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African Artivism: Politically engaged art in Sub-Saharan Africa

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1. Introduction

The idea to write about politically engaged art in Africa has been lingering in my mind for quite a while now. The first time I came across this topic was during an internship at the Goethe-Institut in Nairobi, Kenya in 2014. In the context of my work there I met a lot of Kenyan artists from various artistic disciplines. What really amazed me was their political consciousness and their ambitions to bring overlooked issues to the public, to inspire awareness and work towards social change through their artistic output. Of course, not every artist I met understood him/herself as politically engaged in a way or another. Still, it was evident that a lot of young Kenyans were very conscious about political issues and social nuisances and intended to contribute to social change through different means. Particularly worth mentioning in this context is the “PAWA254” – a collaborative network of artists and activists where creatives from different backgrounds involved in various art forms come together to brain-storm, create art and engage with like-minded people for the purpose of social change (Hungu & Bennett 2017: 84). For me, this has been the starting point to engage with the topic of politically engaged art in Africa and the convergence of art and political activism in general. When I came back to Germany I continued to engage with this subject, visiting several events such as “Africologne 2017” (– a festival for contemporary African Arts in Cologne), “Afropean Mimicry & Mockery 2016” (– a festival for Afropean Theatre, Performance & Visual Arts in Frankfurt) and other venues to broaden my understanding of contemporary art in Africa. In many instances, the exhibitions, artworks, theatre pieces and performances were explicitly linked to political issues in the artists’ home countries and alongside the performances it was discussed how art can be meaningful to social change. Having had these experiences, I started to dig deeper into this field and finally decided to write my Master thesis about politically engaged art in Africa.

This paper presents a merger of the manifold fields of interests that inform me. Speaking of my academic background, I completed a Bachelor of Arts in Social Anthropology and African Studies, and currently I am enrolled in the Master’s programme of Empowerment studies. Consequently, I previously dealt with topics such as the role of civil society and social movements (in Africa), postcolonial studies, racism, colonialism, and human rights, to name just a few subjects that are relevant to this topic. On the other hand, I participated in a programme to become a theatre pedagogue, and in this vein, I (re-)discovered my passion for art and experienced the power of art on a personal level. I mention this to highlight that this

paper is not only written in order to obtain the Master's degrees, but that it is also developed from a very personal source of interest and inspiration in an effort to bring various aspects of my academic and pedagogic life together. This may on first glance not fit together well, but my aim is to use my varied background and interests to form creative synergies that will hopefully create an engaging and worthwhile addition to this field of research.

1.1. Subject matter and current state of research

Politically engaged artists and artworks are not a new phenomenon, for in the course of history, there always have been artists taking a political stand and revealing political messages through their creative productions. There is however, a kind of "renaissance" of political art to witness within the previous years: on the one side, more and more artists are becoming politically engaged actively, and on the other side social movements are employing artistic means to enhance their activism. It seems that art and political activism are approaching towards each other in various ways. Sociologist and art historian Jens Kastner, for example, states, that there is a plethora of entanglements between artistic creations and political activism and social movements that can be witnessed today (2015: 26). And indeed, during the 21st century, we can observe tendencies around the world to consider art not as an end in itself, but rather a means to disclose social and political grievances and point to new, alternative ways. As Mamedow put it: art should be socially and/or politically engaged (2011: 43). This concept of art is highly debated within the art world, though, which is divided into two fronts between those who argue that all art is political and those who are convinced of art's autonomy. But apart from this ideology-driven debate, it is evident that there are a lot of politically engaged artists, artworks, and art projects emerging around the world. On some occasions, art and activism are becoming so closely connected to each other that they merge into one concept: 'artivism' (Malzacher 2015). I would not put it as Mamedow, because I do not agree, that art *should* be politically engaged, I would rather argue that in many cases it actually is. And I am convinced that creating energy for social change is not just about persuasion through rational argument, it is also about "connecting to others in extra-rational ways, through the heart, which of course is what arts do" (Wergin 2017: xliii). That is why I consider it worthwhile to take a closer look at politically engaged artists and the ways in which they engage their audiences in order to inspire social change.

The African continent looks back on a long history of interrelations between politics and arts, which date back to precolonial times. Within these interlockings, art could take up various

functions: it could serve as an instrument of legitimization for command, but it could also serve as a medium for critique and resistance (see Clarke 2006, Nzewi 2017). The role of art in the context of the decolonization process and the emergence of independent postcolonial nation-states is quite well documented (see Okeke-Agulu 2015). However, the role of art and artistic activism in the current time seems to be underrepresented in academic literature. Exceptions include artistic works within the context of the 'Arab Spring' in Northern Africa (see El Husseiny 2016, Schwartz et. al. 2013) and the role of resistant art during the Apartheid regime in South Africa (see Williamson 1990, Pfeffer 2009).

The crucial role of art and artists affecting processes of social change have long been overlooked. Whereas the role of formal civil society is widely acknowledged, the potential of artists and their productions is only recently garnering academic attention. This recent upsurge in academic interest is reflected in compilations such as "Grassroots Leadership and the arts for social change" (2017) by Erenrich & Wergin, or in "Agents of Change — The Role of Artists and Cultural Actors in Regions of Conflict and Crisis" (2011), published by the Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen (ifa). In 2013, the UN Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights, Farida Shaheed, wrote a report on "The right to freedom of artistic expression and creativity". She specifically points out, that artists "contribute to social debates, sometimes bringing counter-discourses and potential counterweights to existing power centres. The vitality of artistic creativity is necessary for the development of vibrant cultures and the functioning of democratic societies." (Shaheed 2013: 3). The fact that the Special Rapporteur of the United Nations wrote a report about freedom of artistic expression points to the increasing centrality and relevance of the topic.

Jens Kastner states that there is little academic literature available concerning the interrelations between art and activism, but within the last years a number of works have been published which are dealing with this topic. Among them are "The one and the many. Contemporary collaborative art in a global context" by Grant Kester (2011), Claudia Mesch's "Art and Politics. A small history of art for social change since 1945" (2014), and "Living as Form. Socially engaged art from 1991-2011" (2012) and "Seeing power. Art and activism in the 21st century" (2015), both by Nato Thompson. This recent emergence of works concerned with this subject demonstrates that the topic of politically engaged art is garnering increased attention. However, what struck me while researching for this topic was the fact, - that

although a number of recent works have been written in the previous years, I could not find any account which specifically deals with political art in the African context, - at least nothing that takes the current situation into account. There are many articles dealing with a specific artist, a specific country, or a specific art form in Africa (which I cannot all take into consideration, as I am not able to do research for every country and artform in detail), but there is no anthology or systematic analysis like the ones I mentioned, which focus on the African context and presenting an overview about political art in Africa. This left me quite frustrated, for a glance at current events in Africa proves that there is an abundance of politically engaged artists and projects to observe. Furthermore, examination of the aforementioned works showed that they mostly focus on artistic productions from Europe and North America, conceptualizing political art from a “Western” point of view. That is not to say that they did not consider artistic works from African creators, but in sum the presentation of African artworks or even African contributors to the volumes are scarce. These conceptualisations illustrate a Eurocentric view on artistic practices. A notable exception presents “How free is free? Reflections on Freedom of Creative Expression in Africa” published by Arterial Network (2016), which is specifically referring to the African continent. Therefore, there is a need to root the concept of political art in the African context referring to the specific conditions under which political art and politically engaged artists are situated in postcolonial African states. It is certain that the historical, political, economic and social surroundings are shaping artistic works (Negash 2004). That’s why I consider it fundamental to take these preconditions into account in order to conceptualise politically engaged art in Sub-Saharan Africa

1.2. Research Questions

Within the course of this paper I will examine the following questions:

1. How can a conceptualization of politically engaged art and activism within the African context of postcolonial states look like? Which aspects must be taken into account?
2. Under which political conditions are politically engaged artists situated in Sub-Saharan Africa? How is the relation between the postcolonial state and the arts? What kind of repression and threats are critical artists facing?
3. To which strategies are politically engaged artists resorting to under different conditions (democratic vs. repressive state)?

The subject of politically engaged art in Africa is a vast one. In order to clarify and narrow down what exactly I aim to examine, I will start with some preliminary remarks. Firstly, I will not take into consideration community art programmes or programmes designed for a specific smaller group of people. I will focus on artists who aim to reach out to a larger public, who are acting in the public sphere of a given society and are visible to a wider public. Secondly, I will focus on artists who at the same time identify as (cultural or creative) activists and who are expressively engaging for social change. Thirdly, concerning the conditions under which politically artists are situated, I will focus on the political conditions, namely the relation between the postcolonial state and the arts, the legal framework, censorship practices and the state of the media (free or state-controlled). I am aware that many other aspects are impacting artists, as for example the economic situation, but this will not be the focus of this paper. Fourthly, the aim of this paper is to examine the political conditions under which politically engaged artists are situated and which strategies they employ to create politically engaged art under different conditions. To demonstrate the amplitude of conditions and strategies of politically engaged artists in postcolonial African nation-states, I chose to highlight two very distinct examples, namely Hip Hop in Senegal and political satire in Zimbabwe. I wish to portray two countries with very distinct political frameworks. On the one hand, there is Senegal, which is regarded as a stable democracy, where there is no legal censorship and an independent media landscape. On the other hand, there is Zimbabwe, which is regarded as repressive and authoritarian, with very harsh censorship practices, where a restrictive environment towards critical voices resides since the 2000's crisis. I will also highlight two different art forms: Hip Hop and satire. Since a long time, Hip Hop artists throughout Africa are engaging for social change in a number of countries. Because of the relevance of Hip Hop for social change, I decided to focus one part of this paper on this art form. The other artistic genre which I will examine is political satire, which looks back on a long tradition in Sub-Saharan Africa, employed by those who 'speak truth to power' with the use of humour. Still, the role of satire as a form of political artistic engagement remains underexplored. Though it is highly relevant, especially within closed societies where voicing open and direct critique is a dangerous endeavour. At the same time, the focus on these two countries and art forms presents the opportunity to shed light on the different ways in which art may be politically engaged: either in a direct and open way as in the case of Hip Hop, or in a more indirect way as a form of "hidden resistance" in the case of satire.

1.3. Content Structure

In chapter 2, I will propose definitions for the central terms of this paper: politically engaged art and activism. The definitions I found are mostly arising from Western points of view. Although I consider them applicable to the African context, I also see the need to expand them and ground them within the “postcolonial constellation”, which will be covered in chapter 4.

In chapter 3, I will illustrate the relation between art and the ‘political’ more in-depth. Therefore, I will refer to Chantal Mouffe’s conceptualization of political ‘antagonism’ and her ‘agonistic’ model of public space. Mouffe envisages art as an agonistic intervention in public space, following a hegemonic approach. She explicitly highlights the critical potential of art and delineates how artistic practices can play a crucial role in voicing dissent and subverting a given hegemonic order.

In chapter 4, I will extend the definitions proposed in chapter 2 and incorporate other sources which are specifically dealing with artistic practices in Africa. The work of Okwui Enwezor will serve to locate politically engaged art within the African context, e.g. within the “postcolonial constellation”. Furthermore, I will bring forward the arguments of Willems & Obadare who are conceptualising popular art in Africa as an everyday form of resistance within the context of the postcolonial nation-state.

In chapter 5, I will explore the political conditions under which artists in post-colonial African states are situated on a theoretical level, referring to Kenyan writer Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o and his exploration of the relationship between the arts and the state in postcolonial Africa. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o highlights the antagonism between the postcolonial nation-state and the arts and presents different strategies the postcolonial state resorts to in order to control the arts. These strategies present the threats critical and politically engaged artists are facing in postcolonial Africa.

In chapter 6, I will complement Ngũgĩ’s theoretical outline of state repression towards critical artists, with empirical findings of the “Freemuse Annual Statistics on Censorship and Attacks on Artistic Freedom” (2016) and the “Art Watch Africa Monitoring Freedom of Expression Arterial Network Report” (2013). The surveys highlight the vulnerable situation of artists in the face of government repression and that artistic expression is increasingly coming under threat.

In chapter 7, I will outline the case of the *Y'en a Marre* youth movement, founded by Hip Hop artists in Senegal, as an example for African activism. This case allows us to examine an example of activism within a democratic and relatively open context in Senegal. Furthermore, it will highlight the activist Hip Hop practices as an example of direct critique towards the current regime. I will explore the political conditions in Senegal, the emergence of the *Y'en a Marre* movement, the role of Hip Hop as activism and finally the strategies the group is employing to create (successful) artistic activism.

In chapter 8, I will outline the case of *Zambezi News*, a satirical News show in Zimbabwe, as an example for politically engaged art. I will explore the repressive political conditions in Zimbabwe, the role of political satire as a hidden form of resistance, and the example of *Zambezi News* and the strategies the satirists are employing to create politically engaged art under repressive conditions.

The chapters 2, 3 and 4 speak to the definition and conceptualization of politically engaged art and activism and the endeavour to locate these definitions within the 'postcolonial constellation' e.g. within the context of postcolonial African nation-states and the surrounding geopolitical framework. Furthermore, the specific role of critical art as a counter-hegemonic practice will be explored and then further extended taking into consideration popular African art as a form of 'everyday resistance'. The chapters 5 and 6 speak to the general political conditions of (politically engaged) art in Africa, to the antagonism between the postcolonial nation-state and the arts and the specific threats and repressions artists are facing. The chapters 7 and 8 will examine two distinct examples of political conditions and cases of activism/politically engaged art and their strategies more in detail.

2. 'Politically engaged Art' and 'Artivism': What is it all about?

In this chapter I will introduce the central themes of this paper: politically engaged art and activism. I will start with a brief outline of the discussion surrounding political art - Is all art political or is art inherently autonomous? – since this question and the position I take within this debate forms the basis of any engagement with political art. After revealing the eurocentric stance behind the assumption of art's autonomy, I will propose definitions about 'politically engaged art' and 'artivism'.

2.1. Artistic Autonomy as a Eurocentric Myth

What may first come to mind when talking about political art is the long-lasting debate among artists, art critics and art historians: between those arguing that all art is political, and others defending the artist's autonomy. The two conceptions of art are ideologically driven: on the one side, it is argued that art is by nature political, because it is embedded in and shaped by its surrounding political conditions, although an artwork might not evoke a direct political message or meaning at first glance. On the other side, there are those defending "art for art's sake", convinced that art must only pursue artistic purposes and that art is inherently autonomous and apolitical: "art must only look for developing its specific language and must not be tainted by political conceptions" (Preda 2013: 62). This debate is ongoing and much has been written on behalf of this controversy elsewhere, that's why I will not go into detail at this point. Still it is important to outline my understanding of art in this context to define 'politically engaged art' in the following. From my point of view, art is unavoidably created in relation to the political. However, this does not mean that every artwork and every artist has an explicit political dimension, a direct political meaning or message.

A common assumption is, that art is the expression of the freedom of the artist, regardless of external conditions, as artists only obey the rules of art (Gad 2017: 83). But this assumption is not universally valid, it is rather eurocentric in its stance. The notion of 'art for art's sake' emerged from a particular historical and cultural context (ibid.). It is therefore not generalizable to all times and localities.

“With the emergence of western European aesthetics in the eighteenth century, an earlier Renaissance idea of artistic ‘genius’ was reconceptualised. At this time, the artist became the antithesis of courtly society and was declared a rebel element [...] In the nineteenth century, the concept of the artist as an individualist, an outsider, marginal and a dissenter, validated by his recognized ‘genius’, became highly influential if not normative in the Western world. It became generally understood that the artist did not follow standard, socially prescribed rules of order or morality: art was only obligated to itself.” (Gad 2017: 83).

However, this generalization of art and artistry ignores the extent to which the artist – in Western Europe as elsewhere – has never been entirely free to express his/her ideas, as he/she has always been dependent on patrons and markets (ibid.). The “myth of artistic autonomy” is not only fraught with historic assumptions, it is also deeply eurocentric, as this model might not be valid for many non-European cultures (ibid.).

Another common assumption is that of art being critical or subversive by nature. Although art *can* be critical or subversive, this is only one possibility out of a set of roles which can be performed by art. On one side, art may be utilised as an instrument of political power, it may support a dominant narrative or hegemonic order; on the other side art may act as critique to political power and enunciate alternative discourses (Preda 2013: 58, 63). Historically, art often played a significant role in the stabilization of existing social or political systems, “glorifying their rulers or ideologies or providing a symbolic language for the perpetuation of national identity” (Gad 2017: 83). Thus, art can be critical and subversive, just as it can be conservative, restorative or reactionary, depending on the social and political context (ibid.).

“Art is as diverse, ambivalent and partisan as any other cultural or communication system, and its effects can be positive or destructive. It can engage with the emotions or human rationality, it can communicate on different levels, and it can use aesthetic impact to influence its audience in one direction or another.” (Gad 2017: 83).

However, in this paper I will not deal with the role of art instrumentalised by or in support of political regimes in this paper, but with art as critique towards a given political/societal order or regime. Therefore, I will outline my understanding of politically engaged art and activism further in the next section of the paper.

2.2. Towards Definitions of 'Politically engaged Art' and 'Artivism'

Throughout time art and politics always stood in relation to each other: artists positioned themselves between obedience to the powers and critical distance. Since the beginning of the postcolonial era, politically engaged or activist art has increasingly come to characterize a new direction in art production (Mesch 2013: 1). Politically engaged art "takes a stand, or provokes others to take a stand. It does not only want change; it wants to be an active part of this change, or even to initiate it" (Malzacher 2015: 13). This art form is "explicit in its combative stance, or in its tone of political dissent, and does not shrink away from making direct reference to the social problems and issues" (Mesch 2013: 1). "In its broadest sense, political art seeks two things: to comment on, and also to elicit a reaction to an issue or development that is of current concern" (Mesch 2013: 12). Malzacher evokes examples of politically engaged art like Pussy Riot, the Austrian group WochenKlausur which aims at improving the lives of certain groups of people (immigrants, sex workers or drug addicts) by shifting money and attention to social causes, or the Spanish artist Santiago Sierra who is reproducing injustices and power abuses within the frame of an artwork in order to criticise them, Dutch artist Renzo Martens, or German theatre, film and performance artist Christoph Schlingensiefel, to name just a few (see Malzacher 2015).

Politically engaged art is not unique to our times, but it is argued that the political content of art became increasingly specific in modernity and that political art has become more pervasive during the era of globalization (Mesch 2013: 2). Artistic works, driven by the spirit of activism, tend to emerge during periods of crisis, in moments of social upheaval and political uncertainty (Enwezor 2004). These are moments when the relationship between art and society is at a turning point. With the various political and economic crises all over the world within the last years, the idea of activist art became more prevalent (Malzacher 2015: 13). Curator Florian Malzacher goes as far to debate a "paradigm shift" in the relationship of art and politics. New or renewed alliances between art and activism have emerged. Some of them are so closely connected to each other that they merge into one concept: *Artivism* (Malzacher 2015: 14). Artivism stands for the idea to use artistic tools, skills, tactics, strategies to advance or achieve activist goals (ibid.). The term *artivism* is a hybrid neologism depicting "the fusion of art and activism in the struggle for social justice" (Asante 2008: 203). Though the term is new, activist practices existed prior to the term through those who used "artistic talents to fight and struggle against injustice and oppression by any medium necessary" (Asante 2008:

203). Artistic approaches guided by activism “embody an implicated praxis that is explicitly change-oriented, driven by the desire to communicate, inspire awareness or change with an identified audience or social group” (Robinson 2015: 31).

The lines between politically engaged art and activism are blurred, the boundaries are not always clear to determine. Some artists do convey explicit political/critical messages through their artworks, although they are not directly engaged in activist practices. Others are clearly aligned to social movements and identify as activists and artists at the same time. And there are a lot of artists in-between these two poles. Politically engaged art may criticize a regime or a societal order both in a direct or in an allusive manner (Preda 2013: 58). Art as a critical reflection that seeks to convey an alternative discourse include the direct opposition/confrontation (“resistance”), as well as forms of ‘silent’ or hidden resistance (l.c. 63). Art can be critical both in a direct manner, through its message, and indirectly through its form or its disguised message (l.c. 64).

“On one hand, the artist confronts the political power and decries repression and oppression and states it directly, in an easy to grasp language and format. On the other, the artist tackles the political by a disguised critique using symbols and an encrypted idiom based on his/her dialogue with a limited public.” (Preda 2013: 64).

Within this spectrum, activism is to be located the nearest to activism. As ‘activism’ is a neologism not pervasively used, it is variously described as socially or politically conscious art; what remains consistent is the understanding that “activism is art that takes action in the realm of the political” (Robinson 2015: 5). “For the activist, ‘art’ is a political act and any art emptied of political content is equally political in its outright refusal to engage politically” (ibid., see Asante 2008). The contexts in which artists and activists work are diverse: from straightforward dictatorships to authoritarian governments, to societies in transition to democratic states (Malzacher 2015: 15f).

“In non- or less democratic states the danger is often incomparably higher, and the protagonists frequently and bravely risk their freedom, health, or even their lives, the lines of confrontation are usually also more clearly defined: there is still a goal to be reached, a goal that in other societies is already achieved, at least on paper: democracy.” (Malzacher 2015: 16)

The term 'artivism' became more widespread within the past years to define socially or politically engaged practices within and through the arts. Yet, even if a number of artists or artists' collectives are engaging in activist practices, there are also many artists who are suspicious of the possible instrumentalization of art (Gad 2017: 84). "They suspect the inherent freedom of art will be threatened if art is transformed into an explicit and purposive action addressing an equally explicit social problem or issue" (Gad 2017: 84). Consequently, many artists do not want to play the role of a 'change agent' in society. Others however, don't hesitate to align themselves to social movements or even initiate them themselves. The possibility of artists to stimulate change enables us to conceptualize them as 'change agents' (ibid.).

In this chapter, my goal was to define the terms 'politically engaged art' and 'artivism'. This is however, not an unambitious endeavour, because of the immense variety of terms which are all referring to the same or similar topic and which cannot be separated clearly from each other: Political art, politically engaged art, activist art, artivism, socially engaged art, socially conscious art, politically conscious art etc. Initially, I intended to employ only one term with a clear definition throughout this paper. But at the end I decided not to do so. The different sources and authors I refer to in this paper are using diverse terms to denominate politically engaged art, and I did not want to change the terms they are using when citing or referring to them. What unites these terms is the lens through which I will examine the subject in this paper: it is art that is not only *political*, because, as I explained all art is created in relation to the political. It is rather art that is *critical* towards a given hegemonic order dominant narrative. This leads us to the next chapter.

3. Critical Art as a Counter-Hegemonic Practice

In this chapter I want to illustrate the relation between art and the 'political' and my understanding of the 'political' within the context of this paper in a more in-depth manner. Therefore, I will refer to Belgian political theorist Chantal Mouffe's conceptualization of political 'antagonism' and her 'agonistic' model of public space. Mouffe envisages art as an agonistic intervention in public space. Mouffe follows a hegemonic approach, drawing on Gramsci and other post-structuralist thinkers. Regarding the relations between art and politics – particularly the issue of art strategies in politics and political strategies in art – Mouffe's hegemonic approach is particularly fruitful. Furthermore, she explicitly highlights the critical

potential of art and delineates how artistic practices can play a crucial role in voicing dissent and subverting a given hegemonic order. That's why I chose her approach as a theoretical foundation in this paper.

3.1. Politics as Antagonistic Struggle within a Hegemonic Order

Within Mouffe's approach, two key concepts are necessary to grasp the nature of the political: "antagonism" and "hegemony" (Mouffe 2013: 47). Mouffe recognizes the hegemonic nature of every kind of social order and envisages society as the "product of a series of practices whose aim is to establish order in a context of contingency" (ibid.). Hegemonic practices are the practices of articulation through which a given order is created, though every order is temporary and precarious. It is the expression of a particular structure of power relations, predicated on the exclusion of other possibilities that have been repressed and could be reactivated (ibid.). Every hegemonic order thus could be challenged by counter-hegemonic practices (ibid.). Following this view, the dimension of the political depicts the ever-present possibility of antagonism (ibid.). For Mouffe, the public space is the battleground where different hegemonic projects are confronted (Mouffe 2008: 10). Public spaces are always plural and the agonistic confrontation extends to diverse discursive surfaces (ibid.). The challenge of the hegemonic order is thus not limited to traditional institutions, but takes place at a multiplicity of sites.

The dominant tendency in liberal thought is characterized by a rationalist and individualistic approach, which is – according to Mouffe - unable to adequately grasp the pluralistic nature of the social world (Mouffe 2008: 8). Contrary to the prevailing perception of the public sphere, Mouffe takes an agonist approach to public space. For Jürgen Habermas, the public sphere is the field where it is attempted to establish a rational consensus (Mouffe 2014: 142). By contrast the basic assumption of the agonistic approach is, that this rational consensus is conceptually impossible, because there is no possibility of a final reconciliation of those conflicting views within society (ibid.). For Mouffe, democratic politics are characterized by a hegemonic struggle and the antagonism inherent in this struggle reveals the limit of any rational consensus (Mouffe 2008: 8). The agonistic struggle lies at the core of a vibrant democracy. Mouffe's understanding of public space impacts the way how artistic and cultural practices are related to. From the viewpoint of the agonistic approach, critical art is formed by a multitude of artistic practices which are pointing to the fact that there are alternatives to the current hegemonic order (Mouffe 2014: 143).

3.2. The Hegemonic Order of Neoliberal Capitalism and the discursive Construction of Subjectivities

When Mouffe speaks about hegemonic order, she refers to the current hegemony of neoliberal capitalism, which she describes as the “result of a set of political interventions in a complex field of economic, legal, and ideological forces” (Mouffe 2013: 48). Although any given order is the outcome of discursive constructions, the political origin of the current neoliberal hegemony has been erased so that neoliberal practices and institutions appear as the outcome of natural processes and “the forms of identification that they have produced have crystallized into identities which are taken for granted. This is how the ‘common sense’ which constitutes the framework for what is considered as possible and desirable has been established” (ibid.). In this context “civil society” is of central political importance, because it is the space where a certain perception of the world is build and specific forms of subjectivities are created – this is what Gramsci termed “Common Sense” (Mouffe 2014: 138). Gramsci highlights the importance of artistic and cultural practices in the development and dissemination of “Common Sense”, stressing the crucial role these practices can play in both the reproduction and disarticulation of an existing hegemony (Mouffe 2014: 139). The “Common Sense” can be transformed by counter hegemonic interventions, and artistic practices can play a key role within that (ibid.). This requires “the production of new subjectivities capable of subverting the existing hegemony” (Mouffe 2013 :48).

In the 20th and 21st centuries new practices of production emerged, labour processes changed, new forms of social relationships developed and with them new modes of subjectivation came into being (Mouffe 2013: 45,48).

“In modern production, the control of the souls (Foucault) plays a strategic role in governing affects and passions. The forms of exploitation [...] have been replaced by new ones which require the constant creation of new needs and an incessant desire for the acquisition of goods. [...] It is the construction of the very identity of the consumer which is at stake in the techniques of advertising. [...] Indeed, nowadays to buy something is to enter into a specific world, to become part of an imagined community. To maintain its hegemony, the neoliberal system needs to permanently mobilize people’s desires and shape their identities.” (Mouffe 2013: 48f.).

For this reason, the field of production of subjectivity has become of strategical importance. Mouffe sees one of the main tasks of critical art within this field: to produce new subjectivities

and new worlds (Mouffe 2014: 135). The political potential of art becomes clear, when we consider forms of artistic resistance as agonistic interventions in the context of an anti-hegemonic battle (Mouffe 2014: 136). As I already outlined, hegemony is the result of discursive constructions. Similarly, identities are not pre-given, but the result of processes of identification. They are discursively constructed (Mouffe 2008: 11). Therefore, a counter-hegemonic politics needs to become active in this field of discursive articulations and promote other forms of identification (Mouffe 2014: 140). In this way, artistic and cultural practices can create spaces of resistance which undermine the social imaginary necessary to uphold the capitalist system (l.c. 138). Mouffe relates her theoretic model to the hegemonic order of neoliberal capitalism. At this point I would like to clarify that capitalism – although it became a worldwide paradigm - is not the sole existing hegemonic order and that Mouffe’s approach is equally applicable to other forms of hegemony, such as for example patriarchy, heteronormativity, colonialism and neo-colonialism, or the hegemonic order of a particular political regime, as I will show in chapter 8 and particularly chapter 9.

3.3. Critical Art as a Counter-Narrative to the Dominant Hegemonic Order

For Mouffe, art and politics are not two separate realms. She claims that the political has an aesthetic dimension and art has a political dimension:

“Indeed, from the point of view of the theory of hegemony, art practices play a role in the constitution and maintenance of a given symbolic order, or in challenging it, and that is where their political dimension resides. The political, for its part, concerns the symbolic ordering of social relations and that is where its aesthetic dimension resides” (Mouffe 2015: 69).

As for Mouffe all art is political in a way, she uses the term ‘critical art’ to refer to art practices that foment dissent. Their critical dimension consists in making visible, what the dominant consensus obscures and obliterates, and to give voice to all those who are silenced by the existent hegemony (Mouffe 2014: 143). Mouffe assumes that critical art practices can play an important role in subverting the dominant hegemony within the agonistic model of public space, “visualizing that which is repressed and destroyed” within the hegemonic order (Mouffe 2008: 6). A given hegemony is constructed through specific articulations and that means that the struggle against the dominant order also means to try to establish other forms of articulations in the public spheres (Mouffe 2014: 141). However, the transformation of political identities can never solely be achieved through rational appeals but only by mobilising affects, opening the way for other forms of identification (l.c. 143). If critical artistic practices

can play a role in the creation of new forms of subjectivities, it is because they provoke emotional reactions, they address people on an affective level (l.c. 148). This is exactly where the strength of artistic practices resides: in its ability to make us see things in a different light and to realize other possibilities (ibid.). But in order to construct “oppositional identities” it is not enough to foster a process of “de-identification”. The second move, the moment of “re-identification” is decisive (Mouffe 2013: 50).

“The critique and disarticulation of the existing hegemony needs to be accompanied by a process of re-articulation [...] the crucial question for a radical democratic politics [is]: how to establish a “chain of equivalences” among the different democratic struggles. [...] Cultural and artistic practices could play an important role in the agonistic struggle because they are a privileged terrain for the construction of new subjectivities.” (Mouffe 2013: 50).

If we consider critical artistic practices as counter hegemonic interventions, it becomes possible to understand the crucial place of the cultural dimension: artistic practices can contribute to the creation of a multitude of spaces in which the existing hegemony is contested (Mouffe 2014: 158). By developing new practices and subjectivities critical art can be conducive in undermining the existing power configurations and subvert the dominant hegemony (ibid.). Obviously, this does not mean that a single artist or a single critical artwork would be able to direct society to a new course. It is rather that the “sum of artistic statements and the diversity of creative expressions, whether they are direct in their intention or experimental, have a cumulative effect. Artists [and cultural mediators], in facilitating artistic and cultural processes, become subtle activists for social change.” (Gad 2017: 84). The multitude of different critical enunciations might converge towards a “collective will” (see Gramsci) in order to challenge a given hegemonic order. A variety of different organizations, initiatives, artists, collectives, activists might work towards social change, might struggle to challenge a given order – each with their own means and agendas -. However, there will only be significant change if so-called “chains of equivalences” can be established among the different democratic struggles, if their diverse demands can be articulated around a “collective will” (Mouffe 2013: 50). Over a longer period, artists may contribute – albeit partially – to the transformation of a political system and / or of social behaviour. Yet, the impact or success of artistic actions can hardly be measured and not be predicted: only afterwards can clear reference points be identified (Gad 2017: 8).

Although I consider Mouffe's conceptualization of critical art a fruitful approach, the question I ask myself is whether her agonistic approach is suitable to grasp the nature of politically engaged art in the African context, as the political conditions of Western societies on which she bases her approach differ notably from the political backgrounds in African societies. The political history and conditions in Europe and the US are – although strongly connected and entangled with each other - different from the political history and social conditions in postcolonial states. The answer I would give to this question is: yes and no. On the one hand, her envisagement of critical art and the crucial role of cultural and artistic actors is fruitful in order to examine the politically engaged artistic productions in Sub-Saharan Africa. On the other hand, it is vital to take the different historical, political and social backgrounds of African societies into consideration, namely the history of colonialism, decolonization and the political context of postcolonial nation-states. Therefore, I will now shift the focus away from activist / politically engaged art practices in Western contexts to the postcolonial setting in Sub-Saharan Africa.

4. Politically engaged Art in the African Postcolony

Both the agonistic approach of Chantal Mouffe, as the definitions of politically engaged art proposed by Florian Malzacher and Claudia Mesch are predominantly based on examples of politically engaged art in the Western context. During my research for this paper I came across a variety of authors who are dealing with conceptions of political art in the Western context, but what I didn't find was an elaborated theory of political art in Africa. Yet, various instances of politically engaged art practices and artists can be witnessed throughout the African continent. As this paper is concerned with politically engaged art in Sub-Saharan Africa, it is now necessary to widen the scope and take other sources into consideration which are specifically dealing with artistic practices on the African continent - namely the work of Okwui Enwezor - although these are not always explicitly referring to politically engaged art, but to art in general. These works will help to locate politically engaged art within the African context e.g. within the "postcolonial constellation". Furthermore, I will bring forward the arguments of Willems & Obadare who are conceptualising popular art in Africa as an everyday form of resistance within the realm of informal civic agency, for this is much in line with Mouffe's consideration of critical art as counter-hegemonic practices, but with a specific focus on the African continent and popular art within the context of the postcolonial nation-state.

Therefore, it makes sense to connect their arguments so that we obtain a more nuanced view on politically engaged art in Africa.

First, I would like to clarify, that I will not differentiate between so-called 'high' art and popular art. Popular art must be considered as an important part of contemporary 'African' art; it is often conveying direct political messages and is therefore playing a crucial role as 'everyday form of resistance' towards a given hegemonic order, as I will outline in this chapter. Mudimbe differentiates three main currents in contemporary African arts: a tradition-inspired trend, a modernist trend, and popular art (1999: 36). Popular artworks are somehow situated between the tradition-inspired and the modernist currents. Popular artworks "comment vividly on historical events, social issues, and the cultural struggles of working-class and rural peoples" (l.c. 37). Popular art stands in contrast to a 'high' culture "sanctioned by international authority and by the respectability of the European art genres" (ibid.). Popular art brings into circulation new readings of social injustices (ibid.). Popular artworks often relate to a specific region and its history and they want to transmit a clear message (l.c. 46). Popular artists "try to name and unveil even the unnameable and the taboo", aiming "to bring together art, the past, and the community's dreams for a better tomorrow." (Mudimbe 1999: 46).

4.1. Politically engaged Art within the 'Postcolonial Constellation'

Understanding the works of contemporary art in Africa requires to consider the "surrounding historical atmosphere, the conditions of production, and the cultural, political, and epistemological legacies of postcolonialism" (Enwezor & Okeke-Agulu 2009: 11). Works of art are always related to the temporal and spatial context in which they are created, they are often seen as the reflections of their surrounding social and political conditions (Negash 2004: 186). Artistic works provide the site for political discourse because they are influenced by their "historical circumstances in *time and space*"; on these grounds, it is imperative to consider the impact of colonialism and its aftermath, and the insights of postcolonial critiques when talking about (political) art in Africa (Negash 2004: 188).

"social, political, and economic events [...] – from postcolonial critiques of the state form and neo-liberalism, to responses to globalization and the severe austerity measures of recent periods, the reform movements of democratization, state failure, migration, exile, the rise of political Islam, the struggle against apartheid – have all profoundly affected and reshaped the field of contemporary African cultural and artistic production" (Enwezor & Okeke-Agulu 2009: 11)

Okwui Enwezor argues that contemporary art today is located within a “postcolonial constellation”. Contemporary art finds itself within a “complex geopolitical configuration that defines all systems of production and relations of exchange as a consequence of globalization after imperialism”; this geopolitical configuration encompasses what he calls “the postcolonial constellation”, which is shaping the modes of subjectivity and creativity today (Enwezor 2003: 58). The geopolitical framework that defines global relations can be understood as a “set of arrangements of deeply entangled relations and forces that are founded by discourses of power” (Enwezor 2003: 58). “The postcolonial constellation is an understanding of a particular historical order that configures the relationship between political, social, and cultural realities, artistic spaces and epistemological histories” (Enwezor 2003: 77).

Enwezor denominates certain historical effects which address the postcolonial conditions of the contemporary art world today. Among them is the explosion of and the heterogeneous nature of artistic procedures and the emergence of new critical forces. He also mentions the globalization of economic production and culture, and the technological and digital developments that fused them (Enwezor 2003: 72f). Central to the topic of this paper is importance of decolonization and national identity. Enwezor underscores not to underestimate the impact of the dissolution of colonialism on art and culture (ibid.):

“Decolonization and national identity represent the bookends of two concomitant projects of late global modernity. On the one hand, decolonization portends to restore sundered traditions to their “proper” pasts, while national identity through the state works assiduously to reinvent and maintain them in the present and for the future. [...] Decolonization, qua the postcolonial, transforms the subject of cultural discourse, while the nation-state reinvents the identity of the artist” (Enwezor 2003: 70).

In this way, global modernity – in the guise of the modern nation-state – has shaped the political identity of the modern and contemporary artist (ibid.). Modern artistic subjectivity in Africa is thus strongly related to political independence and the overcoming of colonialism.

4.2. Popular Art as a Site of Resistance in Postcolonial African Nation-States

Wendy Willems & Ebenezer Obadare are looking at popular art not from an artistic point of view, but from the angle of ‘civic agency’. In their book “Civic Agency in Africa. Arts of resistance in the 21st century” they argue that Western notions of state and civil society provide only a limited understanding of how power and resistance operate in the African

context. With the principle of informality as a template, they examine various modes through which Africans contend with power. Resistance takes place against the backdrop of deep fractures in state sovereignty, the remnants of colonial rule and the constraints of a global, neoliberal economic system (Willems & Obadare 2014). They conceptualise popular art as an everyday form of resistance.

In modern Africa, histories of resistance have often been equated with the history of colonialism (Willems & Obadare 2014: 2). Postcolonial theories and critique played an important role re-inscribing the agency of Africans and emphasizing their multiple attempts in resisting colonial oppression and liberating themselves from the colonial state (ibid.). After independence, many postcolonial states morphed into intolerant one-party-states, reproducing the repressive framework of the colonial state (Willems & Obadare 2014: 3). Therefore, the postcolonial state lacks a certain legitimacy and rootedness in society (l.c. 10). While anti-colonial resistance dominated postcolonial historiography in the 1960s and '70s, a new paradigm emerged in the 1990s. It focused on the way in which Africans contested postcolonial governments with one crucial concept at its heart: "civil society" (l.c. 3). The notion of 'civil society' gained popularity in the wake of the so-called 'third wave of democratization' when we could observe the gradual disappearance of governments under one-party rule and the introduction of multi-party-democracies in Africa and elsewhere (ibid.). Within this new paradigm civil society organisations (CSO) or non-governmental organizations (NGO) became endowed with an important role in resisting autocratic regimes (ibid.). In the 1990s and 2000s African resistance was therefore largely equated with the activities of formal civil society organizations (ibid.). However, the narrow focus on formally organised civil society masked the rich historical legacy of civil society organizations and activities on the continent which were not defined in opposition to the state or were organised along the lines of kinship, religion, ethnicity or local 'tradition' (Willems & Obadare 2014: 4). Furthermore, the normative and Eurocentric concept of civil society excluded other forms of organising or resistance which are not confined to a defined institutional arena (ibid.). Therefore, among others, Willems & Obadare propose to shift the focus of attention away from formal civil society to informal modes of civic agency. They suggest a broader conception and examination of civic agency taking the "vastness of the non-governmental sphere and the various socio-economic, political, and artistic praxes that animate it" into consideration (Willems & Obadare 2014: 5). Politically engaged artists belong to this real of informal civic agents, that's why the

contribution of Willems & Obadare is fruitful in this context to examine how critical artistic practices can be conceptualised as – open or hidden - everyday forms of resistance towards a given hegemonic order.

African resistance has often been solely understood as reaction to domination by the nation-state. However, African Nation-states are situated within a fundamentally inequitable global system (Willems & Obadare 2014: 6). They face exogenous constraints – represented for example by the restrictions imposed by international financial institutions and global power relations in general (ibid.). The persistent global constraints and the imposition of neo-liberal structural adjustment programmes forced many postcolonial states to deregulate their economies and curtail bureaucratic control (10). Willems & Obadare therefore argue that African states operate as “quasi-states” within a context of “fractured sovereignty” (ibid.). Accordingly, resistance is at the same time ‘local’, but also “frequently transgressive, and engages with or is targeted at powerful global forces” (ibid.). Drawing upon Foucault’s concept of power it becomes possible to discuss the multiple levels at which power is reproduced and contested (l.c. 7). ‘Power’ here is understood as a “network of relations which can be both constraining and enabling. The subjects which power relationships constitute are always both experiencing and exercising power” (l.c. 6).

4.2.1. Popular Art as Everyday Form of Resistance

Willems & Obadare are contesting the tendency to associate resistance with “heroic, successful, large-scale revolutions and rebellions” (l.c. 7) shifting the focus to everyday forms of resistance that are often positioned at the nascent stage of processes of social change (l.c. 8). Resistance should not strictly be understood as “referring to physical and material protests in the streets, but comprise a broader set of practices, often hidden and invisible, used by the dominated to contest those who make attempts to dominate them” (l.c. 9). Their understanding of resistance encompasses a wide-ranging collection of cultural practices, including artistic practices, popular culture respectively. Willems & Obadare conceptualise popular culture as discursive forms of resistance, powerfully mediated through texts, words, music, images and other artistic expressions (l.c. 14).

“While formal mass media such as television, radio and the press in Africa have often been constrained in resisting state or corporate power due to censorship practices or specific – often transnational – ownership patterns, popular culture has been a crucial space allowing for occasional ‘moments of freedom’, enabling the ruled to resist their rulers.” (Willems & Obadare 2014: 14).

As Enwezor points out in his examination of critical African art in the 1980s, the manifestation of art as critique of the social and political in the postcolonial state depended on artists’ commitment to an engagement with their local publics (Enwezor 2009: 32). Contemporary art within the African public sphere constituted a mode of social transaction, and as such a “vehicle for participating in debates about governance and popular sovereignty” (ibid.). Popular art manifested in diverse, often subtle forms of resistance and critical tactics in music, literature, and visual arts (ibid.). Indeed, Enwezor claims, that the body of work produced by artists long classified as “popular art” is “*one of the most important instances of social and political engagement by contemporary African artists*” (ibid.). Artistic practices respectively popular art provides a crucial space for resistance and prove to be important instances of political engagement by African artists. That’s why I will focus on enunciations of popular art, rather than on ‘high’ art in this paper.

5. The Conditions of Politically engaged Art in Sub-Saharan Africa: The Antagonism between the Postcolonial State and the Arts

In this chapter I will explore the conditions under which artists in post-colonial African states are situated. Although there are other forces that may restrict artistic freedom – namely economic or market forces, religious authorities and others – I will concentrate on the relation between the state and the arts. I will refer to Kenyan writer and playwright Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o and his exploration of the relationship between the arts and the state in postcolonial Africa. Although the book “Penpoints, Gunpoints, and Dreams: Towards a Critical Theory of the Arts and the State in Africa” was written 20 years ago, but there are still pertinent insights to draw to from Ngũgĩ’s examination which apply till today. Ngugi’s comment on democratic freedom and artistic expression is relevant to the particular precondition of the artist in post-colonial societies. Ngũgĩ asserts that in postcolonial Africa the arts are at war with the state. This image of ‘war’ can be linked to Chantal Mouffe’s notion of antagonism, as both and Ngũgĩ Mouffe refer to a hegemonic order which can be challenged by critical artistic practices.

5.1. The Relation between the State and the Arts in Postcolonial Africa

In his book published in 1998 Ngũgĩ explores the relationship between the art of the state and the state of art in the context of postcolonial African nation-states: between artists and the guardians of a modern state (wa Thiong'o 1998a: 1). Ngũgĩ claims that "There is a war going on between art and the state" and that the state exercises hegemonic control over most of the population in colonial and postcolonial states (wa Thiong'o 1998a: 2f). "The particular status of the neocolonial state as in most countries in Africa brings naturally an archetypal conflict between the state of art and the art of the state" (Negash 2003: 134). Although his focus lies on postcolonial and autocratic state, he asserts that even in democratic societies the relationship between artist and ruler is still problematic and always potentially conflictual (wa Thiong'o 1998b:1). The reason for actual or potential conflict lies within the nature of art and the nature of the state.

The nation-state in Africa was largely introduced during the era of colonialism. Its function is to "ensure that the various forces in society keep their place in the social fabric by policing rules that are often codified into laws" (wa Thiong'o 1998b:2). Yet, the appearance of art precedes that of the state; and in societies that did not have a state, the function of holding together society was carried out by culture (ibid.). Following Ngũgĩ's argumentation, the reason why artists are often seen as a threat to the state lies in "their very functions in society as two authorities, one moral, the other formal and legal, trying to legislate for the well-being of society" (l.c. 3). Ngũgĩ isolates four key features of art to illuminate the antagonism between arts and the state which I will outline here briefly.

The first feature concerns the "godlike aspect to art": in many cultures, there has always been an association of creativity with divinity, as the essence of both God and art is creativity (l.c. 3f). And creativity is inconceivable without change. "Change, the end product of all creativity, is both an expression and the result of movement. [...] There is no art without motion, no change of any kind." (l.c. 4). On the other side there is the state, and throughout history the sovereign was often said to be God's representative on earth. The effort of the state is to conserve and preserve society as it is. Thus, the state stands for stability, whereas art stands for creativity and motion. A postcolonial state will inevitably come into conflict with any words and images that embody change (l.c. 6).

The second feature lies in the exploratory character of art: “Art has more questions than answers. Art starts with a position of not knowing and it seeks to know.” (l.c. 7). A state, on the other hand, which regards itself as a holder of truth, which takes absolute power for absolute knowledge, must regard those who ask questions as “rebels, subversives, madmen” (wa Thiong’o 1998b: 7). Ngũgĩ defines art as “conscious dreaming in words, music, or colours” (l.c. 8). The one who dreams has the freedom to ask any question even of the most taboo and sacred, and the state with its certitude is irritated by this uncontrollable character of dreams (l.c. 10). Visions of a better life impose questions on the present order of things - questions that can be a form of criticism to the status quo - and this is irritating to an autocratic state (ibid.).

Within the third feature Ngũgĩ compares artistic processes to a mirror which reflects both the surface and the deeper nature of things (wa Thiong’o 1998b: 11). This “innocent” mirror shows everything – things not everybody wants to see, things the authorities might want to keep hidden. Ngũgĩ argues that the neo-colonial system is built on a structure of lies, because “it acts as if it is free and independent while it is essentially a continuation of the hated colonial system” (l.c. 12). This is much in line with Obadare & Willems who illustrated that most postcolonial states reproduced the repressive frameworks of the former colonial states.

The fourth feature Ngũgĩ attributes to art is related to “voice”: art tries to give back voice to the silenced (l.c. 14). Whereas the neo-colonial state tries to silence the population, art is breaking this code of silence, it gives voice to silence (l.c. 15). “Writers in contemporary Africa are saying what the majority can actually see but about which they remain in enforced silence. [...] Art was only making people more intensely aware of that which is already there.” (l.c. 16). This feature reminds us of Chantal Mouffe’s conceptualisation of critical art as making visible the invisible, and giving voice to those silenced by a hegemonic order.

These four features of art and their opposites in the state reveal the agonistic nature between them, but only when “functioning to its logical conclusion as the state, and art functioning as art” as Ngũgĩ outlined (wa Thiong’o 1998b: 17). That is why Ngũgĩ claims that art and the state are “continuously at war”. However, this inherent conflict might not always be that clear and visible, as the state does not always act obviously repressive against all artistic creations and practices, and not all artistic creations stand obviously in opposition to the state (ibid.).

5.2. The State's Performance of Power over the Arts

The antagonism between the postcolonial nation state and the arts becomes more evident the more openly opposition, critique and dissent is expressed through artistic practices, which is especially true for politically engaged art/critical art. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o isolates five principal ways in which the state has tried – and still tries – to react to the collective power of the four features of art (l.c. 18).

The first way for the state to appropriate art is through co-option of the artists. As Edward Said pointed out in "Culture and Imperialism", artists "are in the history of their societies, shaping and shaped by that history and their social experience in different measure" (Said 1993: xxii). That means artists may engage in critical or resistant art practices but they may equally come from or be sympathetic to the social stratum in power (wa Thiong'o 1998b: 18). The state may also buy their services outright. When it comes to co-option, artists will produce an art "that seems to negate the notion of change and hence is flattering to the believers in the eternal stability of the present. Or they may produce artistic objects that try actually to embody the didactic and ideological needs of the state." (ibid.). They won't produce art that shows the rulers of the state in a negative light. If co-option of the artist fails, the state may ban the art works, which has – according to Ngũgĩ – been a norm in colonial and postcolonial states (l.c. 19). Otherwise the state may resort to censorship practices: "in censorship the state tries to control the distribution and consumption of the work of art. But when official censorship fails, the state may try to induce self-censorship..." (ibid.). Another possibility is to reconcile art and the state by having artists as heads of state. In Africa, there was for example Léopold Sédar Senghor, a poet and founding father of the *Négritude*¹ movement and ideology, who became the first president of Senegal after independence. However, even if there were some examples of artists as heads of states throughout history, Ngũgĩ is convinced about the impossibility of an absolute reconciliation between art and the state: "Art is more powerful when working as an ally of the powerless than it is when allied to repression. For its essential nature is freedom, while that of the state is the restriction and regulation of freedom." (wa Thiong'o 1998b: 20). When the state failed to contain art by these stratagems, it tries to

¹Négritude is a movement and an ideology, developed mainly by francophone intellectuals of the African Diaspora in the 1930s. It is deeply rooted in ideas of Pan-Africanism, strongly disavowing colonialism and aiming to challenge the theory of race hierarchy and black inferiority. It provided a unifying and liberating instrument for black Francophone students in the first half of the twentieth century in search of their identity (Onwumere & Egbulonu 2014: 148f).

exercise complete control over the artist in two different ways. The first is to maim his mind and body, either through imprisonment - attempting to break the mind of the artist by isolating him – or through physical torture to coerce the artist into total submission (l.c. 20f). The other way is to expel the artist from his society through exile or death (l.c. 21). Prison, exile, and death are the most extreme measures a state may resort to, they present acts of “removing the artist from the territorial stage, leaving the state as the sole performer of power” (ibid.).

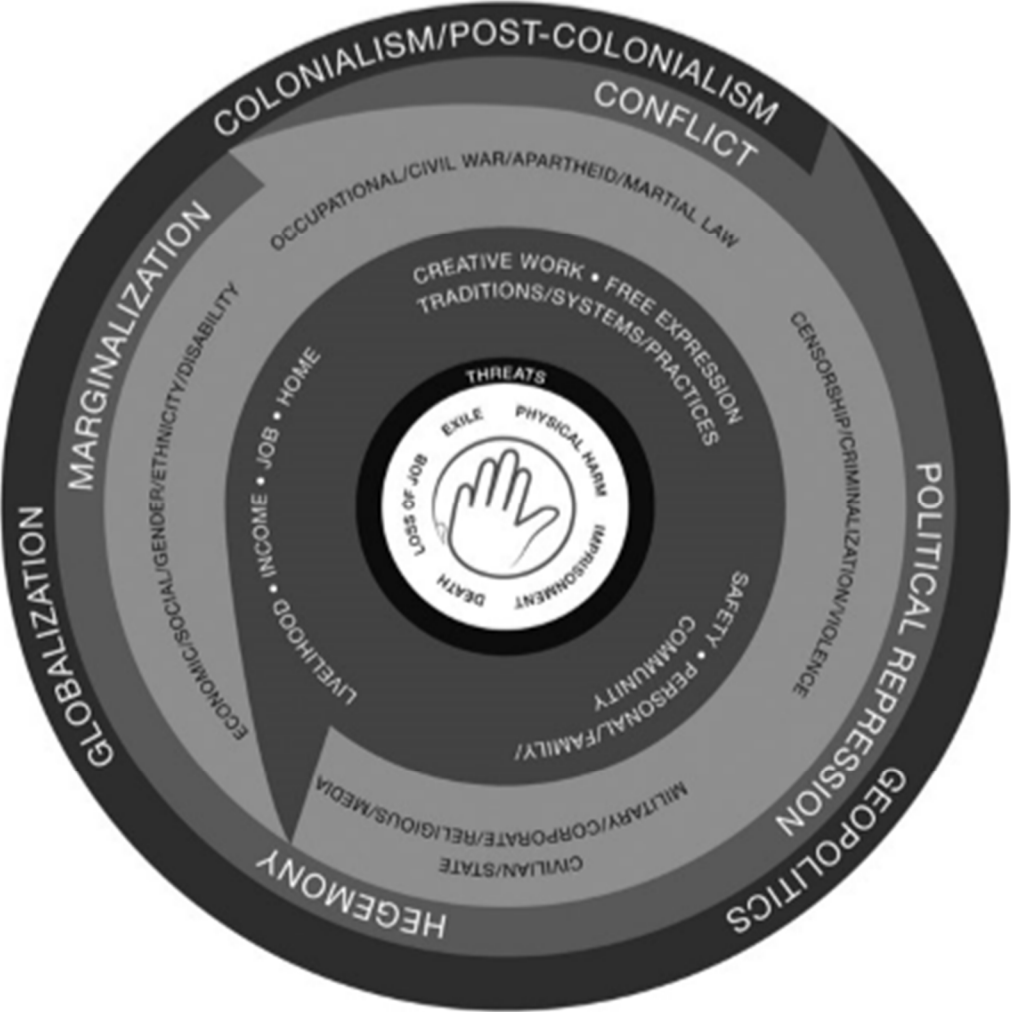


Figure 1 - Visualization of the Artist in Danger

6. The State of Freedom of Artistic Expression in Africa and beyond

After having outlined the relation between the state and the arts on a theoretical level, based upon the argumentation of postcolonial thinker and writer Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, I will take a closer look on the status of freedom of artistic expression in Africa. Therefore, I will refer to the “Freemuse Annual Statistics on Censorship and Attacks on Artistic Freedom” 2016, the Report of the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights 2013, and the “Art Watch Africa Monitoring Freedom of Expression Arterial Network Report” from 2013 that will shed further light on the specific situation of artistic freedom and repression in Africa. For the African context, there are almost no specific statistics to find about the state of freedom of artistic expression. The only survey for this particular geographic area is that from Arterial Network. As it was released back in 2013, I will combine their outcomes with the Freemuse Statistics which are more up to date. Freemuse is an independent international non-governmental organisation advocating for and defending artistic freedom of expression.² I will start with a short overview of the status of freedom of expression worldwide, for many of the findings of the Freemuse statistics are transferable to the African context and reflect the insights of the Artwatch Africa report. I chose to illustrate the outcomes of these studies, as they demonstrate the conditions under which (critical) artists are situated in Africa and beyond, and the particular threats and repressions they are facing. The findings of the surveys are complementing in an empirical way, what Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o outlined on a theoretical basis.

6.1. Artistic Freedom of Expression under Threat

“All persons enjoy the right to freedom of artistic expression and creativity, which includes the right to freely experience and contribute to artistic expressions and creations, through individual or joint practice, to have access to and enjoy the arts, and to disseminate their expressions and creations.”

(Report of the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights, Farida Shaheed 2013, p. 3)

Freedom of expression is a fundamental human right, but even though censorship is universally condemned, it is still commonly practiced all over the world to different degrees (Negash 2003: 133). Censorship “encompasses all socially structured proscriptions or prescriptions which inhibit or prohibit dissemination of ideas, information, images, and other messages through a society’s channels of communication whether these obstructions are secured by political, economic, religious, or other systems of authority.” (Jansen 1991: 221). Especially in moments of economic and / or political instability, censorship becomes a tool

² <http://freemuse.org/about-us/>

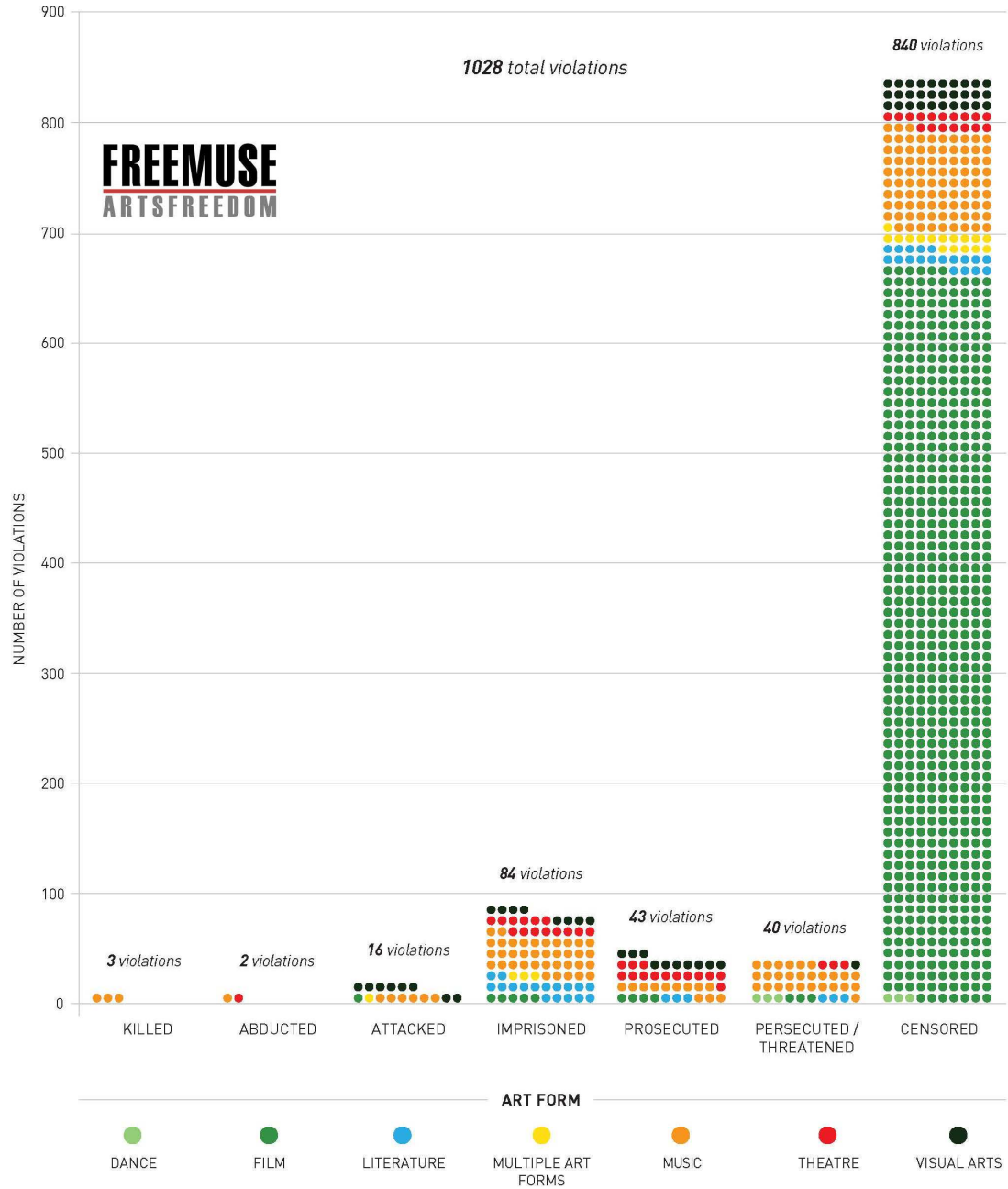
governments resort to in order to regulate, control or even silence the platforms artists use to criticise and highlight societal excesses (Mataga 2016: 134). The issue of freedom of artistic expression and repression of artists' rights seems to be of growing interest within the past years. Within this context two milestones have been achieved, directing the focus of attention on the state of freedom of arts worldwide: In 2012 the first World Conference on Artistic Freedom of Expression took place in Denmark, while the second milestone was the report by the United Nations Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights, Farida Shaheed on "The Right to freedom of artistic expression and creativity" published in 2013. The Conference and the report were two important landmarks pointing to the difficult conditions under which artists worldwide are situated.

"Arts have the power to change the world, either by attacking or ridiculing those in authority, by bringing overlooked issues to public attention in an unusual and memorable way" (Denselow 2013: 6). It is probably this feature of art that makes artists so dangerous for those desperate to hold on power and why artistic expressions and creations are coming under particular attack (Denselow 2013: 6; Shaheed 2013: 3). According to Freemuse there is indeed a worrying trend to observe: artistic freedom is increasingly coming under threat and the vulnerable situation of artists in the current global context has worsened considerably.

The Freemuse Annual Statistic shows that in 2016 there were 1028 attacks on artists and violations of their rights registered across 78 countries (Freemuse 2017: 8). Accordingly, the number of cases doubled compared to 2015. In 2016 there were 188 serious violations – which include killings, abductions, attacks, imprisonment, prosecution and persecution and threats – and 840 acts of censorship (ibid.). However, these figures need to be regarded with caution, as violations of artistic freedom continue to be under-reported in many countries (ibid.). The sad reality is, that the real number of attacks and violations is most probably much higher (ibid.). According to Freemuse, it is almost impossible to report "on closed societies or determine the number of acts of self-censorship carried out by artists due to intimidation, cultural and social pressure, or living under regimes that threaten punishment for artistic expression of any or all kinds" (ibid.).

► VIOLATIONS OF ARTISTIC FREEDOM IN 2016 BY VIOLATION TYPE

This bar graph shows the number of violations of artistic freedom separated into violation type columns and colour-coded art forms within the columns.



The large number in the Censored category is due to two censorship cases – one in Ukraine and one in Kuwait – wherein their governments released blacklists of 544 films and 54 films, respectively. Freemuse considers each of those censored films to be individual instances of censorship.

Figure 2 - Violations of Artistic Freedom in 2016 by Violation Type

According to the Freemuse statistics the worst violators committing serious violations on artistic freedom in 2016 were Iran, Turkey, Egypt, Nigeria, China, Russia, Malaysia, Syria, Tanzania and Uzbekistan, committing 67% of total serious violations (Freemuse 2017: 9). Although Iran and other parts of the Middle East seem to dominate the statistics, many African countries are also recorded for their restriction of freedom of artistic expression and for depriving artists of their rights (Arterial Network 2016). Among the African countries Egypt committed the most cases of censorship and repression while Nigeria and Tanzania take up second and third place. The statistics do not only show which countries are committing the most violations of artistic rights, but they also highlight which artistic disciplines are the most vulnerable to violent repressions. Music continued to be the art form that suffered the most violations of artistic freedom, while 2016 also showed a rise in serious violations on theatre and visual arts – these art forms combined accounted for 77% of worst affected art forms for serious violations (Freemuse 2017: 9). In the realm of censorship film overtook music to be the most censored art form in 2016, while music ranked second (ibid.). Music was usually listed as the most targeted discipline for repression, in 2016 however, cinema came particularly under threat. These two art forms combined accounted for 90% of all acts of censorship (Freemuse 2017: 9). In the case of film, it was mostly a silent repression conducted through censorship, while musicians and singers remain the most vulnerable to physical attacks (Arterial Network 2016). “Restrictions on artistic freedom are often implemented through unclear regulations or directives without legal basis. In too many cases, regulations are implemented without consistency by non-transparent mechanisms with no possibility of appeal.” (Shaheed 2013: 12). This broad overview demonstrates the precarious situation of freedom of artistic expression around the world and how artistic freedom continues to be violated in many countries.

Besides drawing this macro-picture of the state of artistic freedom of expression worldwide, the Freemuse statistics also point to some specific issues and tendencies which came to the fore in 2016. Among them is the tendency that threats and attacks are increasingly coming from non-state actors (Freemuse 2017: 9). Furthermore, there are certain groups of artists who are particularly vulnerable to repression: Women and LGBT³ artists, or art portraying LGBT-

³ LGBT is an abbreviation for ‘gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender’

related content, which is still seen as very controversial around the world (Freemue 2017: 17; Shaheed 2013: 10).

Concerning the rationale of repression, “protection” is frequently used as an excuse for violating artistic freedom. Two arguments are prevailing: the “protection of the state” and “protection of traditional values and religion” – both are not new but still widely used (Freemuse 2017: 22). This reflects the conservative nature of the (postcolonial) state that Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o was highlighting. States often refer to the “necessity of regulating the dissemination of artistic expressions deemed to, for example, call for discrimination, hatred and violence against specific groups or persons, amount to drug propaganda, or contain pornographic content.” (Shaheed 2013: 8). However, in most cases restrictions on artistic freedom reflect a “desire to promote a world vision or narrative while simultaneously blocking all others” (ibid.). According to the United Nations report, in many cases states resort to imposing restrictions authorized under international law in inappropriate or abusive ways, favouring some worldviews over others (Shaheed 2013: 9).

6.2. The State of Freedom of Artistic Expression in Africa

After this general outline about the state of artistic freedom of expression around the world, I want to take a closer look at the specific situation on the African continent referring to “Art Watch Africa – Monitoring Freedom of creative Expression 2013” – a report conducted by Arterial Network. Arterial Network is a “Pan-African, civil-society network of artists, cultural activists, entrepreneurs, enterprises, NGOs, institutions, and donors active in Africa’s creative and cultural sectors”⁴. Their focus lies on supporting the arts through advocacy (through the Artwatch Africa project), capacity building, market access, knowledge management and information dissemination with the overall aim to create “a vibrant, dynamic and sustainable African creative civil society sector engaged in qualitative practice in the arts in their own right, as well as in a manner that contributes to development, human rights and democracy”⁵.

Art Watch Africa is project established by Arterial Network to monitor the challenges and constraints on freedom of creative expression in all African countries, including the various forms of censorship (Arterial Network 2013: 10). Their Report is a compilation of information on the status of creative expression gathered in 47 African countries, addressing the multi-

⁴ <http://www.arterialnetwork.org/about/vision>

⁵ Ibid.

faceted ways in which freedom of creative expression is being curtailed (Arterial Network 2013: 10). Although the results of Art Watch Africa generally conform with the insights of Freemuse, I will illustrate some of their main outcomes so as to draw further light on the specific situation on the African continent. Arterial Network states that there are very serious instances of contraventions and restrictions of freedom of creative expression on the African continent.

“The most common form of repression are threats, followed by arrests, harassment, blacklisting and social marginalization, and finally, attacks. Somalis and Eritrea are the only countries in which assassination and kidnapping occurs. Physical punishment is also found in Sudan and South-Sudan.” (Arterial Network 2013: 126).

Concerning the legal frameworks, Art Watch Africa indicates that the majority of African countries “expressly assert or support cultural rights and freedom of expression in their constitutions, in some laws or, in regional and international conventions to which they are signatories.” (Arterial Network 2013: 123). There is however a disparity of situations in Africa. Whereas some constitutions explicitly protect freedom of creative expression through the protection of “artistic creation” or “artistic creativity”, the right to “artistic / creative expression” or similar phrases, many others protect artistic freedom implicitly through the “rights to freedom of expression, to participate in cultural life, to access culture and cultural development” (ibid.). Even though a majority of countries has adopted cultural policies frameworks, these policies are rarely actually implemented and monitored (ibid.). African governments seem to be ambivalent towards freedom of creative expression: On the one hand, they generally embrace fundamental human rights and freedoms, while on the other hand they show a tendency to give themselves “escape clauses where they may use the law and order as legitimate means to deny people these rights and freedoms.” (l.c. 124). Additionally, in many countries public figures, including those exercising the highest political authority, are not subject to criticism (ibid.). Censorship in Africa exists in many forms. A number of states still have censorship enshrined in their constitutions and set up bodies entrusted with the responsibility of censoring artworks (l.c. 125). In many cases, however, regulations are implemented without consistency by non-transparent mechanisms with no possibility of appeal (ibid.). Music and film are at particular risk in this matter. Self-Censorship is also commonly practiced, although it is difficult to verify (ibid.).

7. Hip Hop Artivism in Senegal: Mobilising Youth for Social Change

In this chapter I will illustrate the case of Hip Hop artivism in Senegal in order to examine how and under which conditions artists may become actively involved in social movements, or even initiating them. I will first introduce Senegal's political framework, as it presents the conditions under which artists are situated in Senegal, and the role of Hip Hop as an artform of protest. Then I will outline the case of the *Y'en a Marre* movement, a youth movement initiated by Hip Hop artists in the fight for political and social change. I chose to illustrate the *Y'en a Marre* movement, because it demonstrates an incisive and insightful example of 'artivism', as the *Y'en a Marre* group merges art and activism to achieve social change. I will especially highlight the strategies the movement employed to create successful artistic activism. The *Y'en a Marre* movement is meant to show an example of artivism as a direct and open form of voicing critique and dissent towards the current hegemonic order.

Senegal is home to a vibrant cultural milieu, which can be traced back to the early postcolonial period, when first president Léopold Sédar Senghor – himself a writer and poet – took it as a major task to promote and foster the arts and culture sector in his country. Senghor “regarded art as a medium of change – a tool that could be used to advance his cultural, political, and economic development plans. Consequently, he envisioned the artist as a representative of and advocate for a new nation” (Harney 2004: 5). Today there exists a vibrant scene of young artists, authors, actors, and musicians who are in a way continuing this Senghorian tradition, envisioning art as a means to produce social change, but at the same time “rethinking the type of nation and citizen that would be formed through this intersection of culture and politics” (Krueger & Bryson 2014: 1). Clearly, Senegal has changed over the decades and it is not the same as it used to be under Senghor. Whereas Senghor generously supported the arts, there is a more overt tension to observe between politics and the arts in the twenty-first century (ibid.).

7.1. Senegal's Political Framework

Senegal's 2001 constitution guarantees the major political and civil rights. Article 10 of the constitution states that “Everyone shall have the right to freely express and disseminate his opinions by word, pen or image or peaceful march, provided that the exercise of these rights shall not undermine the honour of and respect due to other persons, nor threaten public

order.”⁶ Furthermore, Article 8 guarantees individual fundamental freedoms such as “freedom of opinion, freedom of expression, press freedom, freedom of association, freedom to hold meetings, freedom of movement, freedom to protest, cultural freedoms, religious freedoms” and others.⁷ And Article 12 guarantees the right “to freely constitute associations and economic, cultural and social groups as well as societies [...]”.⁸ Although “freedom of artistic expression” is not explicitly mentioned, the constitution provides the ground for artists and artists’ collectives to express themselves freely. However, some provisions of the penal code and the code of penal procedure contain restrictions to the fundamental rights guaranteed in the constitution.

“The restrictions apply to matters such as disrupting public order, attempts against the state’s security or offences against the president of the republic. They are frequently cited as reasons to accuse political opponents or journalists and put them on trial before a tribunal. They also serve as a justification for preventive detentions, sometimes followed by a release without trial” (Camara 2008: 34).

Freedom House considers Senegal as one of Africa’s most stable democracies (Freedom House 2017). Since independence from France in 1960, Senegalese rulers avoided military or harsh authoritarian rule (Freedom House 2009). The first president, Léopold Sédar Senghor exercised de facto one-party rule for almost two decades, but most political restrictions were lifted in 1981 when Abdou Diouf from the same Socialist Party (PS) succeeded Senghor (ibid.). In the subsequent years, Senegal has undergone two peaceful transfers of power between rival parties since 2000, when Abdoulaye Wade came to power. From 2003 till 2008 the Freedom House report regarded Senegal as “free” concerning political rights and civil liberties. In 2008, the rating declined from “free” to “partly free”, due to the growing authoritarian power of president Wade and the ruling party, as well as the increasing marginalization of the opposition (ibid.). In 2012 Wade lost the elections to his opponent Macky Sall. Since then Senegal’s status reverted from “partly free” to “free”, due to free and fair presidential elections, a peaceful rotation of power, and Sall’s efforts to increase government accountability and transparency (Freedom House 2013). “The government’s respect for civil liberties has improved over time, and the country is known for its independent media and

⁶ Constitution of the Republic of Senegal 2001

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

public engagement in free expression and debate.” (Freedom House 2017). However, even if freedoms of expression and assembly remain relatively robust, they continue to face ongoing pressures.

7.2. Senegal’s Media landscape

Regarded as one of Africa’s most stable democracies, Senegal enjoys a diverse media landscape. “The 2001 constitution guarantees freedom of information, and abuses against journalists have been relatively infrequent in recent years”.⁹ Senegal is home to many independent media outlets, one state television channel, and a number of radio stations and newspapers, that are controlled by or affiliated to the state (Freedom House 2016). But there are also several private newspapers that have existed for decades and are widely consumed. Private radio stations have been in existence since 1994, the year which marked the end of the state monopoly of the electronic media (Camara 2008: 33). Radio is by far the most popular medium in Senegal, it is widely used as a source of information, while television and newspapers stay far behind (ibid.).

The state-run media make up an important group regarding their number and (financial and technical) resources, but the influence of the state media on public opinion has significantly declined with the development of private media, which began in the mid-1970s (Camara 2008: 34). “It has become clear that the private media have a greater influence on the political opinion of the Senegalese people” (ibid.).

Legal censorship does not exist in Senegal because “no publication or broadcast is subject to the government’s prior approval” (Camara 2008: 36). This does however not mean, that there are no cases of harassment or ban occurring in Senegal. Self-censorship is widely practiced in both public and private Senegalese media:

“It is the rule in the state-controlled media, which follow the positions outlined by the government. These media avoid making any comments likely to embarrass the political powers with which they are identified. The press as a whole is very careful in its treatment of information relating to religion, especially Muslim brotherhoods, to which 95 per cent of the country’s population are affiliated” (Camara 2008: 38).

⁹ <https://rsf.org/en/senegal>

Although freedom of expression exists in Senegal, restrictions have increased and the fear of state repression has seriously worsened since regime change in 2000 (Camara 2008: 39). Compared to the situation which prevailed until 2000, relations between the regime and the press, journalists and critical artists have become tenser. “The regime in place since 2000 often engages in a trial of strength with the independent press, which it wants to subject to its dictate” (Camara 2008: 39). The worsening of the situation results from the repressive attitude of the government towards journalists, press organisation, and others critical of the government (l.c. 41). Self-censorship and cautious attitudes are becoming more common (ibid.).

7.3. Hip Hop Artists as Agents for Social Change

“Art is no longer just a refuge for disenchanted, ‘lost’ youth; it is a vehicle for change, a weapon most dreaded by moral regulators because it transcends boundaries they can no longer delimit and control. Art thus becomes the space where creativity stimulates social change and reinvents the future”
(Niang 2016: 149)

In Africa, contemporary activism of artists builds on a long historical and cultural connection to the artist as social critic. Today, Africa’s youth have expanded the role of the artist to one that “mobilizes and empowers the youth toward social and political change” (Lo 2014: 27). Especially African Hip Hop artists have engaged in calls for social change throughout Africa, through their music, but also through work with grassroots and civil society organizations (Clark & Koster 2014: ix). Social change often involves serious critique of political leaders or systems, religious institutions, cultural practices or class structures. African Hip Hop artists are integral to these critiques, which are increasingly occurring on both a global and a local level (ibid.). Through Hip Hop music and culture artists engage their communities in a variety of ways to inform, question, challenge, and confront established social structures and political systems (ibid.). The use of Hip Hop as a vehicle for social change speaks to the very nature of Hip Hop culture: a culture of rebellion against the establishment, protest against current conditions, and participation in revolutionary change are ingrained in and define important aspects of Hip Hop culture (Clark & Koster 2014: x). Hip Hop’s early foundation as a powerful tool for social protest attracted African youth, especially in poor, urban communities (l.c. xiii). Within the 2000s renewed activism could be observed in Africa in reaction to government repression and the continuation of failed neoliberal economic policies which resulted in increased levels of poverty (l.c. xvi). “Midway through the 2000s Africa experienced increases

in strikes, protests, marches, and rebellions all over the continent, from the Arab Spring in North Africa, to South African workers' strikes, to Senegal's political protests. "(l.c. xvii).

Many Hip Hop artists make use of the stage and studios to voice their political and social musical messages to educate, uplift, and unite masses, and solidify actions. "Hip Hop Music, revolutionary music, and the flows of social movements can take on many different forms, but they all play a role in signalling a time for Africa's reawakening." (Clark & Koster 2014: xix). Hip Hop artists are not only providing their listeners with words, beats, and sounds of revolution, but "they offer the potential to also provide listeners with the pledges and necessary commitments for change" (ibid.). "Hip Hop nourishes by offering membership that entails a body of cultural knowledge, yet it also nourishes by offering a counter-hegemonic authority and subjectivity [...]" (Perry 2006: 18).

7.4. The Y'en a Marre Youth Movement

Nowhere was the rise of young, politically engaged Senegalese artists more evident than during the re-election campaign of the country's third president, Abdoulaye Wade, in 2011-/2012. Wade, initially serving as an important figure of change, was first elected in 2000 thanks to the *Sopi* Coalition – the first time the country saw a unified political opposition (Krueger Enz & Bryson 2014: 1). Following Senegal's independence from France in 1960 Léopold Sédar Senghor, one of the founders of the *Négritude* movement, became the first president of Senegal, holding office from 1960 until 1980. His successor Abdou Diouf, member of the same *Parti Socialiste du Sénégal* (PS), stayed in power from 1980 till 2000 (Krueger Enz & Bryson 2014: 2). The election of Wade in 2000 thus indicated the end of forty years of one-party rule and was accompanied with much enthusiasm and hope for improvements, especially on the side of younger Senegalese (l.c. 3). However, hope for change soon turned into disillusionment when Wade failed to meet the needs of the Senegalese population in terms of basic needs and employment. Many people became frustrated with the lack of opportunities and the rising cost of basic necessities. A frustration that only increased with the upsurge of wealth in the Wade family and continuing corruption in the country (Lo 2014: 29).

In Senegal, over 63% of the population is under the age of twenty-five. Unemployment is one of the major problems in Senegal. According to the "*Agence nationale de la statistique et de la démographie*", six out of ten unemployed Senegalese were young citizens between fifteen and thirty-four at the end of Wade's presidency in 2011 (Krueger Enz & Bryson 2014: 3). The

high level of unemployment only increased under Wade, despite his promises for improvements of the situation (ibid.). These bleak social circumstances left the youth, who initially supported Wade in the hope for change, even more frustrated.

In 2011, Wade aimed to run for president a third time, although the Senegalese constitution mandates only two legislative periods, but Wade attempted to rewrite the constitution to gain a third term in office (Prause 2013: 23). Together with the detrimental social circumstances this grab for power caused the Senegalese youth to become fed up with Wade's presidency and established politics in general (Krueger Enz & Bryson 2014: 2). As a matter of fact, many of these disillusioned young people took part in the *Y'en a Marre* ("We're fed up" / "Enough is enough") youth movement which evolved during Wade's bid for a third term (ibid.). "This movement provided the means for young Senegalese to respond to Wade's power grab from artistic and cultural positions rather than in the more traditional form of political opposition" (ibid.). Hip hop culture and rap music played a key role in these protests and many activist collectives were formed around Hip Hop (l.c. 4). The most visible group who could mobilise a large part of the youth was the *Y'en a Marre* youth movement, founded in January 2011.

7.4.1. The Birth and Rise of *Y'en a Marre*

Y'en a Marre was created by several Senegalese journalists and high-profile Hip Hop artists who banded together: the journalists Fadel Barro, Denise Safiatou Sow, Alune Sane, Ahmet Seek, Mame Aladji Niase, and Hip Hop artists Thiat and Kilifeu from the group Keur Gui as well as Rapper Fou Malade (Lo 2014: 32). The *Y'en a Marre* founding members sought to create an organization whose resistance would extend beyond journalism and music "in combating the corruption and ineffectiveness of Wade's administration" (Lo 2014: 32). With the use of music, written manifestos, oratory, and striking visual imagery, *Y'en a Marre* quickly garnered the support of youth from various walks of life (Krueger Enz & Bryson 2014: 4). The group Keur Gui was among the first to call upon fellow Hip Hop artists, civil society organizations, and other musicians to join the movement.

"the activism of hip hop artists is part and parcel of the larger role and responsibility of the social critic in Senegal. The lyrics are interwoven into the creation of networks, movements, organizations and structures involving actors from the hip hop community." (Lo 2014: 31f)

The Hip Hop artists of *Y'en a Marre* built upon the socially engaged music which many of their members had already been creating before the birth of the *Y'en a Marre* movement. Their use

of the arts to engage with Senegalese citizens proved to be essential, as this strategy allowed them to connect with the people, especially the youth, on a personal, intimate level and to encourage them to express their grievances (Krueger Enz & Bryson 2014: 5). “The arts stood at the heart of the movement and its success, which exemplified the shifting identity between various artistic communities and politics in contemporary Senegal.” (ibid.).

7.4.2. Mobilising Youth in the Wake of Presidential Elections

On a press conference in January 2011 the group announced the creation and purpose of *Y'en a Marre*. Subsequently, many other artists came to join the movement (Prause 2013: 25). In March 2011, the *Y'en a Marre* group called for the first protests against Wade and thousands of people came out onto the streets (Lo 2014: 32). This shows that the Hip Hop artists' commitment to the future of their country was not only symbolized through their music, but was equally expressed in the direct physical actions of public mobilization, resistance, and civil disobedience (ibid.). Soon after the first protests, Abdoulaye Wade introduced legislation that would allow him to win the office of president with just 25 % of the vote; he also proposed to introduce the office of a vice-president – a position supposedly designed for his son Karim Wade (Prause 2013: 26). At an emergency meeting the *Y'en a Marre* group decided to have a large-scale meeting with civil society actors on June 22 and to take to the streets again (Lo 2014: 33). The police reacted with tear gas to the protests and arrested two of the founding members of the movement: Thiat and Fou Malade, with Thiat later being tortured with electric charges to his feet (ibid.). The next day, Wade's endeavour to amend the constitution caused the largest protest Senegal had witnessed since the 1980s. Additionally, the news of Thiat and Fou Malade's arrest galvanized even more youth to take part in the protests on June 23 (ibid.). Many thousands protested at the National Assembly against Wade's newly proposed amendments. The emerging protest were not carried by *Y'en a Marre* alone. A broad coalition between opposition parties, trade unions and civil society organizations came to the fore, mobilising against the new legislation and a third candidature of Wade: the *Mouvement des forces vives du 23 Juin* (M23) (ibid.). At the end of the day Wade had to withdraw his constitutional amendment proposals. The M23 then decided to protest once a month on the twenty-third to commemorate the victory of the public, until Wade was no longer a candidate (ibid.). The emergence of this broad coalition illustrates an example of what Chantal Mouffe called “chain of equivalences”: different actors from the realms of civil society and art came together in order to fight for social change. It presents an example for how the sum of artistic

and civic statements and engagement are converging towards a “collective will” to challenge the given hegemonic order and transform the political system.

Ultimately, Wade’s third run for president couldn’t be prevented, as the constitutional court decided that his candidature was legitimate. When the verdict was declared on January 27, 2012, further mass protests erupted (Prause 2013: 28). *Y’en a Marre* and M23 called for demonstrations and thousands took to the streets. The protests were eventually dissolved by force (ibid.). Still, *Y’en a Marre* and M23 succeeded, as Wade lost the election on the second ballot in March 2012 due to a huge voter participation from the side of the youth (Prause 2013: 23). Opposition candidate Macky Sall won with 65,8 % of the votes.

7.5. *Y’en a Marre*’s Strategies of Mobilisation for Social Change

Luisa Prause engaged with the question how *Y’en a Marre* could mobilise the Senegalese youth to take part in the protests, which strategies the movement resorted to and why these strategies were successful. She identified three central elements which I will outline in the following. Firstly, *Y’en a Marre* linked their criticism on Wade’s third candidature to critique on the precarious living conditions of the youth (Prause 2013: 24). Secondly, *Y’en a Marre* managed to present the protest as constructive and to refute the negative stereotypes concerning the youth in general and Hip Hop culture in particular (ibid.). Thirdly, *Y’en a Marre* utilized Rap and Hip Hop as a cultural resource to disseminate their message and mobilise supporters (ibid.). Based on Mouffe’s hegemonic approach I would add two more elements that were crucial for the collective’s mobilising efforts: The fact that *Y’en a Marre* joined a broader coalition of other civil society actors; and their introduction of the “New Type of Senegalese” as an alternative way of identification for the youth.

7.5.1. Protesting Precarious Living Conditions of the Youth

Within the course of a year, *Y’en a Marre* managed to mobilise a large part of the Senegalese Youth to demonstrate and participate in the elections. One reason for their immense success in mobilising the youth was that they explicitly referred to their daily struggles and precarious living conditions (Prause 2013: 29). They did not only identify Wade’s third run for president as a problem, but linked it with economic hardships a majority of the population is faced with in daily life, especially the high unemployment rate of the youth (ibid.). *Y’en a Marre* hold the political system and the Elites responsible for these problems, which was a decisive strategy within the process of mobilisation (ibid.). Central to a successful mobilisation was also the presentation of this precarious situation as a shared experience among the youth, not caused

by individual failures, but by misgovernment (ibid.). In this way, the social grievances were presented as changeable and consequently, protests against the regime became a reasonable means in order to achieve improvements (l.c. 30). *Y'en a Marre's* mobilisation was therefore not only a fight for democracy, but also a fight for concrete improvements of the economic and social situation of the Senegalese youth. In this way, they gave "voice to the silenced", taking the grievances of the young seriously and speaking out on their behalf.

7.5.2. *Y'en a Marre* as Vanguard of engaged Citizenship

A second important feature of *Y'en a Marre's* mobilisation was their self-representation as peaceful and engaged for the common good. In Senegal, society is dominated by the elder generation, both in public as in private spaces (Diouf 1996: 229). Open revolt or opposition to the elders represents a high social risk for the young generation, as many of them are financially dependent on their families (Prause 2013: 31). The elder generation's attitude towards the youth is sceptical, which led to a certain distrust towards the *Y'en a Marre* group as a youth movement (l.c. 32). Aggravating this distrust was the fact that the collective emerged from the Hip Hop milieu. Although a large part of the Hip Hop movement is politically engaged since their beginnings in the 1980s, and despite the prominent role Hip Hop artists played during the regime change in 2000, in Senegalese society a negative image of Hip Hop persists: that of a violent rapper, smoking weed and drinking alcohol (Moulard-Kouka 2008: 60f). To defy those stereotypes, the Hip Hop artists/activists showcased themselves as vanguards of active and engaged citizenship: *The New Type of Senegalese*.

Offering a new mode of Identification: The 'New Type of Senegalese'

The *Y'en a Marre* founders were convinced that real social change could not be achieved by simply substituting the president, but that every single person would have to change his/her individual behaviour. That is why the group introduced the slogan "Nouveau Type de Sénégalais" (A new Type of Senegalese). *Y'en a Marre* demand their supporters to overcome fatalism, to take over responsibility and to fight for social improvements (Prause 2013: 26).

"Their philosophy emphasizes self-sufficiency, personal responsibility, and community-based development. *Y'en a Marre* promotes the formation of local solutions throughout the country instead of waiting for politicians to make changes in people's lives and communities. [...] Patriotism and political education, being punctual at work, keeping the streets clean, and engaging corruption are encouraged. People who subscribe to this philosophy are called a New Type of Senegalese (NTS)." (Lo 2014: 36)

Y'en a Marre has grown into 423 satellite groups called “Esprit” (spirit) (ibid.). The *Esprits* are local groups who are carrying out the work and ideas of *Y'en a Marre* in their urban districts or villages (Prause 2013: 27). They are not only mobilising for large demonstrations, but at the same time organising smaller protests, discussions, or concerts autonomously (ibid.). The fact that the *Y'en a Marre* movement can fall back on these independent satellite groups operating throughout the country, gives them the opportunity to plan field activities across the nation aimed at social and economic development (Lo 2014: 37). The field activities emerge from local Esprit groups who propose solutions to issues they consider important in their local area and try to find NGOs with funding agendas which match these proposed solutions in order to realise their ideas (ibid.). This mode of development lies at the core of *Y'en a Marre*'s “New Type of Senegalese”.



Figure 3 – *Protestors of the Y'en a Marre Movement, arms crossed*

Especially effectual was also their form of collective actions to present themselves as peaceful and oriented towards the common good (Prause 2013: 32). At demonstrations or gatherings, protestors were sitting on the ground to demonstrate their peaceful intentions; when it came to clashes with security forces, they crossed their arms above their heads – a symbolic gesture to show that they would not resort to violence (l.c. 33). An important feature of *Y'en a Marre*'s

protest repertoire were their collective clean-up efforts: volunteers would collect the garbage after their activities to leave the place clean (ibid.). With this strategy, the artists/activists appropriated the public sphere as a place for political engagement. The activists presented themselves as engaged citizens who would not only criticize the authorities and protest, but also provide remedy for the failures of the state (ibid.). Chantal Mouffe explained that the field of production of subjectivity is of strategical importance, and that social change can only be achieved if new forms of identification are created. The 'New Type of Senegalese' is a significant example of this instance, as it offers the youth an alternative way to identify, an opportunity to realize other possibilities within the given societal order.

7.5.3. Hip Hop as a Cultural Resource and a Means for Mobilisation

Y'en a Marre utilised Hip Hop in order to appeal to the youth, to inform and also to request direct action. For example, the lyrics of *Y'en a Marre's* "Faux! Pas Force" song declare the invincibility of the will of the people while encouraging the youth to resist and endure in the fight to rid the country of Wade (Lo 2014: 33). *Y'en a Marre* achieved success by organizing various campaigns aimed at mobilising the youth towards political and civic engagement (Lo 2014: 35). In April 2011, they launched their new campaign "Daas Fanaanal" – "Ma carte, mon arme" in order to mobilise youth to register as voters for the presidential elections in 2012 (Prause 2013: 26). At the heart of this campaign were Rap concerts, which the movement used to sensitize the youth for elections (ibid.).

Y'en a Marre's successful mobilisation was enhanced through their skilled use of Rap and Hip Hop as cultural resources. The movement had few financial resources at their disposal (Prause 2013: 34). However, this lack of money awarded the movement with credibility and legitimacy. The founders of *Y'en a Marre*, Fadel Barro, Thiat, Kilifeu, Fou Malade and others achieved moral integrity as it was evident that they didn't enrich themselves through their positions (ibid.). As the Senegalese population was fed up with widespread corruption in the country, this played a role not to be underrated in the process of mobilisation.

Being Hip Hop artists themselves, *Y'en a Marre* had an easy access to other Rap and Hip Hop groups - which are estimated 2000 to 4000 in Dakar alone – as well as to their fans (Maraszo 2002: 82). Due to the groups' recognition *Y'en a Marre* was able to mobilise fellow Rappers and Hip Hop artists and their fans in a prompt and uncomplicated way, without the need for material resources (Prause 2013: 35). Furthermore, *Y'en a Marre* made use of their

connections within the Hip hop scene to get access to the media. Since digital technology and media were not widespread in Senegal at that time, the artists/activists were extremely reliant upon traditional media such as radio and television (Krueger Enz & Bryson 2014: 8). They attempted to intervene in mainstream media outlets as much as possible in order to reach out to the public (ibid.). The Hip Hop scene in Senegal possesses several slots in national media, especially a number of local and national radio programmes dedicated to Hip Hop, which served the activists as a platform to make their concerns public (Prause 2013: 35). In these programmes, not only the songs of the *Y'en a Marre* artists were played, but they were also invited as interview partners (l.c. 36). As these programmes are almost exclusively listened to by the youth, *Y'en a Marre* could address their target audience without the need to resort to financial resources (ibid.). At the same time, the radio programmes offered an opportunity to announce logistical information such as place and time of demonstrations (ibid.). Access to the radio was therefore an important resource for the movement to organise events. The internet and social media like Facebook on the other hand, hardly played a role for mobilisation, because infrastructure is scarcely developed in Senegal, and due to power outages few people access or use the internet frequently (ibid.).

However, the collective did not only utilize Hip Hop to build a network and get access to the media, but notably as a cultural resource to call attention to their concerns and mobilise for demonstrations (Prause 2013: 36). In their songs, they decry the social and political problems of contemporary Senegal; concerts and the release of critical tracks were important aspects of their protest repertoire (ibid.). Hip Hop as a form of expression enabled them to voice open and direct critique toward political and social nuisances in Senegal, as the language of rap is freed from societal norms and constraints (ibid.). In Senegalese public and private space, it is common to use euphemisms in communication, but within the lyrics of Hip Hop and Rap it becomes possible to criticize politicians directly and openly (Maraszto 2002: 91).

Building on a long Tradition of politically engaged Hip Hop

The *Y'en a Marre* movement benefitted from the reputation and previous engagement of the Hip Hop artists who participated in the creation of *Y'en a Marre*. Especially the group Keur Gui (Thiat & Kilifeu) is well-known in Senegal for their long-standing critical and political engagement (Prause 2013: 34). With Rap/Hip Hop as expression of protest, the *Y'en a Marre* movement is following political activities of former Senegalese Hip Hop movements. Already shortly after its emergence in Senegal in the 1980s, Hip hop was instrumentalised by the youth

to voice critique and revolt (Prause 2013: 37). In the 1990s large parts of the youth in Senegalese cities identified with the Hip Hop Slogan *Bul Falé*, a movement criticising traditional norms and corruption through critical Rap songs and a particular dress code (ibid.). Later, in 2000 the movement merged into the *Sopi* coalition, when a lot of Hip Hop artists and their fans supported Abdoulaye Wade in his election campaign. Appropriating public space through collective clean-ups is a strategy well-known in Senegal: at the beginning of the 1990s Hip Hop and other artists introduced this form of collective action under the name *Set Settal* (meaning 'to clean up') (ibid.). Accordingly, form and content of the *Y'en a Marre* protests are related to those of former Senegalese youth movements. Yet, there are some significant distinctions to former protests: the *Y'en a Marre* movement is merging artistic and cultural forms of protest with more confrontational tactics such as demonstrations, street blockades or sit-ins (Prause 2013: 38). *Y'en a Marre* thus made use of Rap/Hip Hop - itself already a form of protest – not only to utter critique of the political system and social deficits, but also to mobilize for other, more confrontational forms of protest (ibid.). It is this combination of different protest repertoires which enabled their successful mobilisation of the youth.

7.6. Summary: The presentation of alternative ways of Identification & the Importance of a broad network as crucial factors for *Y'en a Marre*

The *Y'en a Marre* movement presents an insightful example of the merging of art and activism presenting an important manifestation of African activism in the recent years. Hip Hop as a vehicle for social change speaks to the nature of Hip Hop culture as a culture of rebellion and protest. Therefore, the use of Hip Hop itself presents a strategy in the fight for social and political improvements. Hip Hop offers a counter-hegemonic authority and subjectivity which speaks to Mouffe's conceptualisation of critical art as a counter-hegemonic practice. A favourable pre-condition for the *Y'en a Marre* movement, was the fact that they could build upon a longer history of politically engaged Hip Hop in Senegal which paved the way for their artistic and activist engagement.

Within the artistic activism of *Y'en a Marre*, several strategies were decisive for their success: Firstly, the activists linked their criticism on Wade to the precarious living conditions of the youth. They made explicit reference to their daily struggles, fighting for concrete improvements of their situation and giving voice to the unheard, making visible what the current regime obscured. Secondly, the *Y'en a Marre* members portrayed themselves as vanguards of active and engaged citizenship, offering an alternative way of identification: The

'New Type of Senegalese'. Thirdly, *Y'en a Marre* made use of Hip Hop as a cultural resource to circulate their messages and mobilise supporters. Their connections within the Hip Hop scene enabled them to reach out to fellow artists and their fans. Their network also afforded them access to the media, namely to the radio, which presented an important instrument for the movement. Furthermore, the use of the Hip Hop genre itself was an important cultural resource, as it gave them the opportunity to voice critique openly and directly. To add on the three strategies which Luisa Prause identified, I would argue that there were two more aspects relevant for the success of *Y'en a Marre's* activism: it was a crucial step to band together with other civil society organisations and opposition parties to form the M23 in order to strengthen their position against the Wade regime. It allowed them to build a 'chain of equivalences' merging towards a common public will. I would also specifically emphasize that the 'New Type of Senegalese' was not only helpful in refuting negative stereotypes towards Hip Hop culture, but that it was a highly significant aspect, not only to criticise, but to offer the disillusioned youth an alternative way of identification, to re-articulate new subjectivities on the way towards social change.

8. Satire as hidden Resistance under a Repressive Regime

In this chapter I will outline the case of political satire in Zimbabwe. Zimbabwe presents a very different political framework than Senegal. It is characterised by a repressive and authoritarian regime which I will outline in the following. As the political conditions for (critical) artists in Zimbabwe are different, they also do resort to other strategies than in the case of Senegal. Whereas politically engaged artists in Senegal could voice critique openly through the use of Hip Hop, in Zimbabwe it can be a dangerous endeavour to voice dissent in a direct manner. Nevertheless, there are various politically engaged artists in Zimbabwe. I will outline how political satire can play a role as a form of 'hidden' resistance and as 'weapon of the weak', therefore I will highlight the example of Zambezi News, a satirical news show with immense popularity, and the strategies they are using to create politically engaged art under repressive conditions.

8.1. The Legal and Policy Framework in Zimbabwe

The Zimbabwean context is characterised by excesses of state power and a curtailed public sphere where private media, criticism of the president and visible popular protest are subject to harsh legislation (Hammett 2011: 203). President Robert Mugabe¹⁰ and his Zimbabwe National Union – Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) have dominated Zimbabwe since independence in 1980, partly by carrying out “severe and often violent crackdowns against political opposition, critical media, and other dissenters” (Freedom House 2017). Mugabe presides with an iron fist over a nation whose economy is in deep crisis, where poverty and unemployment are endemic and corruption and political repression are commonplace.

The history of censorship in Zimbabwe has a long trajectory, stretching across colonial and postcolonial periods until today. A number of censorship laws have been introduced under the Rhodesian government, especially during the period from 1965 to 1979 when the colonial government sought to limit the freedom of expression and association for Black nationalists (Mataga 2016: 135). Such was the “Censorship and Entertainments Control Act” from 1967, which controlled the diversity of artistic productions (ibid.). The bulk of censorship laws were not repealed after Zimbabwe gained independence in 1980, but remained largely unchanged (ibid.). Following the first democratic election in 1980, Robert Mugabe’s ZANU party swept to power and Mugabe became the country’s first post-independence leader. “In the transition from a militarised liberation movement to democratic government, the politics of ‘command’ emerged strongly in the centralisation of control” (Hammett 2011: 204). These practices continued into the 2000s. As I mentioned earlier in this paper, governments often incline to censorship practices in times of instability and crisis. This has been the case in post-2000 Zimbabwe – a period often termed “Zimbabwean crisis” – (Mataga 2016: 134). The year 2000 was a turning point in Zimbabwean politics as the government’s draft constitution was rejected, which was accompanied by popular disillusionment of the excesses of state power (Raftopolous 2004: 12). The government reacted by mobilising anti-imperial discourses, attacks on the judiciary and the rule of law, land- and factory invasions and violence against opponents (ibid.). The space for political dissent closed and the following period was marked by a constricting environment for freedom of association, increasing intolerance of political

¹⁰ In November 2017, the era Mugabe finally came to an end. He resigned as president after the military took over the country and parliament started impeachment proceedings against him. These events could not be considered in this paper as it is unclear how the situation in Zimbabwe will further evolve. The argumentation in this paper refers only to the times when Mugabe was still in office.

dissent, violation of human rights and freedom of the press (Mataga 2016: 135). Civil society was at the forefront of attempts to mobilise social spaces of engagement and critique and, consequently, has been subject to violent repression (Hammett 2011: 204).

The Zimbabwean constitution (2013) guarantees fundamental human rights and freedoms, and is explicitly naming “freedom of artistic expression”. This right is further protected by Zimbabwe being a signatory to the main international conventions guaranteeing the right to freedom of expression including artistic freedom (Freemuse & Nhimbe 2016: 2). “However, several laws including the Censorship Act and the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act limit artistic expressions, and the practices of the police and other government agencies create an environment of fear and self-censorship” (ibid.). Since 2000 new laws and regulations were passed which are limiting the freedom of speech and association (Mataga 2016: 135). The government sought “to exert stricter control over the dissemination of information and the activities of oppositional parties, as well as civil society organisations that were publicly exposing government’s political intolerance and human rights abuse” (Mataga 2016: 135). The laws put in place are: The *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (AIPPA) (2002), the *Public Order and Security Act* (POSA) (2002), and the *Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Act* (2004). The main law affecting artistic productions is the *Censorship and Entertainments Control Act*, introduced 1967 by the Rhodesian government (l.c. 138). The Censorship Act

“regulates and controls the public exhibition of films, the importation, production, dissemination and possession of undesirable or prohibited video and film material, publications, pictures, statues and records and the giving of public entertainment; to regulate theatres and like places of public entertainment in the interest of safety...”¹¹

This act was created to control the activities of artists, regulating all artistic sectors. One key aspect of the Censorship Act is the Establishment of a Board of Censors, whose members are appointed by the Minister for Home Affairs (Mataga 2016: 139). Furthermore, it grants the Board of Censors police powers to regulate, ban, confiscate or arrest artists or their artworks who do not comply with the provisions of the Act (ibid.). Public entertainment and the arts sector are further regulated and controlled through a permit system: no person or

¹¹ Government of Zimbabwe, *Censorship and Entertainments Control Act*, Chapter 10:04, 1967, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/4c46e6ec2.html> (accessed 29.11.2017)

organization is allowed to perform in public without approval by the Board (ibid.). The other mentioned Acts do not directly refer to artistic expressions, yet they are frequently used to curtail artistic productions.

8.1.1. Zimbabwe's State-controlled Broadcasting System

Besides official censorship, there are other forms of indirect or covert censorship which are widely applied. Zimbabwe is one of the few remaining countries in Africa where all broadcasting (television and radio) is controlled by the state (Kabwato 2011: 86). Indirect censorship is carried out by the state-controlled platforms such as television and radio stations by simply not granting space to artists seen as critics of the government (Mataga 2016: 142). This has particularly affected the music industry: while there are few cases of direct censorship, the system of unofficial censorship exists which involves the recording industry, DJs and radio stations (see Eyre 2001). Furthermore, the government's monopoly of the airwaves is used to restrict airplay of artists who are deemed critical towards the regime (Mataga 2016: 142). Concerning the print media, the government controls the main daily and Sunday newspapers (Kabwato 2011: 86). In this way, the ZANU-PF ensures that broadcasting and print platforms are used for propaganda purposes (ibid.).

“Television, radio and the print media have been hijacked by ZANU-PF in an all-out cultural war in which other political parties, civil society organisations, artists and intellectuals, and private media are castigated as ‘foreign agents’ paid to effect ‘regime change’.” (Kabwato 2011: 88).

One result of all these forms of official and indirect control is self-censorship: out of fear of upsetting the political establishment, artists deliberately avoid subjects or activities that could be interpreted as critical towards the regime (Mataga 2016: 143). Legislation as well as extra-judicial pressure on the public sphere has severely curtailed spaces for resistance (Hammett 2011: 206). Although overt acts of resistance are existent, the draconian state measures against opponents have discouraged public displays of critique (ibid.).

“The ‘terrain for resistance’ in Zimbabwe is therefore predominantly hidden, utilising disguised voices and other weapons of the weak that can be mobilised without free and equal access to public, social, symbolic and political spaces.” (Hammett 2011: 206).

8.1.2. The Deification of Robert Mugabe

Mugabe ascended to Zimbabwe's leadership at the age of 56 when he became the first president after independence. More than 35 years later, Mugabe being in his 90s, the state media represent him as having been untouched by age (Siziba & Ncube 2015: 516). From the time he assumed power, the Zimbabwean government has mythologised Mugabe's person (l.c. 520). The state media has played an important role in creating a ZANU-PF and Mugabe-centred narrative of the latter's "selfless leadership and heroism in the fight against colonisation" (ibid.). Within this dominant narrative, Mugabe has been transformed from his humanly form and elevated to "a god, a messiah and spiritual figure destined to lead Zimbabwe until the end of time" (ibid.). The portrayal of Mugabe as a god – drawing from Mbembe's characterisation of the workings of power in the postcolony - constitutes part of "the signs, vocabulary and narratives" of the 'commandment' (l.c. 516). Mbembe argues that "in the postcolony, the commandment seeks to institutionalise itself, in order to achieve legitimation and hegemony, in the form of a fetish" (Mbembe 1992: 3). This is in line with the Zimbabwean government's fetishisation of Mugabe's power and his person.

8.2. Political Satire in Africa and Zimbabwe

There is a long and rich history of African political humour, yet, - the role of humour and satire as a form of social and political engagement in Africa remains underexplored. However, Africa looks back on long-lasting satirical traditions: "parable and allegory, often replete with symbolism, such as talking animals and powerful spirits, angry gods and mystical creatures, heroic men who take on forces larger than themselves" (Msimang 2016: 6). These satirical means were often used to provide guidance employing humour and metaphors (ibid.).

"The role of the praise singer, such as the *imbongi* in Southern Africa or the *griot* in parts of West Africa, has been compared to that of the ancient Greek comedy playwright or the medieval court jester: a figure who entertains, but also speaks truth to power by using humour to present views that would otherwise not be tolerated." (Luckscheiter & Al-Zubaidi 2016: 4).

Despite attempts by colonial and authoritarian postcolonial states to censor critique and coerce journalists and artists to adhere to the dominant government discourses, political satire has come to be an established genre in Africa (Eko 2007: 221). Though, satire in Africa never had an easy existence, for in many parts of the continent (the threat of) criminal charges for insult and defamation are commonplace, impacting the freedom of expression (Luckscheiter & Al-Zubaidi 2016: 4). At the same time satire provides a unique opportunity for

(hidden) critique: because of its use of humour, “satire can survive in plain view for a long time before those who hold power recognise. In many closed societies, satire provides openings and bright spots.” (Msimang 2016: 6). Such is the case in Zimbabwe, where the use of satire and political cartoons has grown since the 1990s (Hammett 2011: 204). In the face of severe socio-economic and political problems, satire has come to play a pivotal role in contesting the repressive regime in Zimbabwe. This phenomenon is not exclusively confined to Zimbabwe, it can rather be observed that on the entire African continent political Satire play an increasingly central role within the debate about freedom of expression and freedom of the media (Kind 2016). A growing number of African satirists are producing TV- and Web-formats, skits, Blogs and caricatures, even under authoritarian or repressive conditions (ibid.).

Satire can be defined as a combination of “wit and burlesque to mount an attack on someone or something through laughter” (Msimang 2016: 6). Satire is an artistic genre which aims to criticise or ridicule certain persons, assumptions, incidents or conditions through the use of irony, burlesque, mockery and other means.¹² Satirical ways of representing can be found in various forms such as literary or journalistic texts, cabaret performances, TV and radio programmes, as well as in the graphic form of caricatures and political cartoons.¹³

As Hammett argues, “political cartoons capture complex social and political issues, acknowledge and resist power relations, and are used symbolically to generate identities and propagate ideologies” (2011: 202). Popular art, in this case satire, can act both in support of ‘official’/dominant state ideologies as well as in challenging these through oppositional or alternative ideals (ibid.). This ring true for the Zimbabwean context, where political cartoons have been used both to support and promote state power and state-sponsored media, and to resist and critique the excesses of the state (l.c. 204). As Nyamnjoh highlights, satire and political cartoons are a “perfect medium of communicating dissent and discussing the powerful in unflattering, even if muted terms” (2004: 75).

8.2.1. Satire as a ‘Weapon of the Weak’ and Everyday Form of Resistance

As it is claimed elsewhere, humour can be read as a tool for resistance, particularly to abuses and excesses of power (see Eko 2007; Obadare 2009). As such, political satire can be conceptualised as a ‘weapon of the weak’, as an ‘everyday form of resistance’. At this point I

¹² <https://www.duden.de/rechtschreibung/Satire> (accessed 05.12.2017)

¹³ <https://anthrowiki.at/Satire> (accessed 05.12.2017)

refer Willems & Obadare who called for attention for 'everyday forms of resistance' as I outlined in chapter three, and to James Scott's "Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Resistance" (1985). In his book, Scott examines slave and peasant communities in Malaysia, arguing that there is a need to shift the focus from visible historical events of resistance or rebellion, - to subtler and less obvious practices of everyday resistances. In this vein, Satire can play an integral role as an expression of subtle resistance to state hegemony "by exposing the 'hidden' and inverting the states narrative" (Siziba & Ncube 2015: 519). Mbembe asserts that laughter and mockery re-signify and re-assign the 'commandment' meaning different from that which the commandment intended (Siziba & Ncube 2015: 517). As Eko states, satirical "counter-narratives are instruments of resistance that undermine, demythologise and demystify governmental political mythologies and narratives" (2007: 235). Humour and Satire provide opportunities to understand and challenge hegemonic political projects and representations and in so doing, they offer mechanisms that "constrain authoritarian government's politics of repression" (Hammett 2011: 203).

Many satirical works which are critical of political leaders and elites across the African continent have been subject to judicial and extra-judicial coercion (ibid.). However, within repressive contexts Satire and political cartoons remain a vital form of resistance, for they are often overlooked by national agencies, presenting the complexities of relations between rulers and rules in the postcolony, as Mbembe illuminated (Hammett 2011: 204).

8.2.2. Social Media as Alternative Platform for Counter-Hegemonic Narratives

Siziba & Ncube (2015) analysed the role of memes on social media sites as a form of 'silent resistance', deconstructing the myth of Mugabe as a god. Although they are not focusing on art, but on memes¹⁴ – a social media communication tool -, their analysis provides a fruitful entry point to examine Satire as a 'weapon of the weak' in the Zimbabwean context, as well as the crucial role social media can play in a repressive environment. They conceptualise satirical memes as 'weapons of the weak' that "reveal alternative (hidden) spaces and dramas that run contrary to, and challenge the state's official narrative about Mugabe and Zimbabwe" (Siziba & Ncube 2015: 519). As I outlined previously, the Zimbabwean state media portrays Mugabe as a "superhuman", having been untouched by age and being "fit as a fiddle" (Siziba

¹⁴ Internet memes take on different forms as images, videos, websites, words, phrases etc. In this case it concerns manipulated photos (and videos) created in order to "create impressions, to have a certain effect, for example intrigue, shock or humour, on the viewer" (Siziba & Ncube 2015: 518).

& Ncube 2015: 516). This myth fell apart when Mugabe fell to the ground in full public view in February 2015. Siziba and Ncube are analysing the satirical memes that were circulating on social media sites after the falling of Mugabe. These memes present a form of 'silent' resistance, deconstructing thy myth of Mugabe as a god who is immune from human weaknesses (l.c. 517). Siziba & Ncube argue that social media presented a new alternative platform for people to discuss issues of contemporary relevance, apart from the state-controlled mainstream media (l.c. 518). Through these satirical memes on social media platforms Mugabe has been ridiculed ruthlessly. Siziba & Ncube suggest not to see them as mere mockery of Mugabe, but to read them as what Scott terms a 'weapon of the weak' (2015: 522). Scott asserts that "most of the political life of subordinate groups is to be found neither in the overt collective defiance of powerholders nor in complete hegemonic compliance, but in the vast territory between these two polar opposites" (Scott 1985: 136). Therefore Siziba & Ncube allege that these satirical memes must be considered as a 'counter-narrative' of the figure and person of Mugabe and that they play a vital role in questioning the dominant state discourse (2015: 522). "In a context where state-controlled media projects a disproportionately positive, if not exaggeratingly flattering, image of the president of Zimbabwe, social media provides an alternate space to deconstruct and challenge this image." (ibid.). What is important about these memes is the fact that they reveal "social media's subversive potential because it lies on the limits of the instruments of government (l.c. 532). State repression and violence are undercut by the distance and "protection" that social media provide (l.c. 526). Thus, social media play a vital role in rethinking and reimagining the person and figure of Mugabe, presenting a medium through which it becomes possible to reconfigure the hegemonic narrative (l.c. 536).

8.3. Zambezi News: Political Satire against the repressive Zimbabwean state

Thinking about Zimbabwe or the kinds of political art that may exist within such a repressive context, the first thing that comes to mind isn't probably a satirical comedy show. But Samm Farai Monro aka Comrade Fatso states that satire has never been so prevalent or necessary in Zimbabwe as now: "Satire and humour are great ways to unpack big political, social and economic issues. You make people laugh and think at the same time. It's a really powerful tool to communicate to people." (Shambala Festival 2016).

8.3.1. The Emergence of Zambezi News

Zambezi News is a satirical comedy series with a growing popularity that was launched in 2011. Samm Farai Monro and Leslie Tongai Makawa created the satirical news show, which parodies the state-controlled Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation and takes on the Zimbabwean political system (Schmidt 2016). Monro and his co-founder, who is also known as 'Outspoken', both have backgrounds as spoken-word and Hip Hop artists: "their music is described as 'socially conscious' and has been banned in Zimbabwe for its 'political content'" (Shambala Festival 2016). The idea for Zambezi News came into being when Monro and Outspoken were approached to do a live news skit at a local festival. It turned out so well that they decided to further develop the format (ibid.). They created a "faux-news-programme" with three comic news presenters: Samm Farai Monro aka Jerome Weathers or Comrade Fatso, Leslie Tongai Makawa aka Mandape Mandape or Outspoken, and Michael Kudakwashe aka Kudzaishe Mushayahembe or Michael K. (Mushekwe 2016). Alongside explosive political topics they are spoofing the chaos of everyday life in Zimbabwe with a sharp sense of humour (ibid.). Within their show, they switch between the newsroom and satirical reports from the field, accompanied with highly overdrawn adverts and music clips which are subversively interwoven with each other (ibid.).



Figure 4 – The protagonists of Zambezi News (Tongai Makawa alias Mandape Mandape, Samm Farai Monro alias Jerome Weathers, Michael Kudakwashe alias Kudzaishe Mushayahembe)

Within the frame of Zambezi News, the trio is criticising racism, homophobic stereotypes and hypocritical sex morals, making fun of corrupt politicians, commenting the disputed land reform and parodying the eurocentric view on Africa (Schmidt 2016, Mushekwe 2016). Monro states: “Zambezi News is about dealing with burning political issues in a humorous way. We deal with the political hot potatoes: from corruption to climate change, xenophobia to homophobia – but always with a good dose of sarcasm and wit.” (Shambala Festival 2016). Indeed, the unprofessional or even dilettantish programmes of the state broadcasting itself provide Zambezi News with a stream of material, as many Zimbabweans are fed up with the propaganda-like news coverage of the state media, which amounts to a “state-prescribed brainwash” (Mushekwe 2016). Zambezi News are offering their audience – especially the young generation – a different view on power politics and the disastrous conditions within the country (ibid.). With humour and sharp wit, they comment on social and political grievances. Tongai Makawa explains: “We found that there was a need for an alternative narrative. But it was important to find a format that engages people in a positive way, because you cannot have people live in a depressing reality and on top of it tell them how messed up their reality is.” (Heinrich Böll Stiftung 2016: 13).

8.3.2. The Dangers of being a Satirist in Zimbabwe & the crucial Role of the Internet and Social Media as alternative Spaces for articulating Dissent

“We have 100 percent freedom of expression. Freedom after expression, that’s where the problems come in.” (Tongai Makawa)

Zambezi News is primarily disseminated via internet, reaching out to a predominantly young audience (Mushekwe 2016). Due to the draconian legislation and harsh censorship practices, only the Internet is offering a certain free space. As a result of the repressive environment in Zimbabwe, the sole options remaining for critical artists are self-censorship or to resort to marginal niches within the oppressive framework, notably the internet and social media (ibid.). If satirists name political or social issues directly, they are faced with threats of imprisonment (ibid.). In a country where a vibrant, critical and internationally acknowledged cultural scene developed over the past decades, Mugabe and his regime gagged satirical expressions to a large extent (ibid.). State repression reached a peak when even innocent citizens were beaten up by the police for making a joke about the president on WhatsApp or Facebook – accused for offending the head of state (ibid.). For years the Zimbabwean citizens have been rigorously intimidated by bands of thugs and a widely ramified system of

government informers (Mushekwe 2016). Such abuses of power are exactly what Zambezi News are satirising: the programme is exposing the ruthless inclination to violence and excessive corruption of fictitious ministers and government officials (ibid.). Yet, there is a clear line not to cross: high-ranking politicians – first and foremost the president - are not mentioned by name (ibid.). That’s why the programme is not yet banned and it’s probably the reason why the Zambezi News performers are still alive and not imprisoned. Michael Kudakwashe explains: “The president. Don’t joke about him. Don’t mention anyone by name. There are certain things we don’t do because that is just asking to die. We just imply. Everybody will know what we are talking about, but you can’t really get us.” (Heinrich Böll Stiftung 2016: 15). In the face of the authoritarian leadership of Mugabe and his ZANU-PF, one wouldn’t actually expect Zimbabweans to be speaking out against the regime, even mocking the president and his wife Grace. Monro concedes that “being a leading satire show and poking fun at the powerful comes with risks” (Shambala Festival 2016). Threats to critical artists are common in Zimbabwe where most of the media is state-controlled. The content of Zambezi News is blacklisted on state-controlled radio and TV stations. The police, the Censorship Board and the Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO) are frequently harassing them, and the crew of Zambezi News is often target of repressions, threats and censorship (ibid.). However, in an environment of intimidation, Zambezi News resort to the internet to express themselves, defying the media commission, the Censorship Board and the police (Mushekwe 2016). Sann Farai Monro says:

“We have to be creative in how we distribute and publicise the shows because we get no airplay on state-controlled media. [...] A lot of people ask how we’re still alive. We know we’re risking our safety. One of our actors was accosted by state security agents for pursuing an anti-government agenda. And on the launch day of seasons two and three we were harassed by the CIO. But we went ahead.” (Ramaswamy 2015).

Tongai Makawa adds:

“Yes, we do fear, but look, somebody has to do it. We can’t all live in fear. So what we do with our satire is to make people laugh at their situations, and if you can laugh at your situation, you look at it differently. [...] So that’s what we provide for our people – hopefully. Yes, we are afraid. Yes, we’ve been threatened. It happens quite often. But we are still here.” (Heinrich Böll Stiftung 2016: 14).

Monro stresses the importance of the Internet, identifying access to the Internet as a “revolution for Africa” (Schmidt 2016). A new generation of young independent producers are stepping forward throughout the continent, escaping state censorship by sharing their contents online (ibid.). He considers political satire as part of this movement: Satire provides hope for change in one of the poorest countries of the world (Schmidt 2016). Zambezi News is shared on YouTube, Facebook and WhatsApp, being watched by around six million Zimbabweans (Ramaswamy 2015). Additionally, they are distributing DVDs, especially to the rural areas, where not so many people have internet access, and particularly within the first years of the show, when smartphones were not that common yet (Schmidt 2016). However, when they are distributing their DVDs to the rural areas, they are met with confiscations: the government wants the rural population to remain sealed off and “obedient” (Mushekwe 2016). On the countryside even listening to the DVDs is regarded as a “subversive act” (ibid.). As soon as critical contents are spread to the rural areas, the regime reacts alarmed. In contrast to that, the Zimbabwean government doesn’t seem to care much about positive resonances to Zambezi News abroad, in Europe or the United States, as it gives the impression that there is freedom of expression in Zimbabwe (Mushekwe 2016). Now, with the growing access to the internet and the dissemination of smartphones, an increasing number of young Zimbabweans can share videos and content online. This presents a widening audience for Zambezi News and more and more alternative means to circulate their content.

8.3.3. Zambezi News: Creating an alternative Narrative & inspiring for Change

Through the use of satire, Zambezi News are decrying the political and social grievances of contemporary Zimbabwe in a humorous way. In this way, the artists aim to inspire young people, who would otherwise not be interested in politics (Schmidt 2016). They claim, that humour is the best way to make people think about politics – everything else would only be more depressing in an already repressive and corrupt state (ibid.). Zambezi News wants to motivate young people and demonstrate that they can be part of a political change, which the nation desperately needs (ibid.). Tongai Makawa is convinced that satire offers great opportunities to entertain and inform people at the same time, and to motivate them to think about possible solutions (Mushekwe 2016). The three artists hope that satire can contribute to see things differently (ibid.). Under difficult and repressive conditions, satire provides the youth with new possibilities to inform and express themselves (ibid.).

Samm Farai Monro highlights that it is of utmost importance to transfer political online activism to the “Offline world” (Schmidt 2016). Zambezi News should serve as a source of inspiration for the “real” political activism on the streets (ibid.). For this reason, Monro and his colleague Tongai Makawa are engaged beyond the realm of political Satire:

“For us, satire is a way of reaching young Zimbabweans and trying to inspire them to actually believe that they can be part of the change needed in the country. It’s another form of creative activism. With our organisation, Magamba Network, we also use other forms of creative activism such as spoken word, hip-hop, new media and festivals.” (Samm Farai Monro in: Heinrich Böll Stiftung 2016: 13).

Monro and Makawa are running ‘Magamba’, “a cultural activist network which uses arts and culture in the struggle for social justice in Zimbabwe” (Shambala Festival 2016), for they see themselves not only as artists, but as cultural activists, aiming to provoke debate and to enable Zimbabweans to speak out. Monro states: “I believe that through the work we do we have opened up space for free expression in Zimbabwe and we have inspired a new generation of young Zimbabwean satirists, rappers, bloggers and cultural activists to speak truth to power.” (Shambala Festival 2016). Indeed, there is a growth of comedy and satire to observe in Zimbabwe. “When we started out there was nothing else like this in the country”, says Monro (Ramaswamy 2015). Six years on, “the genre is flooded with great initiatives that speak on important issues, notably online content producers such as Busstop TV, PO Box Reloaded and newer upstarts like Madhorofiya Republic” (Marunya 2017). Monro comments: “Now there is a whole new movement of Zimbabwean satire. We intend to continue with our strategy... To hide in plain sight.”

8.4. Summary: Social Media & Humour as decisive aspects of *Zambezi News*’ silent Resistance

In a repressive environment like Zimbabwe, social media and the internet are playing a crucial role. They reveal alternative spaces and provide opportunities to challenge the state’s hegemonic narrative. Social media present alternative platforms for people to discuss issues of current relevance apart from state-controlled media. Social media inhabits a subversive potential as they are situated at the limits of the state’s censoring power. In the case of Zimbabwe, the use of satire itself presents a strategy, as critique can be voiced in a humorous and hidden way. The performers of Zambezi News skilfully deploy satirical means to voice critique and dissent towards the Mugabe’s repressive regime. They offer their

audience an alternative narrative of the hegemonic order. Through the use of humour people are enabled to see the situation in Zimbabwe in a different light, it engages them in a positive way, inspiring awareness without further depressing the audience in an already repressive situation. Zambezi News are offering new ways of identification by showing that it is possible to speak out politically despite the restrictive environment. In this way, they are inspiring others to follow their example and take on the political system in creative ways. Zambezi News strategically make use of the internet and social media to avoid state censorship.

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9. Summary & Conclusion

The topic I chose for my Master thesis is a quite vast one, and I tried to find a balance between presenting an overview about the political conditions for artists in Africa in general, and the two cases of the *Y'en a Marre* movement in Senegal and *Zambezi News* in Zimbabwe that were examined in detail. As this paper touches upon different interconnected subjects, I will start my conclusion with a summary to recall and highlight the main findings of this paper.

How can a conceptualization of politically engaged art and activism within the African context of postcolonial states look like? Which aspects must be considered?

I defined politically engaged art as critical towards a given hegemonic order or regime, making direct reference to social problems and being explicit in its tone of political dissent. Politically engaged art does not only want to comment on social or political issues, it also wants to evoke a reaction. Politically engaged art seeks to convey alternative narratives, either in direct opposition to the hegemonic order or through forms of silent or hidden resistance. Activism is to be located on the same spectrum as politically engaged art, but it is even closer connected to the realm of activism. It is explicitly change-oriented and takes action. Politically engaged art and activism can be located as counter-hegemonic practices within the agonistic public sphere shaped by particular power relations. Within a given hegemonic order artistic practices can play an important role by producing new subjectivities and offering alternative forms of identification, making visible what the dominant hegemony obscures and represses. Politically engaged art and activism can be seen as counter-hegemonic interventions in the context of an anti-hegemonic battle. If chains of equivalences can be built among different counter-hegemonic projects, the dominant order can be subverted.

The second step was to locate politically engaged art and activism within the context of African postcolonial nation-states, taking into consideration the surrounding geopolitical framework that shaped the so-called 'postcolonial constellation'. Speaking about politically engaged art in Africa, it is vital to take into account the manifold instances of popular art which have arisen throughout the African continent. They provide spaces for everyday forms of resistance and have proven to be important instances of political engagement by African artists. Artistic productions and artistic subjectivities in Africa have been deeply affected by the historical circumstances of colonialism, decolonization and the emergence of postcolonial states and nation-building efforts. However, African artists are not only situated within their postcolonial nation-states, but embedded in a complex geopolitical framework, a fundamentally

inequitable global system of power relations that is shaping the modes of subjectivity and creativity today. The postcolonial nation-state's hegemonic control over its population is not fixed, but frequently subject to acts of resistance and counter-hegemonic practices. These are not confined to the realm of formal civil society or large-scale rebellions, but contain a variety of informal modes of civic agency: 'everyday forms of resistance'. Popular art in Africa is part of this spectrum of informal modes of contestation.

Under which political conditions are politically engaged artists situated in Sub-Saharan Africa? How is the relation between the postcolonial state and the arts? What kind of repressions and threats are critical artists facing?

To answer the questions of political conditions for artists in Africa, I first referred to Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and his description of antagonism between the postcolonial state and the arts. He delineates an archetypal conflict between the nature of the postcolonial state and the arts, stating that the arts are at war with the postcolonial state. Although I would not follow him in his argumentation that any kind of artistic production stands in conflict with the state, I consider his approach relevant for the realm of politically engaged art that is voicing critique or dissent towards the state. In this regard his analysis rings true, pointing to the different threats and mechanisms the state is applying to control critical artists: co-optation, bans, censorship, imprisonment, torture, death and exile. These threats are more prevailing the more repressive a state operates. I complemented this theoretical outline with the findings of two empirical surveys to demonstrate the current reality of these threats. The statistics highlight the vulnerable situation of artists in the face of government repression and point to the fact that freedom of artistic expression is increasingly coming under threat. Although freedom of expression is a fundamental human right, censorship practices continue prevailing in Africa and worldwide. However, artists are not only exposed to censorship practices, but are suffering from serious violations of their rights. Restrictions are often imposed either without legal basis or on the grounds of unclear regulations, utilized by states to gag critical artistic expressions. African governments seem to be ambivalent towards freedom of (artistic) expression: on the one hand, they embrace fundamental human rights, while on the other hand they are using escape clauses to impose restrictions. On the African continent, there are still serious contraventions and restrictions in place, resulting in threats, harassment, arrest, blacklisting and attacks on artists.

To examine different conditions for critical artists more in detail I explored the cases of *Y'en a Marre* in Senegal and *Zambezi News* in Zimbabwe. These examples were meant to demonstrate the highly distinct political conditions under which artists are situated in Sub-Saharan Africa, the different strategies they are employing to respond to these different conditions, and the various forms of politically engaged art itself: as open and direct critique/dissent or as silent form of resistance towards as hegemonic order.

Hip Hop Activism in Senegal

The political conditions in Senegal are to a certain extent favourable for artistic creation – at least compared to other postcolonial African states. The Senegalese government is regarded as democratic and stable. The country possesses a diverse media landscape, including private and independent media outlets. Though legal censorship is not existent, self-censorship is common and repressions have increased since Abdoulaye Wade came to power in 2000. Historically, the arts have been fostered in Senegal, and the country looks back on a long history of politically engaged Hip Hop which paved the way for the artistic and activist engagement of the *Y'en a Marre* movement. Hip Hop as a vehicle for social change presents an important manifestation of African activism, speaking to the nature of Hip Hop as a culture of rebellion and its counter-hegemonic subjectivities. The *Y'en a Marre* movement emerged during Wade's re-election campaign in 2011, founded by a group of Hip Hop artists and journalists. The movement demonstrated against Wade's third run for president and his intended constitutional amendment. Hip Hop played a key role within the movement which became strongly supported by the youth of the country. *Y'en a Marre* merged art and activism within their fight for social change. Certain strategies were decisive for their success. Firstly, they linked their critique on the Wade regime to the precarious living conditions of the youth, making their marginalized position in society visible and their needs heard. Secondly, the *Y'en a Marre* members presented themselves as vanguards of active and engaged citizenship, offering an alternative way of identification for the youth: 'The New Type of Senegalese'. Thirdly, they used Hip Hop as a cultural resource to disseminate their message and mobilise supporters. Hip Hop afforded them not only access to a vast network of Hip Hop artists and fans, but also access to the media, namely the radio, which turned out to be a significant factor for their success. The Hip hop genre itself presented a meaningful resource, as it enabled them to speak out and criticise in a direct and open manner. Fourthly, the collective joined a broad

coalition of other civil society organizations and opposition parties that enabled the movement to further enhance their common struggle for social change.

Satire as a form of hidden Resistance in Zimbabwe

The Zimbabwean political context is characterised by excesses of state power and a curtailed public sphere. Robert Mugabe and his ZANU-PF dominates the country since independence. Since the crisis in the 2000s political repressions against the opposition, critical media and other dissenters have even more increased, and several new laws and regulations have come into place that severely limit and constrict freedoms of expression and association. The space for political dissent has been closed and a constricting environment of fear prevails. Zimbabwe is one of the few remaining countries in Africa where all broadcasting is state-controlled. Besides official state-censorship, a wide scope of indirect censorship is practiced. Due to oppressive state measures against opponents and critics, the space for resistance in Zimbabwe is restricted.

Within this repressive context, critique and dissent cannot be voiced openly and directly. Nevertheless, there are politically engaged artists who are using forms of hidden resistance in to contest the Mugabe regime. Such is *Zambezi News*, a satirical news show launched in 2011. The three performers implement political satire in order to speak truth to power by using humour. They employ it as a tool for resistance to present views that would otherwise not be tolerated. Political satire is here conceptualised as a 'weapon of the weak', an everyday form of resistance, playing an integral role as expression of subtle resistance to state hegemony by offering alternative narratives through humorous ways. In this manner, political satire provides the opportunity to challenge hegemonic narratives and communicate dissent within a curtailed public sphere. It is a silent form of resistance, other than the Hip Hop activism in Senegal, because the repressive framework does not allow for open critique.

Zambezi News are dealing with delicate political issues in a satirical way, aiming to inform and entertain people at the same time. Satirising the regime's abuses of power, they are offering their audience an alternative narrative towards the hegemonic order. For being blacklisted in state-controlled media, *Zambezi News* is predominantly disseminated via internet and social media. Within the state-controlled broadcasting system and censorship machinery, this is the only way to escape censorship. The protagonists of *Zambezi News* identify as creative activists: their goal is to inspire the young generation to be part of political change. The satirical show

opened a new space for expression and encouraged a new generation to follow their path. In the case of *Zambezi News*, the use of satire itself presents a strategy, as critique can be voiced in a humorous and hidden ways. Using jokes and wit to critique Mugabe's repressive regime, *Zambezi News* is offering an alternative narrative towards the hegemonic order and another way of identification by demonstrating that it is possible to speak out and resist in creative ways. Their strategical use of social media is highly relevant to circulate their messages and escape censorship.

To which strategies are politically engaged artists resorting to under different conditions?

To sum up and compare these two examples of Hip Hop in Senegal and satire in Zimbabwe I would state that the artistic genre itself presents a strategy to contest the hegemonic order in two different ways: Hip Hop as a culture of rebellion and protest enables artists to voice critique openly and directly, which is possible in the Senegalese context, where freedom of expression is given to a large extent and where previous Hip Hop movements paved the way for further engagement. Satire as a form of everyday resistance speaks truth to power in a hidden way, using humour to disguise critique, which is necessary in a restrictive environment like Zimbabwe. Both for *Y'en a Marre* and *Zambezi News* the media play a crucial role for their politically engaged artistic practices. However, whereas the Hip Hop artists in Senegal enjoy free access to the radio to promulgate their messages and reach out to their audience, in Zimbabwe all media are state-controlled so that the protagonists of *Zambezi News* are heavily relying on social media to evade censorship. Both the *Y'en a Marre* movement and *Zambezi News* are introducing alternative narratives/counter-narratives to the given hegemonic order and are offering new ways of identification. This happens in two distinct ways: While *Y'en a Marre* are advocating for the 'New Type of Senegalese' in a very open and direct way, *Zambezi News* spark hope by making people laugh even at desperate situations and in this way making them see things in a different light, demonstrating that it is possible to speak out against the regime – albeit in a disguised manner. Both *Y'en a Marre* and *Zambezi News* are taking up the concerns and grievances of their audiences – be it the youth unemployment in Senegal or the frequent power abuses and restrictions in Zimbabwe – they are giving a voice to the people, bringing to light what the dominant discourse obliterates. Both the *Y'en a Marre* collective and *Zambezi News* want to inspire people and raise awareness, being conscious about the fact that social change involves everyone.

Personal comment

In my opinion, the role of art and critical artists in the struggle for social change should not be underestimated. For a long time, there has been little research on this subject, because any attempt of accurately measuring the influence of art on social transformation is not realistically possible. What these two examples, demonstrated, however, is that artists are highly responsive to their surrounding conditions. Even a severely repressive framework, like that of Zimbabwe, will not impede artists to continue creating and expressing their views. Art will find creative ways to survive and reach out to people, as the *Zambezi News* project demonstrated. I believe this is one of the strengths of art: it maintains its potential even under conditions where open activism is deeply curtailed and critique cannot be voiced openly. Art does not need to formulate clear statements, it can remain subtle and ambivalent, - while still being critical, which can be an advantage when operating under restrictive circumstances. This is only one of art's virtues. I am certain, that art is also powerful because it reaches people on an affective, emotional level. This is an important aspect, for many people will not engage in social change solely on the base of rational arguments. Art can inspire people, create awareness and motivate to take action. These strengths are not precisely measurable, but a lot of examples – like the *Y'en a Marre* movement in Senegal - demonstrate that they are present.

The field for further research is a vast one, as this paper touched upon many different aspects which could be further investigated. Now, - that Mugabe has resigned, after 37 years of repression, authoritarian rule and mismanagement, Zimbabwe will definitely change. It could be interesting to examine how exactly the political situation will develop, what implications for artists will emerge, and how artists in Zimbabwe will respond to this regime change.

As I focused this paper only on the relation between the state and the arts, there are many other aspects which could be further examined, as they could not have been taken into account in this paper. One imperative could be to look at the field of restrictions imposed not by the state, but by non-state-actors. In the case of Senegal, for example, the protagonists openly criticised the government, which was already dangerous in and of itself. During my research, though, I discovered, that it is much more dangerous, or rather impossible, to criticise religious authorities in Senegal. This field of non-state repression could be an interesting and valuable research endeavour.

My own research focuses two art forms that bear an inherent political and critical potential: Hip Hop and satire, for in the course of history they have been used to speak truth to power and offer counter-hegemonic narratives. It would be worthwhile to consider other artistic genres, which are rather regarded as 'apolitical' such as dance or (to a lesser extent) visual arts, to make visible that any art form holds critical potentials.

Furthermore, I would suggest that there is more research required to investigate the situation of specific groups of artists: especially Women and LGBT individuals, or artists portraying LGBT-related subjects. In many African countries (as in any society around the world) women are still discriminated against and they continue to be underrepresented within the artistic environment. I think it is important to examine the specific situation of female artists within a given societal order; how they cope with discriminations, which strategies they use to make their voices heard and how their creative output may inspire social change towards a more gender-equal society. It would be interesting to investigate feminist art and/or queer art within the African context, to examine how their works may counter the hegemonic order of patriarchy and heteronormativity. Even if these artists are not directly critical of their government, they nevertheless are necessary and crucial to instigate a discourse regarding gender norms.

To conclude, I would like to state that I firmly believe that through the embrace of art, - especially but not exclusively through critical and counter-hegemonic artistic practices -, it is possible to inspire and motivate people to engage for social change that is so desperately needed, - not only in Africa, but the world in general-, to make our world a more just and peaceful place for everyone.

“Any form of art is a form of power.

It has impact.

It can affect change.

It can not only

move us.

It makes us move.”

(Ossie Davis)

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11. Table of figures

Figure 1 – Visualization of the Artist in Danger

Source: freeDimensional AdvoKit; image design by Ruben Mercado

Extracted from: Joag, Sidd; Lanier Lester, Todd (2017): freeDimensional. Artists' Safety and Creative Safe Heavens. In: Polly Stupples und Katerina Teaiwa (Hg.): Contemporary perspectives in art and international development. New York, New York, London, England: Routledge (Routledge Studies in Culture and Development, 2), S. 206–217.

Figure 2 – Violations of Artistic Freedom in 2016 by Violation Type

Source: <https://freemuse.org/resources/art-under-threat-in-2016/>

Figure 3 – Protestors of the *Y'en a Marre* Movement

Source: http://www.corriere.it/gallery/esteri/02-2012/senegal/01/senegal-proteste-contro-wade-degenerano-scontri-_06a630d0-4cd2-11e1-8838-1be80b480ae6.shtml?title=A%20Dakar%20rivolta%20popolare%20contro%20la%20candidatura%26pos=1#

Figure 4 – *Zambezi News*

Source: <http://www.dw.com/en/the-77-percent-a-platform-for-africas-youth/g-41568039>