one of its forms that he named "aesthetics disposition" to define the ability to understand an artwork that is not natural but acquired through inculcation in the family, school or museum visit. Defined in that way, it appears clearly that this "aesthetics disposition" (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 23) has an uneven dispersion around the world between countries with strong and wealthy art institutions and countries, such as Congo, with weak or non-existent art institutions. So when we hear questions like those of the audience from Lubumbashi surprised by the photo installations as reported by Njami at the beginning of this chapter, we should keep in mind their cultural context. The choice he made to not answer these questions, instead of starting a long interpretation speech, is probably the

most respectful way to deal with this clash. It is the way to replace the hegemony of the art world habitus by the relational capacity of the art work and the aesthetics autonomy. This adaptation to the local by silencing the statement or the code of the art work follows the advice of art historian Pamela M. Lee who calls to "forget the art world" for the benefit of the "work of art's world" (Lee, 2012) which can then start to operate as an autonomous agent with no regard to any "aesthetics disposition" of the viewer.

The ability to "forget the art world" is maybe the main asset of an organisation in the less documented context, such as Lubumbashi, which wants to experience art by developing its own grammar, organising art events and even gain the status of a recognised biennial as Picha did. In her analysis of "the rise and fall of new institutionalism", German curator Nina Montmann shows how the attempt of European art institutions to continue the institutional critique started in the 1970s by artists such as Daniel Buren, has failed in the same way. She starts by castigating this failure by quoting German filmmaker and artist Hito Steyel describing how the alternative art institutions in Europe are "dismantled, underfunded, and subjected to the demands of a neoliberal event economy" (2009), and then she decries a "perspective of a possible future" in the "transgressive institutions" of the Southern hemisphere (Nina Möntmann, 2009)[40].

But is the transgressive character enough to challenge the homogenisation of the art world? According to the post-Marxist political theorist Chantal Mouffe, "a counter-hegemonic struggle cannot merely consist of separating the different elements whose discursive articulation is at the origin of those practices and institutions", it is also crucial to have a second moment of "re-articulation of new and old elements into different configurations of power" (Mouffe, 2009). Picha's task of re-articulation was an attempt to find new modes of presentations, or to use the phrase by Enwezor at the beginning of this chapter, "curatorial devices". But deploying those devices in the local context cannot just be "interpretative and

[40] "In search of participatory institution-forming activities, my attention has recently turned to the institutional situation in several regions in the southern hemisphere. There the few official contemporary art institutions mostly are inaccessible for young artists and dysfunctional as part of the public sphere, and artists and curators don't have easy access to public or private funding. These kinds of local situations where there is a lack of access to institutional infrastructure often give rise to community projects, that are characterized by their institution-forming character (…) They start with a small space and very local programming, exhibiting their own work and that of artists they know (…) assuming a quasi-institutional status that often goes hand in hand with an expansion of their activity. They then start to fundraise internationally, to set up residencies, offer research possibilities, invite foreign curators and artists, organize film programs, edit magazines and so on." Picha didn't strictly follow this path, but the form of quasi-institution described completely fits its structuring.

performative" as Enwezor suggested. This could be a form of "carnivalisation of the world" as coined by sociologists Lauren Langmann and Karen Halnon, and could lead to "sustain the very system it would critique" by creating an anticulture fostered by the art world itself and inscribed in its frames. A curatorial device could also made by silence as a mediation tool, by the gathering for no reason and the adaptation to the unplanned and the precariousness. But as Dyangani Ose noted, this is no longer a curatorial task, but a life commitment.

Biennial culture definitely has the potential to impulse that counter hegemonic dialogue, but it sits uncomfortably in the role of re-articulation of curatorial devices from the perspective of less documented areas. That is the moment when it has to give the baton to another dynamic, more flexible with less influence from the field and its power relations, more integrated in the local with a political vision on how and with whom to connect it.

I would like to close with this quote of Arundhati Roy's, echoing her countrymate Appadurai's reflection on grassroots globalisation:

> What we need to search for and find, what we need to hone and perfect into a magnificent, shining thing, is a new kind of politics. Not the politics of governance, but the politics of resistance. The politics of opposition. The politics of forcing accountability. The politics of slowing things down. The politics of joining hands across the world and preventing certain destruction. In the present circumstances, I'd say that the only thing worth globalising is dissent. It's India's best export. (Roy, 2002, p. 32).

This need of globalising the dissent as a production of localities should be, according to me, the manifesto of any art organisation that aims to speak to the world from the perspective of a place that struggles to move beyond the symbolic violence[41] of the globalisation.

[41] The notion of symbolic violence is coined as "the violence which is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 167).

CONCLUSION

In the course of this research, I have analysed the dual positioning of Picha through two projects: Picha art centre and the Rencontres Picha, Biennale de Lubumbashi. I have explored three aspects: its historical background, the implementation of curatorial concepts in the local context, and the commissioned projects by international artists and their reception by local audiences. Each aspect reveals diverse motives expressing the need to embed the projects in the local or the ambition to expand it in to the international, even global, art world. My argument was to show the possibility of developing art projects in Africa that follow the concept of "grassroots globalisation" coined by Arjun Appadurai in his text "Grassroots globalisation and the research imagination".

As I explored these different aspects, the ideas merged to connect the two concepts of grassroots and globalisation. They were no longer disparate when operating within an organisational space of social commitment and one based on the notion of participation with blurred responsibilities and organised so that it can overcome its precarious situation.

This approach creates a disjuncture between biennial culture with specific roles for curators and artists, and the organising principles of a grassroots art initiative in a context like Africa. Rather than excluding the grassroots initiative from the biennial culture, this disjuncture appeals to the globalised and homogenised art world that fails to understand the experimentation of art produced in certain regions of the world despite the global about turn of the art world since 1989.

The concept of grassroots globalisation concept could then be seen as a counter hegemonic approach to this homogenisation that forces the art world to see art appreciation through the eyes of Western ideologies. This counter hegemonic approach of the biennial culture comes with the necessity to define new discursive spaces, what Mouffe calls the "re-articulation", as pointed out in the previous chapter. Those spaces could be organised on the value of spectactorship. The spectator, whether an art world professional or a local by-passer, can be considered to have the same legitimacy to appreciate an artwork as any art institution which gives the status of "artwork" to objects. This is in keeping with Rancière's concept of the "emancipated spectator" (Rancière, 2014). This concept is very close to

"sharing of the sensitive"[42], which is the active role of the audience who can engage with an artwork without being pushed to a particular understanding by a message from an artist or curator.

These notions of emancipated spectatorship and sharing of the sensible are key elements in adapting grassroots globalisation to the context of the art world. However, the challenge of adapting those concepts to biennial culture in particular and mega exhibitions in general is not so easy. As pointed out in chapter one, the biennial culture faces the risk of becoming a spectacle and falling into "festivalism". Furthermore the attempt made to adapt it to the local context puts it in an insecure position. According to Enwezor, as noted at the end of chapter three, a counter hegemonic resistance approach to biennial culture can be located in the gap between the spectacle and the carnivalesque, this last concept coined by the Russian theoretician Mikhail Bakhtin (2009) who expressed the possibility of a popular event subverting power relations in a temporary symbolic reversal, such as the poor playing the rich, the profane the sacred and the trivial challenging the nobility. Such an answer that borrows from European renaissance popular culture could be seen as being weak when facing the challenge of a biennial in a context like Lubumbashi and more broadly Africa. It is, in a way, a sort of falsification of the world, the creation of a temporary and false space of autonomy that will be dismantled at the end of the event.

The experience of Picha art centre could be read in a different approach, based on the notion of grassroots globalisation. The way the biennial momentum was extended, reformed and presented with the "normal audience", has shown, in both its failures and its successes, the possibility of extending the role of an art institution from a confined definition of what is an art experience. This re-articulation based on the blurring of responsibility at two levels: inside the art world (as artists, curators, art managers, etc.) and inside the community (to refer to Rancière's "ordinary citizen" (2002)). These positions define two areas of action: knowledge sharing and the redefinition of geographies.

[42] "Politics precisely happens when they who have "no time" to do anything else than their work, take that time that they have not in order to make themselves visible as sharing in a common world and prove that their mouth indeed emits common speech instead of merely voicing pleasure or pain. That distribution and re-distribution of times and spaces, places and identities, that way of framing and re-framing the visible and the invisible, of telling speech from noise and so on, is what I call the partition of the sensible." (Rancière, 2002, p. 4).

The notion of knowledge occupies a central place in Appadurai's definition of grassroots globalisation. He castigates Western research ethics that exclude important aspects such as intuition. In Picha's projects such as Close Openings and Revolution Room, knowledge is shared in a more egalitarian way, even if there is still, especially in the case of the Close Opening, a strong curatorial voice with both its relevant and its perverse aspects.

The notion of geographies has also become an important element for the art centre, especially in the way it defines itself as a "local" space of artistic and intellectual production. But also in the way it re-creates a grammar for its experimental practices. The way Picha art centre has been dealing with questions like the Diaspora (discussions with curators as noted in chapter two), Africa (role of institutions in post-colonial contexts noted in chapter three) or the inscription of the Revolution Room project in the global South discourse through the network Arts Collaboratory, are eloquent aspects of this commitment. This redefinition of locality and geographies fits the concept of "process geographies", where areas are defined as "not facts but artifacts of our interests and our fantasies as well as of our needs to know, to remember, and to forget"(Appadurai, 2000).

This definition of area is very close to the definition of institution by English anthropologist Mary Douglas, "institutions remember and forget"(1986). The experience of Picha art centre and Rencontres Picha, Biennale de Lubumbashi highlights the potential of the notion of grassroots globalisation and its use in biennial culture in a way that is not necessarily an opportunity to "forget the art world" (Lee, 2012), but is more the capacity and the responsibility to produce "non-naïve" local answers to the universal assumptions of the Western art world.

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