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*Knowledge Production in
Visual Arts Organisations*

A Case Study on the Triangle Network

Sofia Ana Elise Steinvorth



Knowledge Production in Visual Arts Organisations

A Case Study on the Triangle Network

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A Case Study on the Triangle Network

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Conjunction is the pleasure of becoming other, and the
adventure of knowledge is born out of this pleasure.

FRANCO 'BIFO' BERARDI¹

[...] think of 'learning' as taking place in situations or sites
that don't necessarily intend or prescribe such activity.

IRIT ROGOFF²

The best kind of art, like the rain, invokes a re-ordering
of the cognitive and sensory fields. It asks of its actual
and potential publics to open doors and windows and
let other worlds in. This re-ordering – subtle, slight, sure,
sharp or soft as the case may be, whether it is a desultory
drizzle across a few frazzled or jaded synapses, or the
neurological equivalent of an electrical thunderstorm and
sudden downpour – is why we bother with art in the first
place. When it rains art, we do not reach for umbrellas.
It makes sense to let ourselves soak, as long as we can,
like children dancing in the season's first rain.

RAQS MEDIA COLLECTIVE³

¹ Berardi, Franco 'Bifo' (2014), *And. Phenomenology of the End. Cognition and Sensibility in the Transition from Conjunctive to Connective Mode of Social Communication*, Helsinki: Aalto ARTS Books, p. 13.

² Rogoff, Irit (2008a), "Turning", in *e-flux Journal* 0/2008, available at <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/00/68470/turning/>, last accessed in April 2018.

³ Raqs Media Collective (2010), "Wonderful Uncertainty", in O'Neill, Paul and Wilson, Mick (2010) (eds), *Curating and the Educational Turn*, pp. 76-82, London; Amsterdam: Open Editions / de Appel, p. 76.

Introduction

Even though the 'production of knowledge' has come to dominate part of the discussions revolving around the challenges and aims of contemporary curatorial practice, it remains unclear what exactly is meant when addressing 'knowledge' and even more so, its 'production'. As the editors of the BAK publication *On Knowledge Production: A Critical Reader in Contemporary Art* (2008) state, "terms that have become commonplace in the discourse of contemporary art – such as knowledge production, artistic research, and interdisciplinary practice – remain arguably as nebulous and contested as ever" (Hlavajova, Winder, Choi, 2006: 7).

Based on this realisation and considering that the aim to produce knowledge in cultural institutions is not more than a few decades old and seemingly increasing in popularity (probably not less due to this concept's similarity to the knowledge production put forward by the knowledge economy), it is important to analyse what is meant when the production of knowledge is addressed in a discourse related to contemporary art. More specifically, the focus of this inquiry is on the way visual arts organisations (VAOs) have fused this idea into their curatorial practice and activities.

2006 seems to be an interesting, if not "turning"⁴ year for the discourse on knowledge production and curatorial practices, seeing the birth of the Curatorial/Knowledge programme at Goldsmiths' Visual Culture Department under the tutelage of Irit Rogoff and the unique discourse-based programme *Concerning "Knowledge Production" (Practice in Contemporary Art)* organised by BAK, basis voor actuele kunst, which eventually led to the above mentioned publication *On Knowledge Production: A Critical Reader in Contemporary Art* (Hlavajova, Wind, Choi: 2008). But what has happened since then?

⁴ The term is used as a reference to Irit Rogoff's essay "Turning" (2008a).

Even though far from being a discourse exclusively linked to VAOs, these (sometimes more, sometimes less) institutionalised structures that have spread over the world since the 1990s, prove to be interesting examples for the present study mainly because, as Ana Bilbao diagnoses in her analysis of small visual arts organisations, these quasi-institutionalised, small-scale and locally-oriented organisations “have received substantially less scholarly attention than, for instance, large-scale art institutions or biennials” (Bilbao, 2018: 119).

Therefore, the present research aims to advance two central questions: (1) what does ‘knowledge production’ mean in the context of contemporary curatorial practice and (2) how do VAOs fulfil this objective through their programmes. To a certain extent, the inquiry into the second question will provide insights into the first one.

In order to engage with these issues, the Triangle Network, which brings together twenty-eight VAOs and looks back upon by now twenty-five years of experience, functions both as the umbrella and the foundation for this research. Considering the very specific position in between local and global, national and international, in which VAOs associated with the Triangle Network operate, it is a pertinent question to ask whether and how this situation influences the ‘production of knowledge’. This interrogation, though not one of the central ones, will appear throughout the inquiry, as it is based upon one of the key characteristics of these spaces. As Alessio Antonioli, the director of the Triangle Network says, “Partners [of the Triangle Network] share a mission or philosophy, which they put into practice in different ways, according to their resources and the context in which they operate. What they have in common is an interest in dialogue, process and development as a learning tool rather than a commercial one” (Antonioli, 2018: Annex A): this is precisely what is going to be analysed in terms of knowledge production.

Given the network’s diversity and the very unique conditions that each organisation faces in its differing geographical, cultural and socio-economic contexts, three VAOs were chosen as case studies for this inquiry. By selecting Gasworks (London, England), HANGAR (Lisbon, Portugal) and 32° East (Kampala, Uganda), the aim has been to provide a detailed insight into the heterogeneity of the network and to work out similarities as well as differences between these organisations. All of this, bearing in mind the objective of describing the means through which the production of knowledge is put into practice through the curatorial approaches put forward in each space.

*

What is nowadays understood as curatorial work in the field of the arts has its roots in the Latin word *curare*, which means ‘to take care of’. Even though the usage of the word has evolved and taken on different meanings over time and in different contexts (Obrist, 2014: 25), it remains closely related to its Latin origin.

It is not before the 1990s though, that the rise of the curator as a prominent figure can be traced. It is from that time on that the development from an understanding of curatorial practice from ‘curating’ as the work of developing exhibitions, such as the German word *Ausstellungsmacher* suggests (Obrist, 2015) towards an expanded understanding of ‘the curatorial’, that engages with the production of knowledge through the staging of an “event of knowledge” (Rogoff, 2013), can be traced. As stated by Rogoff and Martinon in the preface of their publication *The Curatorial: A Philosophy of Curating* (2013), within the ‘curatorial’

works of art can no longer be a process of interpellation, a conscious or unconscious hailing by some internalized mode of knowledge. Instead, they engage in another process, that of precipitating our reflection, of encouraging another way of thinking or sensing the world. From being reactive to the world to precipitating another reflection on the world (and inevitably sparking ways to change the world), works of art reflect the myriad ways of being implicated in the world, not just as passive recipients, but as active members of a world that is never one with itself, always out of joint, out of place, but always intrinsically ours – of our own making. (Martinon, Rogoff, 2013: ix)

This is a notion further studied at Goldsmiths at the Visual Culture Department, founded by Rogoff, especially through the Curatorial/Knowledge course, a master’s – and PhD – programme that posits questions about the production of knowledge in curatorial practice following this understanding, constantly addressing the tensions and relations between ‘knowledge’ and ‘the curatorial’, as the ‘/’ in the title suggests. Furthermore, it is an interesting example because it self-critically questions what happens at the point of the institutionalisation of an endeavour such as the production of knowledge.

In this sense, knowledge production can be contextualised by looking at the historical development and the changes in the field of curating, especially over the past thirty years. However, curatorial practice itself is dependent from artistic practices and in most cases also from cultural institutions. In relation to artistic practices for instance, the rise and popularity of the so-called artistic research has been witnessed in what can be called a parallel development with the discourse around the production of knowledge. This issue is addressed by authors such as Kathrin Busch in her essay *Artistic Research and the Poetics of Knowledge* (2009). Like her, several authors, such as Simon Sheikh and Dieter Lesage, to name just a few, have published on this topic in the online platform *Art&Research: A Journal of Ideas, Contexts and Methods*, that owes its origin and name precisely to this discussion. Another journal that focuses exclusively on artistic research is *JAR: Journal for Artistic Research*, in which one finds a text by Julian Klein for example, that asks: *What is Artistic Research?* (2017)⁵. This question, formulated in 2017, shows how the debate around this topic stretches to the present day and is thus still forming and transforming.

Artistic research is one example of how the clear separation of the disciplines is being challenged and how artistic practices are trying to be recognised as engaging with more than objects and 'mere' aesthetics. The publication of Bourriaud's *Relational Aesthetics* in 1998 had an immense impact in this sense and led to a flourishing in the curatorial discourse: questions about how these 'expanded' art practices could be included into the exhibitionary format or put the other way around, how the exhibition format could and should adapt to these new practices started to become hot topics in the art world.

It is in relation to institutions and the way institutions are led that the third aspect relating to changes that affect curatorial practice and the production of knowledge since the 1990s crystallises. Following Carol Duncan, museums can be thought of as "powerful identity-defining machines. To control a museum means precisely to control the representation of a community and some of its highest, most authoritative truths" (Duncan, 1991: 102). It is in this sense that museums long operated as resembling temples, not only architecturally but also in the way they work: specific spaces being marked off and

⁵ Klein, Julian (2017), "What is artistic research?", in *JAR Journal for Artistic Research*, 23 April 2017, jar-online.net, retrieved from: <https://www.jar-online.net/what-artistic-research>, last accessed in March 2019.

culturally designated as special, for contemplation and learning experience and demanding special quality attention from its visitors, that should bring willingness and ability to shift into a certain state of receptivity (Duncan, 1991: 91). According to this author, there has been a shift in the way museums operate, especially since the 1950s – a development that can be found put into words some years later in Duncan F. Cameron's text *The Museum, a Temple or the Forum*, published in 1971 and claiming the need for a shift from the museum as temple to the new concept of museum as *forum*, by which he means a place for confrontation, experimentation and debate (Cameron, 1971). However, it might be argued that even though this call for change came as 'early' as 1971, it only started taking place around the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s with the rise of new institutionalism.

Following this brief outline of important discussions around contemporary curatorial and artistic practices, as well as the role institutions play in the process of curatorial knowledge production, PART I 'Visual Arts Organisations Within the Contemporary Arts Landscape' provides a theoretical backbone to the research topic addressing key curatorial discourses in relation to the production of knowledge. Chapter 1 'Knowledge Production: From Curatorial Discourse to Institutional Aim' starts by introducing artistic research, the role of the curator and new institutionalism. Also a part of this theoretical overview is the presentation of the Triangle Network and how it is understood by its current director, Alessio Antonioli. He sees it as a model inspired by the rhizome theory developed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in the 1980s and formulated in their text *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987). Through the outspoken identification of the Triangle Network with this model, it becomes an important theoretical reference, which is thus explored in Chapter 2 'Visual Arts Organisations: Three Case Studies from the Triangle Network'. Starting from the general analysis of the network, the three case studies are introduced, before passing on to their detailed analysis in PART II.

Part II 'The Three Vertices of Knowledge in Visual Arts Organisations' is then structured in three chapters, each of them concentrating on one specific means through which the case studies are believed to put knowledge production into practice. Chapter 3 'From Education to Mediation: Breaking Down Barriers' focuses on mediation and the notion of dialogue between the local and the global, considering the production of 'glocal' knowledge through community-oriented programmes. Additionally, this chapter recalls that mediation

can take on varied formats and be embedded in different systems in which architecture is one to consider. Chapter 4 'Representation – Curating Other Knowledge(s)' talks about representation and the ways in which these organisations bring 'other' knowledge(s) into the fore by promoting specific signifying practices, while Chapter 5 'Conviviality – What Being Together Means for Knowledge Production' addresses the notion of 'experience' and how 'shared time' (Bouman, 2004) can function as a vehicle for knowledge. It is important to mention that these categories, which suggest a clear separation of VAOs' practices into clearly identifiable and individual approaches, serve, even though rather artificial, the purpose of clarity and structure of the inquiry.

The methods used for the analysis are a thorough review of literature as well as ethnographic analysis and live interviews with (one of) the directors of each organisation, following the general interview guide approach. Through the active involvement with the organisations through at least two visits (or more, whenever possible) and by following the programmes of the VAOs through digital newsletters, social media announcements and other publications for a duration of at least six months, a part of the necessary data for the evaluation was gathered.

The interviews, however, represent the main source of evidence and insight into VAOs' practices, since they stand for the creation of a small archive around the production of knowledge and get hold of very individual understandings and approaches towards the topic. In addition to this, the focus on interpersonal relations and the direct engagement with the local community that these organisations nurture, makes the figures involved at the front of VAOs define and characterise the way the communication of the organisation is handled in a very person-bound way, which leads to the hypothesis that the individuals running these organisations play a fundamental role for the issues at stake in this inquiry.

*

As Isabel Capeloa Gil identifies (Capeloa Gil, 2008: 148), Culture Studies attend their auto-definition as macro – and meta-discipline in that “they look at culture as matter and communicative medium, and they are inclined towards the **materiality of communication** (Gumbrecht, 1994; Kittler, 1987). In this sense, they discuss the way in which the medium (written, images, *performance*) and

the institutional system that tutelages it (*media*, museum, cinema, literature) simultaneously condition the representation and are conditioned by it, resorting to the theoretical framing of semiotics, and articulating it with the interest in the role of historical contingency and with the reflection on material culture, which is characteristic of neo-historicist reflection⁶". It is in this framework of Culture Studies that the present research is undertaken, mirroring the interest for the materiality of communication through the analysis of contemporary curatorial and artistic practices in VAOs as the institutional system that supports them, asking how they position themselves in relation to representation, not only in the most direct sense, but how their practices include mediation strategies and a focus on conviviality, which could also be read in terms of representational stand-takings.

⁶ Translation by the author from the original in Portuguese: "respondendo à sua autodefinição como macro e metadisciplina, os Estudos de Cultura olham para a cultura enquanto matéria e meio de comunicação, e debruçam-se sobre a **materialidade da comunicação** (Gumbrecht, 1994; Kittler, 1987). Debatem, assim, o modo como o meio (escrita, imagem, *performance*) e o sistema institucional que o tutela (*media*, museu, cinema, literatura) simultaneamente condicionam a representação e são por ela condicionados, recorrendo ao travejamento teórico da semiótica, e articulando-o com o interesse no papel da contingência histórica e com a reflexão sobre a cultura material, que é característico da reflexão neo-historicista."

PART I

Visual Arts Organisations

Within the Contemporary Arts Landscape

CHAPTER 1

Knowledge Production from Curatorial Discourse to Institutional Aim

In this first chapter, the aim is to give an overview of important discourses that have become popular over the last twenty to thirty years and that are related to the field of curating, knowledge production and the cultural institution (as structure that in different ways engages with both). Addressing artistic research, the role of the curator, and new institutionalism, the aim will be to draw a theoretical backdrop from which to start for the analysis of visual arts organisations regarding knowledge production. While the discussed theory will allow for a first-hand platform for a definition for what knowledge production could mean in the context of the present inquiry, it will naturally remain a work in progress since it precedes the analysis of the case studies, which will shed light onto more specific aspects of the production of knowledge in VAOs.

1.1 Artistic Research

In the article *Curating the University: Overlapping Problems and Solutions* (2017) Ana Cachola and Luísa Santos reflect upon the tension between the arts and knowledge and how the boundaries of the disciplines are being contested through contemporary artistic practices⁷ and curatorial approaches. It

⁷ The concept 'artistic practices' is used based on Tasos Zembylas' definition in the recent publication edited by him: *Artistic Practices: Social interactions and cultural dynamics* (2014). As stated in the introduction: "Practices are configurations of cohesive activities that establish coordinated and collaborative relationships among members of a community. From this perspective, practices are clearly understood as collectively constituted and regulated, and as transforming along social, cultural, technological, and economic trajectories" (Zembylas, 2014: 1). He continues

is here that they identify that “the etymology of the word studio – from Italian studio ‘room for study’, from Latin stadium ‘apply oneself to the acquisition of learning, pursue a formal course of study’⁸ – persists and will perpetuate the symbiotic connection between art and knowledge and the understanding of art as knowledge” (Cachola and Santos, 2017).^{9, 10} Even though today it is widely accepted that there is a close relationship between art and knowledge (Busch, 2009), and the discussion about the epistemic value of art is seeing a revival,¹¹ the question remains how the knowledge that art produces can be defined and how this process takes place under different (structural, institutional) circumstances.

By starting from the etymology of the word studio as a place for study and the acquisition of learning as an indicative for the connection between art and knowledge, the authors suggest arts’ close connection to what should rather be demarcated and specified as *academic* knowledge in the Humanities. This is due to the fact that if the same etymological analysis was made for the word ‘study’, the result would show that this word happens to be mainly related to theoretical endeavours such as the “application of the *mind*¹² to the acquisition of knowledge, intensive reading and contemplation of a book, writings, etc.”¹³ (Online Etymology Dictionary, “Study”). These are all activities related to the Humanities and the intellectual tasks of academia.

to clarify that “in order to avoid the vanity of definitions, [he] will go along with a certain semantic openness while keeping in mind that the locus of practices is the social life of practitioners, their accomplishments, which as a rule includes institutional settings. Consequently, practices are implicitly and intrinsically tied to living communities situated in time and space” (Zembylas, 2014: 1).

⁸ As referenced by the authors, the definitions were retrieved from: <http://www.etymonline.com/>

⁹ For a general introduction into the discussion on art and epistemology see: “Art and Epistemology”, Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, A Peer-Reviewed Academic Resource, freely accessible under <https://www.iep.utm.edu/art-ep/>, last accessed December 2018.

¹⁰ All references to authors with no expressed page number are from publications, most of the times online sources, that do not provide them.

¹¹ Recent works that delve into this question include: Simoniti, Vid (2014), “The Epistemic Value of Contemporary Art”, PhD diss., University of Oxford; Sherman, Aleksandra and Morrisey, Clair (2017), “What is Art Good for? The Socio-Epistemic Value of Art”, in *Frontiers of Human Neuroscience*, Vol. 11, 2017 and Klinke, Harald (ed.) (2014), *Art Theory as Visual Epistemology*, Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

¹² My own italics.

¹³ “Study”, Online Etymology Dictionary, etymonline.com, retrieved from <https://www.etymonline.com/search?q=study>, last accessed 18 December 2018.

In the spirit of allowing a broader definition of ‘knowledge’ in relation to art and artistic practices, the understanding of it as being an exclusively academic/theoretical endeavour (through its relation to the word ‘study’), will remain distant to this inquiry. Instead, the notion of ‘research’ will be favoured, as it allows a wider array of possibilities and includes varied methodologies to pose questions and acquire knowledge. Coming from the Old French ‘recercher’, meaning to “seek out, search closely” and from the Latin ‘circare’, which means to “go about, wander, traverse”¹⁴ (Online Etymology Dictionary, “Study”), it advances the realisation that while artistic research might sound academic at first, it may actually stand for a broader array of possibilities in terms of how an inquiry is undertaken, e.g., how different knowledge(s) can be produced through varying methodologies.

For this purpose, ‘research’ will be comprehended as a more universal and elementary ability to inquire “into those things we need to know, but do not know yet” (Appadurai, 2006: 167) as defined by Arjun Appadurai in *The Right to Research* (2006). It is in this framework that he acknowledges research as a “specialised name for a generalized capacity” (Appadurai, 2006: 167). Appadurai reminds us of the mystery of research itself, when thinking about the fact that research, be it in the empirical (social or natural) sciences or in the Humanities, “purports to be a systematic means for discovering the not-yet-known” (Appadurai, 2006: 169). And he continues to question “How can you have a systematic means for getting to what you do not know?” (Appadurai, 2006: 169).

This definition of research allows for an understanding of how, as in the project PUKAR initiated by Appadurai in Mumbai, “knowledge and action, specifically creative action, artistic action, [and] political action” (Appadurai, 2006: 174) can come together. Even though the different kinds of engagement of the arts with knowledge will be addressed in the next few pages, it seems important to highlight already the importance that is given to the assemblage of knowledge, creativity, the arts and politics in this project. Especially, when one understands the impact “the capacity to document, to inquire, to analyze and to communicate” (Appadurai, 2006: 175) has on the participants’ “capacity to speak up as active citizens” (Appadurai, 2006: 175). Acknowledging how this assemblage of apparently separate spheres leads to the development of a

¹⁴ Ibidem.

deeply democratic competence, such as research, that is generally promoted exclusively by (more traditional) educational institutions.

Furthermore, this project is interesting in that it recognises a need for projects that address things from a local and a global perspective¹⁵, being that “Mumbai, like many other cities, is embedded in global processes” (Appadurai, 2006: 174). In the next chapter, the reader shall see why this is important in relation to the work developed by the visual arts organisations associated to the Triangle Network.

By now, it should have become clearer which questions and tensions arise when talking about the relation between knowledge and the arts. It has been argued that even though artists engage with ‘knowledge’ and ‘research’, these concepts are not as tightly or exclusively linked to academic/theoretical work as it might at first seem. This allows for a broader understanding as in that (1) the artists’ practice is not only or necessarily linked to an academic/theoretical knowledge, but also ‘other’ types of knowledge(s) – something that will be analysed through the way in which visual arts organisations develop their work. On the other hand ‘research’, as defined by Appadurai, creates the chance to specify that (2) when talking about research as the methodology artists use, as in ‘artistic research’, what is meant must not be an (again) exclusively academic/theoretical endeavour aiming only at “the production of original ideas and new knowledge (as it is normally defined in academia and other knowledge-based institutions)” (Appadurai, 2006: 176). Instead, research can be understood in a broader sense as a right to inquire (Appadurai, 2006). It remains an open question if and how many artists subscribe to a practice engaged with the specific goal of knowledge production, but research being considered a methodology for artistic practice surely suggests a proximity to knowledge and how it is acquired.

¹⁵ The relation between local and global is mainly discussed in sociology, studies on globalisation and cultural theory. The concept of the ‘glocal’, in which the process of globalisation is redefined as being characterised by a two-ways influence, adapting products to the local conditions instead of being only top-down, was initially formulated by Roland Robertson in: Robertson, Roland (1995), “Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity”, in Featherstone, Mike; Lash, Scott and Robertson, Roland (eds) (1995), *Global Modernities*, pp. 25-44, London: Sage Publications. Further and extensive work on globalisation has been developed by Arjun Appadurai. About the relation between the local and the global see for example: Appadurai, Arjun (1990), “Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy”, in *Theory, Culture & Society*, Vo. 7, p. 295, London: Sage Publications.

The cultural theorist Kathrin Busch, who has worked extensively on the relation between art and knowledge, engaging especially with the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze, states that

Art and theory, in effect, are nothing more than two different forms of practice interrelated through a system of interaction and transferences. In this constellation, philosophy neither brings the arts to the point nor does art sensualize philosophical truths; philosophy serves a knowledge-based artistic practice as a point of reference, similar, conversely, to how art might affect theoretical practice. (Busch, 2009)

By focusing on the interaction and the transferences among these two fields – instead of privileging one – she suggests an exchange that happens both-sided, attributing equal value to art and theory.

In her essay *Artistic Research and the Poetics of Knowledge* (2009)¹⁶ Busch analyses the heterogeneous forms of what has been called 'artistic research'¹⁷ and proposes the differentiation of this concept into three types. Firstly, she introduces *art with research*, a practice in which art is not understood as research itself, but as openly influenced by it. Recalling some examples, such as the relation between linguistics and conceptual art in the 1960s and '70s, she

¹⁶ This article is included in one of the issues of the online journal *Art & Research*, which offers a fair number of articles around the same topics. It is open access and can be found under the following link: <http://www.artandresearch.org.uk/v2n2/busch.html>. Last accessed in December 2018.

¹⁷ Further readings on artistic research include: Caduff, Corina (2017), "Artistic Research: Methods – Development of a Discourse – Current Risks", in Langkilde, Kirsten Merete (ed.), *Poetry of the Real, Aufzeichnungen der Hochschule für Gestaltung und Kunst FHNW*, pp. 311-323, Basel: Christoph Merian Verlag; Caduff, Corina; Wälchli, Tan and Siegenthaler, Fiona (eds) (2010), *Art and Artistic Research*, Zurich: Heidegger und Spiess Verlag; McNiff, Shaun (1998), *Art-Based Research*, London and Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers; Klein, Julian (2017), "What is artistic research?", in *JAR Journal for Artistic Research*, 23 April 2017, jar-online.net, retrieved from: <https://www.jar-online.net/what-artistic-research>, last accessed in December 2018; Lesage, Dieter (2009), "Who's Afraid of Artistic Research? On measuring artistic research output", in *Art&Research, A Journal of Ideas, Contexts and Methods*, Vol. 2, Nr. 2, Spring 2009, [artandresearch.org.uk](http://www.artandresearch.org.uk/v2n2/lesage.html), retrieved from: <http://www.artandresearch.org.uk/v2n2/lesage.html>, last accessed in December 2018 and Hannula, Mika; Suoranta, Juha and Vadén, Tere (eds) (2005), *Artistic Research. Theories, Methods, Practices.*, Helsinki and Gothenburg: Academy of Fine Arts, Finland and University of Gothenburg / ArtMonitor, Sweden.

reminds us that the engagement of art with scientific knowledge is not a new or specifically contemporary phenomenon.

The second type is named *art about research*. It is depicted as a practice that focuses thematically on research, its procedures and conclusions: “Research, in this sense, is the object of an art that does not restrict itself to functioning as an object of science” (Busch, 2009). Taking this into consideration, it could be argued that it cannot be considered a specific methodological approach to art, but rather a thematic preoccupation that defines the content of the artistic practice. Bearing in mind that the preoccupation of the present inquiry is less about the content of artworks, this type of artistic research practice will not be analysed further.

A third kind of artistic research practice understands itself as research, meaning that scientific processes or conclusions become the artists instrument to develop their work. This is the definition of artistic research that will be relevant in the context of this thesis, not only because it refers to “a particular phenomenon in contemporary art, in particular in institutional-critique”¹⁸ (Busch,

¹⁸ Institutional critique is generally the denomination for a genre in contemporary art practices that was developed in the 1960s and 1970s by several artists that demanded the publicness of the art institution. As explained by Alexander Alberro in the publication *Institutional Critique: An Anthology of Artists' Writings* (2009) edited by him and Blake Stimson: “Like the institution of the university and the library or public archive, the art institution was advanced by Enlightenment philosophy as dualistic. The aesthetic, discursively realized in salons and museums through the process of critique, was coupled with a promise: the production of public exchange, of a public sphere, of a public subject. It also functioned as a form of self-imagining, as an integral element in the constitution of bourgeois identity. The artistic practices that in the late 1960s and 1970s came to be referred to as institutional critique revisited that radical promise of the European Enlightenment, and they did so precisely by confronting the institution of art with the claim that it was not sufficiently committed to, let alone realizing or fulfilling, the pursuit of publicness that had brought it into being in the first place. They juxtaposed in a number of ways the immanent, normative (ideal) self-understanding of the art institution with the (material) actuality of the social relations that currently forms it. That juxtaposition sought at once to foreground the tension between the theoretical self-understanding of the institution of art and its actual practice of operation, and to summon the need for a resolution of that tension or contradiction” (Alberro, 2009: 3).

During the late 1980s and into the 1990s the so-called ‘second wave’ of institutional critique took place, in which according to Simon Sheikh “the institutional framework became somewhat expanded to include the artist’s role (the subject performing the critique) as institutionalized, as well as an investigation into other institutional spaces (and practices) besides the art space” (Sheikh, 2009: 29).

Further reading on a contemporary take on the topic of institutional critique and what might be the ‘third wave’ of this practice, can be found in: Raunig, Gerald and Ray, Gene (eds) (2009), *Art and Contemporary Practice: Reinventing Institutional Critique*, London: MayFlyBooks.

2009), in which it is the artist who researches autonomously and considers this practice part of the artwork, but also because it can be assumed that this being a given art “becomes the site of knowledge production and does not restrict itself to integrating previously known concepts” (Busch, 2009). While it already shows how closely related this understanding of artistic practice is to the production of knowledge and to the methodological questioning that characterises academic/theoretical research, in the following citation it becomes even clearer:

Theory is now interpreted as a constitutive element of the artistic practice itself, and scientific methods of research and knowledge generation enter into the artistic process. This is where art and science begin to blur, insofar as scientific argumentation and artistic criterion are seamlessly intertwined, and artistic work does not claim to produce a ‘work’ in the classic sense of the term, but rather (often critical) knowledge, so as to use artistic means to analyze the present day and its social conditions and their structures. The required research is neither a preliminary work phase of art production nor is it a means to an end, rather it is the aim of the work itself. [...] The work *is* the research. And the result of this research can assume such diverse forms as symposia, services, publications or interventions. (Busch, 2009)

There are several things to highlight from this: (1) how artists are engaging in the production of knowledge, appropriating research methods that used to be exclusive to the sciences and the humanities and (2) calling the research not only part of artistic practice, but art itself. Moreover, this art/knowledge needs to be presented in different ways than the classic exhibition format that presents ‘just’ objects, which leads to (3) the appearance of different and new ways of exhibiting, such as the symposia, services, publications and interventions¹⁹ mentioned above. But before going into the curatorial developments

¹⁹ To mention just a few examples: *unitednationsplaza* by Anton Vidokle (a temporary, experimental school in Berlin that was created following the cancellation of Manifesta 6 on Cyprus in 2006), the *Copenhagen Free University* by Henrietta Heise and Jakob Jakobsen (a higher education institution founded and operating in the flat of this artist couple in Copenhagen, free and accessible to all) and Santiago Sierra’s *THE NAMES OF THOSE KILLED IN THE SYRIAN CONFLICT, BETWEEN 15th OF MARCH 2011 AND 31st OF DECEMBER 2016* (a performance with a total duration of eight days across four cities on three continents first presented in 2017).

Another example is the curatorial approach of documenta in 2002, where “Instead of trying

that followed these artistic practices and explored different ways of presenting the work that came into existence through them, it seems relevant to recall that the definition of artistic practices as research does not just go without complications.

Although the idea of art as research seems to be widely established in the discourse about contemporary artistic practices, it is also one that is contested by some authors.²⁰ Sven Lütticken for example criticises the discourse of knowledge production as a mere “matter of rhetoric, of branding” (Lütticken, 2006: 85). He follows to state that “in practice, knowledge production in art often amounts to little more than simulation – the ‘research’ in question being little more than advanced browsing that yields hackneyed results” (Lütticken, 2006: 85).

Following the same line of thought Marion von Osten also clashes with the

assumption that knowledge can be produced, like in a factory and can therefore be accelerated and optimized, and that access to knowledge can be controlled in a capitalistic sense by means of issuing patents and monetization and by exclusively being linked to a specific use. (von Osten, 2006: 123)

She clearly addresses the tension between capitalistic priorities and the production of knowledge, identifying that knowledge is not only hard to define, but consequently also very difficult to produce in a measurable way and linked to a specific purpose.

to make a standard exhibition on one site, they created a series of symposia, called ‘platforms’, around the world. The exhibition itself was conceived as the fifth of these platforms, rather than the primary event, stressing that contemporary art should be understood through an ‘off-centre principle’. Rather than standing at the centre of these creative platforms, the viewer of Enwezor’s *Documenta* was made aware there were other activities going on elsewhere, and therefore a comprehensive view was not possible” (Obrist, 2014: 128).

²⁰ See for instance: Scrivener, Stephen (2002), “The Art Object Does Not Embody a Form of Knowledge”, in *Working Papers in Art and Design*, Volume 2, Hertfordshire: University of Hertfordshire, herts.ac.uk, retrieved from: https://www.herts.ac.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0008/12311/WPIAAD_vol2_scrivener.pdf, last accessed in January 2019, in which the author argues that the knowledge that art can produce “is typically of a superficial nature and cannot account for the deep insights that art is usually thought to endow into emotions, human nature and relationships, and our place in the World, etc.” (Scrivener, 2002). He continues to argue that “visual art is not, nor has it ever been, primarily a form of knowledge communication; nor is it a servant of the knowledge acquisition enterprise” (Scrivener, 2002), questioning the relation between artistic practices and research.

One could take this criticism to be based on the disapproval of the idea that knowledge production can be planned. As if one (the academic researcher, the curator, the artist) already knew that when engaging in research she will find something that can then be measured as in the 'amount' of new knowledge produced by the inquiry. This preoccupation seems to resonate with what Appadurai states when considering that the research process is one that is hardly definable as a clear path or a "systematic means for discovering the not-yet-known" (Appadurai, 2006: 169).

While having now the understanding of the different forms of artistic research on the one hand, there are attempts to establish *art as science*, art as an academic scientific discipline. This can be seen above all through the expansion of master and PhD courses for artistic practices that aim to embed the arts into the same educational system in which the sciences are.²¹ Tom Holert even talks about this question having displaced the art/non-art dichotomy, stating that it has developed into "a question of how to establish a discursive field capable of rendering an epistemological and ontological realm of artistic/studio practice as a scientifically valid research endeavor" (Holert, 2009). In this undertaking, "the art educational program is intended to convey knowledge about society and culture, the field of art, as well as art history and art theory. The declared aim is to establish a theoretical, informed artistic practice that considers the claim of scientific methods through methodic rigor and the transfer of basic knowledge" (Busch, 2009). Even though this is a very interesting inquiry when addressing contemporary arts' questions about artistic research, it will not be discussed further in the framework of the present analysis. However, it seems important to mention that Busch accurately identifies the wish to recognise the arts as a science as being rooted in the assumption "that art can only be considered a form of knowledge if it conforms to scientific standards" (Busch, 2009). Clearly, the whole purpose of this research would be nullified should the epistemic value of art be taken to be necessarily linked to the understanding of art as science, underlining the sciences as the only valid model to produce knowledge.

²¹ For further reading on the dichotomy between art and science, please see: Andersson, Erik (2009), "Fine Science and Social Arts – on common grounds and necessary boundaries of two ways to produce meaning", in *Art&Research: A Journal of Ideas, Contexts and Methods*, artandresearch.org.uk, retrieved from: <http://www.artandresearch.org.uk/v2n2/andersson.html>, last accessed in January 2019.

Knowledge Production from Curatorial Discourse to Institutional Aim

Starting from this discussion, criticism can as well go towards the supposition of the existence of a canonistic knowledge that can be integrated into the art practice and that serves as its basis. As soon as knowledge is compacted into information that can be acquired, it gives rise to the question whether it is being economised, in other words, if it is being caught by the metrification of knowledge that has been so often criticised in relation to the Bologna Process.²² As Busch sees it, this measuring and ‘packaging’ of knowledge originates in the idea that “scientific justification could increase the usability and market efficiency of cultural products created by art school graduates” (Busch, 2009), pointing at the discussion about arts’ *raison d’être*.

In his essay *Art in the Knowledge Based Polis* (2009), Holert gives a short but poignant historical overview on the Hornsey Revolution from May 28, 1968. The Hornsey Revolution was an occupation of the Hornsey College of Art as an answer to a dispute over control of the Student Union funds, which then led to a broader, six-week long debate about art education, the social role of art and the politics of design (Holert, 2009).

It is noteworthy, that already back then, students were addressing “the ‘disastrous consequence’ of the ‘split between practice and theory’, between intellect and non-intellectual sources of creativity” (Holert, 2009) and how they maintained that process should prevail over output. Not to forget the fact “that knowledge generated through art cannot as easily be brought to a precise point, [...]. It is much more about formulating doubt from the perspective of art about certain forms of knowledge production” (Busch, 2009).

To make a connection to more recent developments that challenge the separation of the arts and educational institutions, two well-known examples of knowledge production in between these realms are the Independent Studies Programme from the Museu d’Art Contemporani Barcelona (MACBA)²³, which is a leading example of the juxtapositions of the field of the arts and institutions, such as universities, which have been thought to be the ‘holders’ of knowledge. In this case, the museum takes up the role of an educational institution

²² The Bologna Process will still be explained further in PART II of this thesis, since it is a key aspect to consider in relation to the importance given to education and mediation in artistic practices and the field of curating.

²³ The Independent Studies Programme from the Museu d’Art Contemporani Barcelona (MACBA) was launched in 2006, underlining my idea that this year is an important one for the understanding of the production of knowledge in the field of contemporary art.

through its Independent Studies Programme. Another remarkable example is the Tate Exchange programme, which brings together international artists, arts professionals from partner institutions and is open to a general audience (Tate, “Learning Programmes”).²⁴ These examples showcase how the existing separations between arts and education are being challenged, not only through artistic practices, but also through the implementation of study programmes at museums, giving origin to a two-way contamination.

1.2 The Role of the Curator

In addition to the discussions in which the relation between art and knowledge is contested, an intensively animated curatorial discourse has been witnessed since the 1990s. As Hans Ulrich Obrist rightly identifies the increased interest in curating cannot be reflected upon without taking into consideration the close relation it has to the increased amount of information and data that is produced nowadays (Obrist, 2014: 24). Seen like this, curating, or what could be called ‘the art of choosing’, has become a potential way of organising and rearranging the flood of information (text, sound, images, video, advertising...) that surrounds us, trying to identify what is worth of our attention.²⁵

Not less due to these contemporary developments, curatorial discourse has become so popular over the last three decades, leading to the crystallisation of a lively conversation about the field of contemporary exhibition making and cultural management on the one hand and being adopted by other areas and leading to a popularisation of the word ‘curating’ on the other hand. A good example for this is the incredible number of results that show when looking up ‘curating of information’ or ‘content curation’ in a Google-search. These expressions have become widely used in different areas and adapted

²⁴ “Learning Programmes”, About Us, Tate, [tate.org.uk](https://www.tate.org.uk/about-us/learning-programmes), retrieved from: <https://www.tate.org.uk/about-us/learning-programmes>, last accessed in January 2019.

²⁵ In his book *The Ecology of Attention* (2017) author Yves Citton, for example, analyses how the individual’s attention is shaped by the contexts in which it finds itself, passing through such varied fields and mediums as literature, advertising, search engines and performance art. He argues for a consciousness in relation to the many actors that have an interest in the individual’s attention and how awareness could be useful to know how and where to concentrate this limited resource

to a common language, apparently leaving the professional realm of the arts behind and suggesting the need for all individuals to know how to curate (information).²⁶

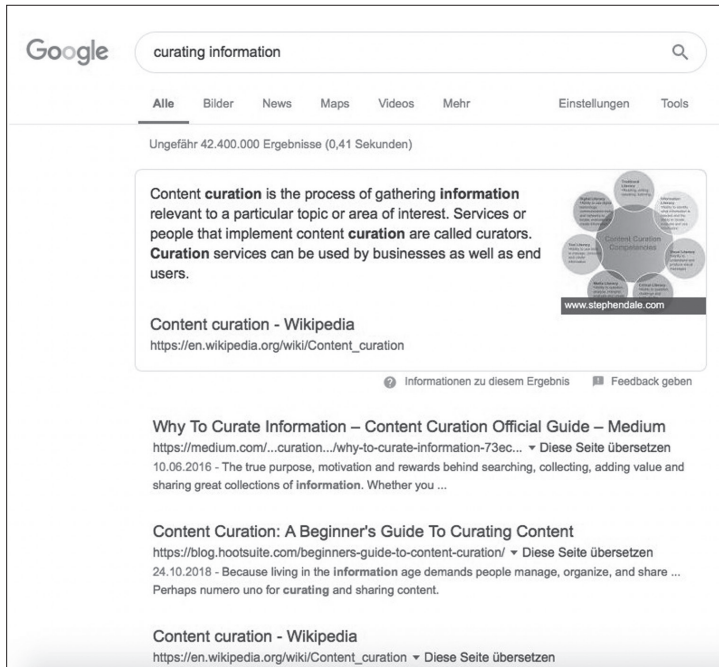


Figure 1. Steinworth, Sofia (2019), 'Screenshot of a Google-Search for 'curating information' taken on March 17', 2019, google.com

In his book *How Curating Took Over the Art World and Everything Else* (2014) David Blazer identifies that

Curationism [...] is the acceleration of the curatorial impulse to become a dominant way of thinking and being. [He] contend[s] that, since about the mid-1990s, we have been living in the curationist moment, in which institutions and

²⁶ When starting a Google-search for 'curating information', forty-two million results are shown – in opposition to eleven million results for 'curating'. Among the first search results one can find: *Content Curation* from Wikipedia, *Content Curation: A Beginner's Guide to Curating Content* (2018) from the Blog Hootsuite and an article called *Why to Curate Information – Content Curation Official Guide* (2016) published by Medium. This brief listing serves the purpose of showcasing how curating has turned into a popular topic in relation to the present times, leaving its original context of taking care of cultural goods, passing on to a taking care, organising and selecting of everything, including information.

businesses rely on others, often variously credentialed experts, to cultivate and organize things in an expression-cum-assurance of value and attempt to make affiliations with, and to court, various audiences and consumers. As these audiences and consumers, we are engaged as well, cultivating and organizing our identities duly, as we are prompted. (Blazer, 2014: 9)

By diagnosing ‘curationism’ as a symptom of our time, Blazer presents it as an overarching, all-encompassing call that takes over even our personal identities. In addition to this, the popularity of the term and its wide scope of definitions in different areas speak for themselves and stand for the urgent need to re-evaluate the meaning of ‘curating’ in and from different fields and standpoints.

In the scope of this thesis and narrowing down the context of curating to the artistic field, the historical development of this profession can be traced back to its Latin root *curare*, meaning ‘to take care of’. In Hans Ulrich Obrist’s succinct words:

In ancient Rome, *curatores* were civil servants who took care of some rather prosaic, if necessary, functions: they were responsible for overseeing public works, including the empire’s aqueducts, bathhouses and sewers. In the medieval period, the focus shifted to a more metaphysical aspect of human life; the *curatus* was a priest who took care of the souls of a parish. By the late eighteenth century, *curator* came to signify the task of looking after a museum’s collection. (Obrist, 2014: 25)

Even though the word has evolved and taken on different meanings over time and in different contexts, it is still closely related to its Latin origin.

It is specifically in the art world, that the transition from the understanding of curating as a practice evolved from the *Ausstellungsmacher* as someone who preserved and added to a collection, while contributing to art history and making exhibitions (Obrist, 2014: 25) and began to broaden into a more dynamic understanding of curating as the “event of knowledge” (Rogoff, 2013). Moving away from the tasks that the curator used to have as *Ausstellungsmacher*, and that seemed to have become rather limiting, curatorial discourse started to engage more intensively with the idea of knowledge production. Instead of (only) organising, taking care of, presenting and adding to a collection, curatorial

practice is now seen as a field that allows for more possibilities in the sense of having an authorial or creative mind that develops a concept and brings it into existence in different forms. This could be an exhibition, a conference, a workshop, a symposium, a talk, an artist residency, etc.

It is important to mention that even though concept and creativity seem to come together in this process, the curator can be contested as an authorial figure when it comes to receiving more significance than the artists. It is in this sense that based on Adrian George, Teresa Pinheiro recognises that in the 20th century “the curatorial concept shaped the exhibition, from which the artworks were selected, to generate unexpected and new relationships between them” (Pinheiro, 2017: 22). Obrist identifies this potentiality for conflict as being rooted in a curatorial practice closely related to the timeframe of the 1980s: “By the 1980s many thematic exhibitions risked being seen this way, the curator as an overriding figure or *auteur* who uses artworks to illustrate his or her own theory” (Obrist, 2014: 32-33).

In the decades to follow and in order to distance curatorial practice from this accusation, the discussion has taken up a focus on the analysis of the nature of curatorial work that even though independent, requires “extensive collaboration, negotiation and discussion – not only with the artists but [in the case of museums] also with the various departments that participate in the production of an exhibition” (Pinheiro, 2017: 22).²⁷

Irit Rogoff and Jean-Paul Martinon from the Department of Visual Culture at Goldsmiths University in London have been key-figures in the process of re-evaluating the means and ends (or rather processes) of curating nowadays. Especially since the establishment of the Curatorial/Knowledge Programme at the same institution in 2006, the discourse has flourished towards an understanding of the ‘curatorial’, distancing it from the praxis that the *Ausstellungsmacher* saw as his own. In *The Curatorial: A Philosophy of Curating* edited by Rogoff and Martinon, they state in the preface that ‘the curatorial’, as in opposition to ‘curating’, “operates at a very different level: it explores all that takes place on the stage set-up, both intentionally and unintentionally, by the curator and views it as an event of knowledge” (Martinon, Rogoff, 2013: ix). Even though Obrist also addresses the stage set-up of an exhibition as an

²⁷ To draw on this development Pinheiro bases herself on George’s, Adrian (2015), *The Curator’s Handbook*, London: Thames & Hudson.

opportunity to make connections and to communicate a message, he seems to stay in the authorial position of the curator as the one making these connections and preparing the message: “the very idea of an exhibition is that we live in a world with each other, in which it is possible to make arrangements, associations, connections and wordless gestures, and, through this *mise en scène*, to speak” (Obrist, 2014: 32). Alternatively, Rogoff and Martinon seem to step back from the curator’s one-way message that is communicated through his work of assemblage, and formulate what appears to be a more inclusive, dialogical or even conversational mode of exhibiting, in which the unintentional is credited as much as the intentional and the curator is seen as the planner of an initial platform, but not as the author of a single and clear message. Within ‘the curatorial’

works of art can no longer be a process of interpellation, a conscious or unconscious hailing by some internalized mode of knowledge. Instead, they engage in another process, that of precipitating our reflection, of encouraging another way of thinking or sensing the world. From being reactive to the world to precipitating another reflection on the world (and inevitably sparking ways to change the world), works of art reflect the myriad ways of being implicated in the world, not just as passive recipients, but as active members of a world that is never one with itself, always out of joint, out of place, but always intrinsically ours – of our own making. (Martinon, Rogoff, 2013: ix)

Hence the question here is, how the role of the curator can be described in a contemporary arts panorama highly influenced by the curatorial, an understanding of art as research and around a prevalent discourse around the production of knowledge.

It has already been indicated before that what can be called the ‘artwork/knowledge’ needs to be presented in different ways than the more classic exhibition format working ‘just’ with objects. As made clear by the introduction of Busch’s definition of art as research, this new art can be presented through “symposia, services, publications and interventions” (Busch, 2009). This way, it could be argued that the curatorial corset of the traditional exhibition format has been loosened up. Tom Holert identifies the same evolution, stating that in today’s art world the “discursive formats of the extended library-cum-seminar-cum-workshop-cum-symposium-cum-exhibition” are commonly used

as modes of address and knowledge production (Holert, 2009). Following this reasoning, curatorial practice is engaging with the production of knowledge not only through the presentation and juxtaposition of objects, but especially through the usage of other modes of addressing, such as the ones mentioned above. Having seen the shift in artistic practices towards an understanding of art as research, it seems to be a logical consequence that curatorial practice starts inquiring into different ways to present such practices. This development seems to be in tune with Obrist's personal belief on what curating should be, namely a practice in which "curators follow artists, not the other way around" (Obrist, 2014: 33). This way, the new ways of understanding, organising and presenting art, have shifted from the exhibition to more varied forms of making public and contrasting in an almost radical way what the *Ausstellungsmacher* used to do. In addition to this, art practice itself has become more dynamic and broader in the mediums it uses and the aims it follows.²⁸

²⁸ Even though this will not be addressed in the scope of this thesis, it seems relevant to mention the recent popularity of the relation between 'the curatorial' and performativity', which seems to be evidential for the preoccupation about finding different ways of presenting contemporary art that challenges the artwork as mere object, shifting the focus towards the dynamic between what is presented, the audience and the space and context in which the 'event' happens.** In the *Curatorial Dictionary*, a Hungarian-English platform that defines curatorial concepts (a long-term collaborative research project initiated by tranzit.hu in 2012), it can be read that 'performativity' "is an interdisciplinary concept that emerged in linguistics, ethnology and, later, in cultural and gender studies. The performative is understood as the constitution of meaning through acts or practices. [...] The aim of the performative approach to curating is to actively structure and mediate the relationship between art and its audience, as well as reconfiguring the relation between the curator and the artist" (tranzit.hu, 2015: 249-250). Moreover, performativity clearly holds a reference to the discourse of the 1960s, in which artists started criticising institutions and the increasing commercialisation of art, initiating alternative practices such as performance art. Now, we see a shift towards education, mediation and again a new understanding of the role of the institution, especially through what we have come to call 'new institutionalism'. We will consider these developments with more attention further on. For now, it is important to recall how the mentioned changes do not only happen in the arts and the institutions, but how they affect curatorial practice nowadays.

*As seen, for example, in the Chapter "Stages" in Martinon, Jean Paul (ed.) (2013) *The Curatorial, A Philosophy of Curating*, London and New York: Bloomsbury.

Another reference for this performativity can be found in: Rogoff, Irit (2006), "What is a Theorist?", in Hlavajova, Maria; Winder, Jill; Choi, Binna (eds) (2006), *On Knowledge Production, A Critical Reader in Contemporary Art*, pp. 142-156, Utrecht; Frankfurt am Main: BAK; Revolver. Rogoff talks about a "shift to a performative phase of cultural work in which meaning *takes place*, takes place in the present rather than is excavated for. Where its operations are not through signifying processes or through entering a symbolic order, which I suppose are the hallmarks of academic intellectual work, but through forms of *enactment* [my own italics]" (Rogoff, 2006: 155).

**For further reading, please consider the issue "On Performativity" from the Living Collec-

When describing the potential of curatorial work, artist and curator Raul Gschrey, for example, specifies how curatorial work allows for a wider array of possibilities when compared to academic inquiry through the various materials that it has at hand:

Through its polyphonic nature, it [curatorial work] challenges the linearity and decisiveness of academic reasoning and allows for a less hierarchical and a more open-ended and associative occupation with topics, ideas, and artifacts. [...] curatorial practice might contribute some elements to a more open and practice-based form of academic research. (Gschrey, 2016)

Placing the attention on what seems to be a somehow playful, more liberated use of theory that originates through the dialogue of theory and art, he continues to explain that

The defining categories of curatorial work [...] are space and the material presence of artifacts, as well as the non-linearity of presentation. This allows for establishing connections through analogy and opposition, through aesthetic and temporal properties, and through multi-media environments that incorporate visual, textual, and material items. (Gschrey, 2016)

Once again, the focus is on a curatorial practice that offers (more) opportunities in terms of modes of bringing together what would else not come together and of mixing-up not only spaces and artworks, but also histories (and audiences) that otherwise might not have encountered each other. It seems to be due to this reason that the curatorial is able to create new possibilities for knowledge production, for it inhabits a space in between the arts and other (academic) disciplines. As Pinheiro suggests, nowadays “the curator still resides between theory and practice: on the one hand, there is a consistent theoretical background and an on-going relationship with the academy; on the other hand, there is a work experience in the cultural fieldwork” (Pinheiro, 2017: 24).

tions Catalogue, Volume I, from the Walker Art Center's publications, which can be found here: <http://walkerart.org/collections/publications/performativity/>. Especially the article “The Experiential Turn” by Dorothea von Hantelmann seems to be relevant in this context.

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In this sense, Gschrey's approach could be read as an invitation and an opportunity to experiment and to surpass the limitations that can be found within a discipline that subscribes specific narratives, spaces and/or behaviours. Curatorial work can thus be understood as an open space, in which the limits of disciplines are less clear (and less important), since it takes its working material from different fields: the arts, the space with its specificities that will necessarily influence the result of the curatorial proposal and the theory that can be drawn from academic but also more scientific disciplines. It is through this mode of presentation, that Gschrey believes "A less hierarchical, associative experience can open up subjective readings, or rather perceptions and perspectives" (Gschrey, 2016).

While one might tend to read this statement in terms of curating as the production of knowledge, the author clarifies that he does not see the role of curators as being producers of factual knowledge but understanding it as what "could be described as moderators in the emergence of insights and perspectives and facilitators in the establishing of individual positions and attitudes" (Gschrey, 2016). This is the same reasoning curator Elena Filipovic follows, when saying that instead of the production of knowledge, exhibitions "might provoke feelings of irreverence or doubt, or an experience that is at once emotional, sensual, political, and intellectual while being decidedly not predetermined, scripted, or directed by the curator or the institution" (Filipovic, 2013: 115).

Even though these two positions openly distance themselves from the idea of knowledge production, the above-mentioned moderation in the emergence of insights and perspectives, as well as the facilitation of individual positions and attitudes (Gschrey, 2016) and the feelings of irreverence and doubt and the emotional, sensual, political experience mentioned by Filipovic (Filipovic, 2013), are all actions that link to the engagement with knowledge. Not a knowledge that can be generalised, not a merely theoretical/academic knowledge, but one that is broader and to a certain extent personal to the individual. It could be said that while wanting to distance themselves from the discourse around knowledge production, probably not less due to its economically driven neo-liberal appropriation, what is needed instead is a re-evaluation of the understanding of knowledge. Based on Filipovic's and Gschrey's descriptions of what they take the potential impact of the curatorial to be, a first draft towards an understanding of 'curatorial knowledge production' could be drawn that includes

and values personal experiences, emotions, doubts, individual insights and positions that originate in the curated space as its elements.

If understood like this, knowledge is taken to be found and formed in and through more varied sources than (theoretical) insight.²⁹ In this sense, its scope expands to include experiences, doubts, emotions and critical engagement – a personal inquiry into the “not-yet-known” (Appadurai, 2006: 169) and a re-evaluation of the already known. It is in this way, that even though these authors take a step back from the accountability and responsibility for a measurable outcome in terms of knowledge, what they describe as the potential of curatorial work can be ultimately linked to knowledge and its production.

Taking knowledge as a dynamic field, in which the contemporary and the historical come together, curatorial practice shows to be a space for the meeting of different knowledges. In Joey Orr’s words: “The tensions between contemporary and historically embedded knowledges constitute a dynamic field in which claims may be formulated and worldviews reconfigured” (Orr, 2018). This is how an artistic or curatorial practice, that identifies itself as research works not only with delivered knowledge and concepts but tries to analyse and inquire by its own means, creating the possibility for this juxtaposition of objects and knowledges that create the possibility for new articulations, understandings, inquiries, perspectives and experiences. Creating – at its best – results that stand on their own.

Very recently, and probably not less due to the lively discussion about art as research, the ‘same’ debate has been opened up about curatorial practice. Paul O’Neill and Mick Wilson have put together an editorial project called *Curating Research* (2015), which features several essays on if and how curatorial practice can be understood as research. Relevant for this thesis is to mention that these discourses keep on being constructed, opening up new fields for

²⁹ It should be further investigated if what is meant by knowledge production in the arts might have relevant parallels with the affect theory. For a general introduction on this topic, see: Gregg, Melissa and Seigworth, Gregory J. (2010), *The Affect Theory Reader*, Durham: Duke University Press.

Especially in relation to the arts the following essay might be of interest: O’Sullivan, Simon (2001), “The Aesthetics of Affect: Thinking art beyond representation”, in *Angelaki, Journal of the Theoretical Humanities*, Volume 6, Issue 3, pp. 125-135, Taylor & Francis Online, doi.org, retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09697250120087987>, last accessed in January 2019.

inquiry and critical thinking about what is sometimes informally assumed. Also, the curatorial as a recent discursive formation is still trying to formulate itself.³⁰

O'Neill and Wilson acknowledge in the introduction of their book that while art as research remains deeply contested as a research domain that "might claim intrinsic epistemic content" (O'Neill and Wilson, 2015: 15), there seems to be an understanding of curating and the curatorial as having "an accepted, relatively uncontested epistemic dimension" (O'Neill and Wilson, 2015: 15). In other words, "research, in some informal and mostly un-problematised sense, seems to be generally recognised as a prerogative of curators" (O'Neill and Wilson, 2015: 15). What is thus showing is that "it appears that the 'curatorial' and certain understandings of 'research' have become aligned with each other, perhaps as a means of moving beyond an understanding of exhibitions as the main outcome of curating-as-production" (O'Neill and Wilson, 2015: 12). Following this, the distinction between curating and the curatorial, that might still have seemed a blurry matter some years ago, shows to be more and more embedded into curatorial discourse as an accepted current stage of things.

1.3 New Institutionalism

Having undertaken a brief overview about the history of curating and the possibilities that curatorial practice offers in terms of engagement with knowledge(s), objects, space and audiences, it is inevitable to talk about the impact the curator figure, as consolidated and popularised since the 1990s, has had on the way institutions are led. This development has been coined as 'new institutionalism' and will be introduced in the following pages.

When talking about new institutionalism, what is meant is a practice that appeared around the end of the 1990s and continued to take shape in the 2000s. Broadly speaking, it aimed to challenge the ways in which an art institution, specifically a museum, was supposed to be conducted and what its purpose should be. Even though some of the changes that the curators – by then institutional directors – were pursuing and how this affected the institutions'

³⁰ The discourse around the 'curatorial' is a quite recent one, looking back on not even ten years of existence. One, if not the first appearances of the word 'curatorial', as opposed to the until then established 'curating', happens with Maria Lind's inaugural column in a series on curating – called precisely *The Curatorial* commissioned by ArtForum in October 2009.

programmes and development can be pinpointed, it remains a difficult task to come up with one specific definition of what is meant when talking about new institutionalism. In this sub-chapter, the goal will thus be to set up a kind of recompilation of characteristics of this practice, so that it serves the better understanding of the main changes that took place in curatorial practice from within institutions during this period of time. Beforehand, it seems important to mention that these changes happened in specific geographical areas, mostly in north-central Europe, namely in the Nordic countries, the Netherlands and Germany (Farquharson, 2006).

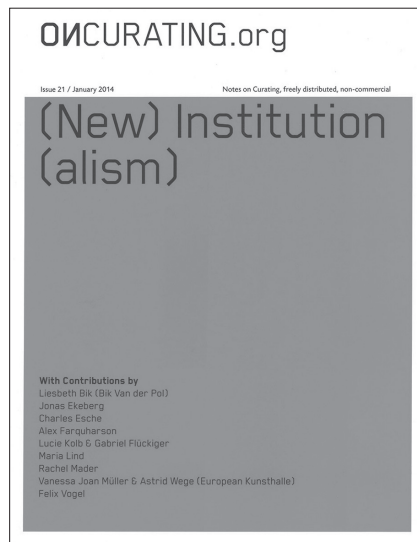


Figure 2. Steinvorth, Sofia (2019), 'Screenshot of the cover of On-Curating's (New) Institution(alism), Issue 21, December 2013', on-curating.org

The re-thinking of the role of (art) institutions is not as new as one might first think, being that there is a connection to the institutional critique formulated since the 1960s and in the 1970s, that was already challenging the role of institutions back then.³¹ The main difference could be said to lie in the origin of the critical discourse. For Claire Doherty new institutionalism must be understood as a field of curatorial practice, institutional reform and critical debate “concerned with the transformation of art institutions from within” (Doherty, 2004).

³¹ For a short introduction to the concept of institutional critique, please see the footnote for this concept in the sub-chapter of this thesis ‘The Role of the Curator’.

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It is new in the sense that it re-thinks what an institution is and can do at this specific point in time and its crucial difference is that the critical posture comes from within the institutions as opposed to the critique practiced from the outside in the '60s and '70s.

Alex Farquharson explains this by saying that “In some senses ‘new institutionalism’ represents the absorption of institutional critique as theorized and practised by artists since the 1970s. Seen this way, it is institutional critique practiced from the inside, exposing and opposing the ideological and disciplinary structures through which art in institutions comes to be mediated” (Farquharson, 2006). Transforming or adapting institutional critique, new institutionalism holds the belief that the institution and its buildings continue to be an important and valuable platform for art and thus aim to adapt their practice to the working methods of contemporary artists and artist-run initiatives. As put by Jonas Ekeberg, new institutionalism can be defined as the effort of some “agents of the art of the nineties” (Ekeberg, 2013: 20) to make the institutions follow the artists. Meaning, by art of the nineties, a contemporary art that was “transformed by neo-conceptual and social practices; art, theory and politics were mixed, as were the formerly distinct roles of the artist, the critic and the curator” (Ekeberg, 2013: 20).

Following this reasoning, Tone Hansen describes how

the art institution was understood as a complex concept that covers education, galleries, museums, publishing houses, and magazines [and how] rather than antagonistically attacking the institution, the critique of New Institutionalism was seen as a space for statements, a laboratory in the positive sense, an asylum where experiments with contemporary social issues could be examined and made visible, and where the exchange of knowledge and information could take place. The institution was reimagined as a social place where people meet and are invited to take part in the production of knowledge. (Hansen, 2016: 14)

It is interesting to note that Alex Farquharson undertakes a listing of the curators from the 1990s that became the heads of institutions and continued to develop their experimental practice³², constituting, in this way, what could be

³² For instance, he mentions: Nicolaus Schaffhausen (Kunstverein Frankfurt), Maria Hlavajova (BAK Utrecht), Nicolas Bourriaud and Jérôme Sans (Palais de Tokyo), Vasif Kortun (Platform

called the core case studies for new institutionalism (Farquharson, 2006). By doing so, he believes new institutionalism to be clearly connected to a handful of individuals that are presented as the drivers of change. The importance of the rise of the curator as an independent and authorial figure in the 1990s, that is then invited to work from within the institution but maintaining a personal style of working that is imprinted into the institution, can be clearly recognised. This seems to come from what Claire Doherty believes to be a practice highly influenced by a nomadic, flux- and exchange-driven methodology that allows for the circulation of new experimental models of presentation (Doherty, 2004), this being a curatorial experience that will necessarily influence the way institutions are then directed, leading to a new model defined by its “rhetoric of temporary / / transient encounters, states of flux and open-endedness” (Doherty, 2004).

Moreover, Doherty focuses on the curatorial as event when stating that new institutionalism “embraces a dominant strand of contemporary art practice – namely that which employs dialogue and participation to produce *event* [my own italics] or process-based works rather than objects for passive consumption” (Doherty, 2004). At this point, it is possible to recall not only the understanding of the curatorial as the ‘*event*³³ of knowledge’ as defined by Irit Rogoff but also the closeness that new institutionalism has to Nicolas Bourriaud’s *Relational Aesthetics*³⁴ (first published in French in 1998), which has seen several collaborations among ‘new institutions’³⁵ (Farquharson, 2006).

Relational Aesthetics are defined by Bourriaud as a form of artistic practice in which “the artist dwells in the circumstances the present offers him, so as to turn the setting of his life (his links with the physical and conceptual world) into a lasting world” (Bourriaud, 2002: 13-14). It is in this sense, that the role of the

Garanti Contemporary Art Istanbul), Catherine David (Witte de With Rotterdam), Charles Esche (Rooseum Malmö) and Maria Lind (Kunstverein München).

³³ My own italics.

³⁴ James Voorhies for example, sees the rise of new institutionalism as a parallel development to the formulation of Bourriaud’s *Relational Aesthetics*. In his words: “New Institutionalism emerged in the 1990s alongside the relational art promoted by the French curator and critic Nicolas Bourriaud to redefine the art institution and its role in shaping art and culture through expanded notions of the exhibition and social engagement” (Voorhies, 2016: 6).

³⁵ For instance, Rirkrit Tiravanija’s Thai-cooking performances offered in several museums, galleries and public spaces since the 1990s.

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artwork goes beyond the formation of imaginary and utopian realities and turns into actually being “ways of living and models of action within the existing real” (Bourriaud, 2002: 13). In other words, relational aesthetics understands artistic practices as a place for social experiments, a game that develops in time (“periods”) and space (“contexts”) (Bourriaud, 2002: 11).

According to this, new institutionalism seems to be related to a strand in contemporary art that in the same way in which art as research, promotes the exploration of process instead of focusing on a finished product, opening the art space, that used to be for the presentation of finished objects only, up for inquiry. Charles Esche, for example, as cited by Claire Doherty, describes how art has started to become such a space for inquiry:

Now, the term ‘art’ might be starting to describe that space in society for experimentation, questioning and discovery that religion, science and philosophy have occupied sporadically in former times. It has become an active space rather than one of passive observation. (Esche, as cited by Doherty, 2014)

New institutions welcome this experimentation and activity from the artists and provide the necessary flexibility for it to happen within the institutional structure. For Farquharson it is through this flexibility that process and product start to be tangled up: “Production doesn’t necessarily happen prior to and remote from presentation; it happens alongside or within it” (Farquharson, 2006).³⁶

Farquharson identifies that one of the main characteristics of new institutionalism is the fact that “exhibitions no longer preside over other types of activity” (Farquharson, 2006). He identifies that “many ‘new institutions’ run international residency schemes for artists, curators and critics under the same roof as their exhibition spaces, their guests being active during their stay in lectures, screenings, workshops, conferences and so on” (Farquharson, 2006). This being, it seems a logical consequence of the developments that were introduced before: artists start engaging with research, which creates the need for new curatorial proposals to present this ‘new’ kind of art that often challenges the understanding of art as mere (and finished) object. New institutionalism can then be said to be the moment in which these curators are invited into the

³⁶ This will be important for the following discussion of the working methodologies of VAOs.

institutions and by keeping the characteristic traits of their independent practice alive start changing the institutions' dynamics from within: adapting them to the emergent artistic practices such as the ones ascribed to the already mentioned art as research or relational aesthetics (Bourriaud, 1998).

New institutions often work closely with artists' groups and interdisciplinary collectives, who base their practice on the sharing of knowledge as a favoured methodology.³⁷ Clearly, the focus here goes towards the "dynamic role knowledge production plays in these institutions. The artist-as-researcher is a privileged figure in new institutions" (Farquharson, 2006). One could then say that the close collaboration among the institutions and the artists that develop their practice as research, is one of the first steps that were taken towards the today widely spread aim to produce knowledge among contemporary art institutions. On the other hand, it is important to consider how "New Institutionalism risks setting up an unnecessary polarization between self-reflexive, open-ended practices and those works which do not subscribe to a 'post-medium' condition" (Doherty, 2014). In a time in which the discourse around self-reflexivity, research and process vs. product are flourishing, it is important to remember that not all contemporary art practices embrace such subscriptions to avoid a polarisation or even an exclusion of other types of art practices from the circuit of (new) institutions.

Last but not least, Farquharson interprets new institutionalism as aligned with the creation of a "compensatory public space" (Farquharson, 2006). This broad contextualization makes sense if reminded that, going back to the definition of the role of an institution in a more general sense, institutions prescribe appropriate behaviour for specific actors in specific situations through their constitutive rules and practices: "Institutions empower and constrain actors differently and make them more or less capable of acting according to

³⁷ One of the projects that has seen collaborations within new institutions is the Copenhagen Free University, a project developed by Henriette Heise and Jakob Jakobsen. Together they started a project that they called a free university for the sharing of knowledge. This university operated in their apartment in Copenhagen and had the aim to be accessible to all remaining free of charge. Besides revealing the vulnerability of words, such as 'university', the project aimed at offering a counter-model to the capitalisation of knowledge and the metrification of knowledge put forward by the Bologna-Process. In the words of the artists: "The research projects we initiated worked as invitations to share rather than drives to accumulate. There have been no singular end products; of importance were all the various experiences and conclusions that people carried into their own lives and networks" (Heise, Jakobsen, 2006: 43).

prescriptive rules of appropriateness” (March, Olsen, 2011). New institutionalism then seems to want to open this space in museums for different behaviours than the ones traditionally believed to be suitable, by critically engaging with the ways in which contemporary art is produced and presented and by challenging and openly and auto-critically analysing the institutions’ own role and prescriptive patterns.

Summing up, by starting from the development of the figure of the curator in the 1990s³⁸ and going through the different modes of address and presentation that have developed in contemporary art institutions since then, such as workshops, conferences and discussions, a development towards a wider array of events being included in the programmes can be observed. Through the increased mobility of curators and artists that fostered exchange and sharing, these practices shaped and changed the way institutions were led, when curators coming from this background were then invited to work within institutions, giving way to what is now called ‘new institutionalism’. In this different way of leading a contemporary art institution, the exhibition sees itself discredited as the only mode of address and a more participatory and audience-engaging approach to art is promoted instead, favouring and encouraging the public as an active part in the process, rather than a passive receiver of a finished product/idea. Finally, acknowledging that in new institutionalism “reception [...] refutes the white cube ideal of the individual viewer’s inaudible monologue, and is instead dialogic and participatory. [And that] discussion events are rarely at the service of exhibitions” (Farquharson, 2006), ‘new institutions’ can be said to have a great preoccupation for education in which learning consists “of equal exchanges among a peer group in which the ambitious level of discussion is not compromised” (Farquharson, 2006). This acknowledgement is in tune with the curatorial developments discussed in the sub-chapters of the educational turn and mediation.³⁹

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³⁸ See Part I, Chapter 1, sub-chapter 1.2 ‘The Role of the Curator’ of this thesis.

³⁹ See Chapter 3.

In this first chapter, three crucial developments from within the art world⁴⁰ from the 1990s on have been discussed. The focus went from artistic practices, over to the establishment of the curatorial figure, to its impact on the institutional structures as manifested in new institutionalism. All of these developments are taken to be closely interrelated with the discourse around the production of knowledge in the cultural (and especially contemporary arts) field.

The starting point for the analysis of artistic practices was set with an outline of the conception of artistic research. For this, the epistemological value of art was introduced and a distanced position towards the methods for artistic inquiry as merely academic/theoretical was abandoned in favour of an understanding of research as an inquiry into the 'not-yet-known' as defined by Appadurai (Appadurai, 2006: 167). Three possible ways in which art and research come together were analysed through the categories proposed by Busch: *art with research*, *art about research* and *art as research*. The latter one being the one that is of interest for the present inquiry, bearing in mind that with it art "becomes the site of knowledge production and does not restrict itself to integrating previously known concepts" (Busch, 2009). Furthermore, through a short discourse on the understanding of art as science, it was concluded that nowadays educational and cultural institutions are opening their programmes to be influenced by each other challenging the separation between the arts and pedagogy.

When addressing the role of the curator, a short etymological introduction into the origin and development of the word was given based on Obrist (2014), addressing at the same time the current state of 'curationism' diagnosed by Blazer (2014). One of the key changes in this field, could be said to be the understanding from curating as the making of exhibitions to an expanded notion of the curatorial as the 'event of knowledge', as identified by Rogoff and Martinon (2013). This challenges more traditional curatorial practices and calls for a re-evaluation of the working methodology to fruitfully curate artworks/knowledge. Based on Gschrey's (2016) and Filipovic's (2013) thoughts on the possibilities within curatorial work different potentialities were introduced in this regard.

Finally, some of new institutionalism's main characteristics were discussed. These include: its close relation to institutional critique, but in this case practiced

⁴⁰ Concept coined by Howard S. Becker in his publication *Art Worlds* (1982).

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from within the institution (in contrast to a critique from the outside); the influence of the figure of the curator and the nomadic nature of his practice that implied a ‘following’ of the artists of the 1990s – time in which the discourse around artistic research arose in the visual arts⁴¹ –; the publication of Nicolas Bourriaud’s *Relational Aesthetics* (1998) and the focus on the ‘event’, context and social engagement, which includes the focus on process, the temporary, flux and open-endedness as working methodologies and last but not least, the fact that the exhibition lost its preponderant position over other types of activities.

⁴¹ See among other contributions: Caduff, Corina (2010), “Literature and Artistic Research”, in Caduff, Corina; Siegenthaler, Fiona and Wälchli, Tan (eds) (2010), *Arts and Artistic Research*, pp. 98-105, Zürich: Zürich University of the Arts and Scheiegger & Spiess.

CHAPTER 2

Visual Arts Organisations: Three Case Studies from the Triangle Network

In this chapter, the Triangle Network and three of the associated visual arts organisations from this network that were chosen as case studies for this research – Gasworks, HANGAR and 32° East – are presented in detail. By offering a brief overview of the development of the Triangle Network the focus will first be on drawing a historical backdrop to better comprehend the context in which the foundations for the establishment of present day VAOs were laid. This framework will facilitate the task of outlining the philosophy that characterises their *modus operandi* to grasp the ways in which they engage with the production of knowledge.

2.1 Triangle Network

The Triangle Network is “a global network of artists and visual arts organisations that support professional development and cultural exchange amongst artists, curators, and other arts professionals throughout the world” (Triangle Network, “About the Triangle Network”)⁴². Alessio Antonioli, current director of Gasworks and the Triangle Network, explained in an interview that one of the main characteristics of the network is that “it promotes international dialogues and the production and sharing of knowledge, the exchanging of information, ideas and experience” (Antonioli, 2018: Annex A).

The project of the Triangle Network started out of a workshop collaboration in 1982, in which artist Sir Anthony Caro and collector and philanthropist

⁴² “About the Triangle Network”, About, Triangle Network, [trianglenetwork.org](https://www.trianglenetwork.org), retrieved from <https://www.trianglenetwork.org/triangle-network/about/>, last accessed in December 2018.

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Robert Loder brought together artists from the USA, the UK and Canada⁴³ in New York in order to explore their artistic practices side by side. The main aim of this workshop was to see how their joint practice and the place and context of the workshop would influence their work during two intense weeks of exchange. Through the workshops' lack of hierarchical structure, artists were encouraged to learn from each other instead of learning in a teacher vs. student model. As described by Antonioli in a text co-written with Anna Kindersley this involves "being around each other, sharing skills, discussing techniques, and debating each other's work and practices" (Antonioli, Kindersley, 2017). At the end of the workshop an open day was held in which audiences visited the site of the workshop, had the possibility to meet the artists and discuss the artworks at various stages of completion.



Figure 3. Triangle Network (1982), Life drawing in the luncheon area (Clement Greenberg, Anthony Caro and Jim Walsh), trianglenetwork.org

On the networks' website the workshop is defined as a space that offers different dynamics from the ones artists and audiences find in established institutions, creating a singular framework that allows the lowering of possible confines and thus a wider outreach. In their words: "The informal and non-institutional nature of the workshop encouraged an alternative way of presenting and talking about art-making with the wider public" (Antonioli and Kindersley, 2017). Furthermore, the informal nature that typifies the workshops allows artists to organise projects in an independent manner, without having to rely on "museum, academic or commercial infrastructure and any agendas or

⁴³ The first workshop, having been organised for artists from *three* different countries, gave the Triangle Network its name.

restrictions that these might impose” (Antoniolli and Kindersley, 2017). Following this reasoning, one of the main characteristics of the working philosophy that developed from the workshops is the focus on the importance of the process rather than the presentation of a product: artists are freed from the expectation of having to present a finished object or final outcome of their work, allowing for experimentation instead (Antoniolli and Kindersley, 2017).⁴⁴

The workshops kept on developing and started taking place in other geographical regions, such as South Africa, where the first Triangle Workshop was hosted in Johannesburg in 1985. A sequence of other workshops followed in countries such as Zambia, Namibia, Botswana and Senegal, providing a much-needed platform for the development of the arts. In the years to follow, workshops were hosted in India, Australia, Latin America, the Caribbean and the UK (Antoniolli and Kindersley, 2017). This development served as a basis to create a wide international network and thus continue one of the core objectives of Triangle: “functioning as a bridge between local and international artists; and fostering cultural exchange by combating the sense of isolation that artists and other arts professionals felt” (Antoniolli and Kindersley, 2017).

While “Triangle workshops continue to take place and spread to new locations subject to funding and local initiative” (Antoniolli and Kindersley, 2017), some have evolved into more permanent spaces. For instance, this is the case with the Bag Factory in Johannesburg, the first actual organisation to become part of the Triangle Network. This happened in 1990, four years before Gasworks in London – now the main hub of the network – opened its doors. At the Bag Factory local artists had their own studios and shared a gallery space to exhibit theirs and other artists’ work. Being located outside formal institutional and commercial structures enabled experimentation, converting it into a place in which “the public could discover new talent and see challenging and innovative work” (Antoniolli and Kindersley, 2017). Additionally, residencies were held, fostering cultural exchange among artists and other arts professionals. From

⁴⁴ For a history about the Triangle Network and its workshops during the first twenty-five years of existence, including thorough experience reviews from those involved and an introduction into the workshop model, see the publication: Albert, Mitch; Antoniolli, Alessio; Fray, Lorna; Loder, Robert (eds) (2007), *Triangle. Variety of Experience Around Artists’ Workshops and Residencies*, London: Triangle Arts Trust.

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the 1990s on more and more VAOs initiated their activity in more permanent spaces and associated to the Network⁴⁵. Often, they were artist-run initiatives⁴⁶ and were modelled on the Bag Factory and Gasworks,

although, as in the case of the workshops, they were all independent from each other, quickly establishing their own unique identities and using Triangle Network as a means to learn from each other, share ideas and opportunities, apply for funding and co-develop exchanges such as residencies or exhibitions. (Antoniolli and Kindersley, 2017)

⁴⁵ The time in which VAOs started to spread all over the world creating an alternative model for the development and presentation of artistic practices happens to be the same in which the figure of the curator, as introduced in Part I, Chapter 1, 1.2 'The Role of the Curator', started to become more important in the art world. This parallel development, which has not yet been analysed in depth, requires further inquiry to see how the role of the curator might have influenced the work of VAOs and how, on the other hand, the alternative practices developed in the framework of the initial workshops and then in the permanent spaces of the Triangle Network for instance, might have had an influencing role in the working methodologies of curators.

The scholar Ana Bilbao has taken on a leading role in starting to engage with the analysis of what she calls small visual arts organisations (SVAOs), addressing their role in the history of curating. See: Bilbao, Ana (2018), "Micro-Curating: The Role of SVAOs (Small Visual Arts Organisations) in the History of Exhibition-Making", in *Notebook for Art, Theory and Related Zones*, Issue 25, 2018, pp. 118-138, Prague: AVU Research Center-VVP AVU.

⁴⁶ Acknowledging the difficulty in defining the very heterogeneous artist-run initiatives under one concept, Simone Sheridan denotes that "artist-run initiatives (ARIs) are operated by active artists with a do-it-yourself (DIY) ideology, often self-funded by the artists involved. ARIs encompass, but are not limited to, galleries, studios, group exhibitions, forums, events, catalogues, collectives, co-operatives and workshops; all ran by a collective group of practising artists. At the centre of what defines an ARI, is that these projects are *artist-run*, hinting towards a hands-on, contemporary environment that is elicited by artists, for artists. ARIs are capable of providing a powerful climate for artists to create dialogue and effectively, change. This argument is evidenced by their close history with reacting against commercial, public and private sectors in the 1960s and 1970s. Artist Run Initiatives represent artists taking control of their art, asserting their own trajectory for others to respond to" (Sheridan, n.d.)*

* Sheridan, Simone (n.d.), "Artist-Run What?", academia.edu, retrieved from: http://www.academia.edu/11577915/Artist-Run_What, last accessed in March 2019.

For further information on the development of artist-run initiatives during the 1960s and 1970s, see: Detterer, Gabriele and Nannucci, Maurizio (eds) (2012), *Artist-Run Spaces*, Zürich: JRP Editions.



Figure 4. Steinworth, Sofia (2019), ‘Screenshot taken on March 17, 2019, from the Triangle Network website showing map with the locations of active (black) and past (grey) Triangle Network partners’, trianglenetwork.org

Nowadays the Triangle Network looks back on collaborations with more than forty VAOs all over the world; counting twenty-nine active partnerships at the moment.⁴⁷

The partners of the network “share a mission or philosophy, which they put into practice in different ways, according to their resources and the context in which they operate” (Antoniolli, 2018: Annex A). This is the case for Gasworks, HANGAR and 32° East. As explained by Antonioli:

Each organisation operates in its context and addresses the local needs. HANGAR in Lisbon and Gasworks in London are two examples of how similar yet different each partner in the network is. While Lisbon is providing a catalyst in the city for more emerging, experimental and international practices, it is important to recognise how many of its decisions and plans take into consideration the precarious situation of non-profit in a country where public funding is scarce and often volatile. Gasworks is ‘older’ and is more institutionalised because of regular and diverse funding options. In Kampala it is again very different as not only is it more recent and has even less access to funding, but it is also the only space in the city of its kind and therefore its role and responsibility to the artistic community are much greater. (Antoniolli, 2018: Annex A)

⁴⁷ For an updated map on the past and currently associated VAOs of the Triangle Network, please see: “Triangle Network Partners”, Partners, Triangle Network, trianglenetwork.org, retrieved from: <https://www.trianglenetwork.org/triangle-network/partners/>, last accessed in December 2018.

2.2 Network as Rhizome

A 'network', as defined by Lars Bang Larsen "seem[s] charged with the power to connect different realms of being" (Larsen, 2014: 16). As such, it has the potential to bring together, to create an encounter between what is believed to be separate and unlike. The network is thus thought of as an autonomous realm, in which the 'Other' can be met. In the current age of digitalisation, the word 'network' seems to automatically imply a connotation to the virtual sphere, and as seen in the quote from Bang Larsen the discourse surrounding it can be heavily influenced by concepts associated to technology. Nevertheless, in the case of the Triangle Network this connection happens in both the digital and the analogue domains. Even though the digital clearly facilitates the persistence of connections when shared time and space are lacking resources, it does not redeem the network to continue focusing on the personal exchange in different localities and to explore the potential for knowledge that lies in these gatherings.⁴⁸ As the director of the Triangle Network explains, "The digital is an additional option, not a replacement" (Antoniolli, 2018: Annex A). Having said that, it is important to recall that

the significant impact of the growing access to the internet means that communication within Triangle has been made fast, increasing the level of support given to new workshop or residency locations. Such access also makes much of the work of searching for, recommending, contacting and involving artists much easier, thereby making an enormous contribution to keeping the network open to new artists, and avoiding the risk of it ever becoming a closed group offering opportunities to a small circle of people. (Antoniolli, 2007: 58)

⁴⁸ The focus on mobility for the sake of conviviality and personal exchange and therefore the potential production of knowledge, as analysed in PART II of this thesis, will show to be very important not only for the production of knowledge from a curatorial perspective, but on a more elementary level due to the maintenance of the physical and interpersonal component of communication. As defended by Berardi in his book *And, Phenomenology of the End. Cognition and Sensibility in the Transition from Conjunctive to Connective Mode of Social Communication* (2014), the effects of the transition from the alphabetical to the digital environment of the Infosphere, which marks a "shift from the cognitive model of conjunctive concatenation to the model of connective concatenation" (Berardi, 2014: 10), this shift has effects in the field of aesthetic sensibility and in the field of emotional sensitivity, "transforming throughout time cognitive patterns, social behavior and psychological expectations" (Berardi, 2014: 10).

Antoniolli sees the Triangle Network as inspired and characterised by the rhizome theory. This theory is a philosophical concept developed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, written between 1972 and 1980. The concept is succinctly explained in their text called *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987).

The rhizome theory is a counter-model to the cultural and philosophical concept of the tree, that, being based on genealogies, is interpreted as hierarchical and dichotomising.⁴⁹ Instead, the rhizome is characterised by being heterogeneous (the first principle) and having numerous connection possibilities (the second principle): “semiotic chains of every nature are connected to very diverse modes of coding (biological, political, economic, etc.) that bring into play not only different regimes of signs but also states of things of differing status” (Deleuze, Guattari, 1987: 7). Furthermore,

a rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organisations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles. A semiotic chain is like a tuber agglomerating very diverse acts, not only linguistic, but also perceptive, mimetic, gestural, and cognitive: there is no language in itself, nor are there any linguistic universals, only a throng of dialects, patois, slangs, and specialized languages. There is no ideal speaker-listener, any more than there is a homogeneous linguistic community. (Deleuze, Guattari, 1987: 7)

The rhizome is thus widely connected and embedded in the surrounding circumstances, and not an extra thing, separated from everything that is ‘Other’. In other words, “A method of the rhizome type, [...] can analyze language only by decentering it onto other dimensions and other registers. A language is never closed upon itself, except as a function of impotence” (Deleuze, Guattari, 1987: 8).

⁴⁹ As presented by the authors, the tree has a large tradition in the imaginary of the West, passing from the genealogical tree as its most commonly known example through models in linguistics and philosophy based on its structure. The rhizome theory aims to be an alternative model.

Highlighting the importance of this publication, Bifo Berardi states that the rhizome theory “opened the way to a new methodology adopting concatenation rather than dialectical opposition as a model for the conceptualization of the cultural process and social becoming” (Berardi, 2014: 10).

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In the case of the Triangle Network, while it is a recognisable trait of the associated VAOs that their programmes are directed towards an immediate locality in which they are inserted, they also have a focus on international exchange and support, which on the most basic level shows in the fact of their being associated to the wider and international network as such. This exchange and sharing of knowledge, as well as the organisation's common interest in "dialogue, process and development as a learning tool" (Antoniolli, 2018: Annex A), unites them and creates the platform for an analysis using the rhizome method "by decentering [...] onto other dimensions and other registers" (Deleuze, Guattari, 1987: 8). As is the case with language, that is understood by Deleuze and Guattari as never closed up upon itself, VAOs are taken to function in a similar way, allowing for fruitful analysis only when in contact with others. Bruno Leitão from HANGAR for example, appreciates how the look from 'outside' can offer a different way of seeing, opening up new perspectives that might not have been possible from the own position as an 'insider' in a certain context (Leitão, 2018: Annex B).

The third principle upon which the rhizome theory is based is the "principle of multiplicity". What is meant by this, is the idea that "only when the multiple is effectively treated as a substantive, 'multiplicity', [...] it ceases to have any relation to the One as subject or object, natural or spiritual reality, image and world" (Deleuze, Guattari, 1987: 8). The multiplicity, as the absence of a subject or an object, is believed to have only "determinations, magnitudes, and dimensions that cannot increase in number without the multiplicity changing in nature" (Deleuze, Guattari, 1987: 8). It is only through the growing of the multiplicity that the number of possible combinations increases. In this sense, an assemblage is precisely an increase in the dimensions of a multiplicity "that necessarily changes in nature as it expands its connections" (Deleuze, Guattari, 1987: 8).

In words of the director of the Triangle Network, the network aims to "continuously change with every new generation of artists and their ideas" (Antoniolli, 2018: Annex A). These artists and ideas can be seen as the input that adds to the rhizomatic multiplicity and changes its nature. Furthermore, Antoniolli defines the organisations of the network as characterised by promoting heterogeneity, the characteristic of the first principle of the rhizome, by stating that he "would like to think that it is difficult to identify a typical 'Gasworks or Triangle artist' as it would be uncomfortable for [me] to know that [we] 'have a type'" (Antoniolli,

2018: Annex A). By taking distance from the definition of the type of art and artists that are promoted through VAOs' programmes and the Triangle Network, and wishing to sustain this difficulty of definition, the rhizomatic character of the network is emphasised. What is seen as the network's goal is the flexibility to adapt to each new generation of artists and their ideas, that will in return affect the spaces in which they are active and hence also the network at large.

As opposed to a structure, tree or root, in which points and positions can be found, in a rhizome the only existing thing are lines (Deleuze, Guattari, 1987: 8). This is how the authors come to speak about what they call a "plane of consistency" of multiplicities, in which, even though the dimensions of this "plane" increase as the number of connections of the rhizome grows in number, "the point is that a rhizome or multiplicity never allows itself to be overcoded, never has available a supplementary dimension over and above its number of lines, that is, over and above the multiplicity of numbers attached to those lines" (Deleuze, Guattari, 1987: 9). In the Triangle Network this is recognisable in its wish to challenge "more formal (and often colonial) centralised structures" (Antoniolli, 2018: Annex A).

Teesa Bahana, the director of 32° East in Kampala, describes the Triangle Network accordingly, focusing on the fact that

in some ways Triangle Network, it is very loose. The ties are quite loose, it is not super structured and [...] it is not like we are subsidiary or a franchise [...] It is an association, in that we have an affinity to or a connection with a lot of these independent spaces that share a struggle in some ways, just to exist as an independent space in the world-system we have. And try to facilitate connections, exchanges and workshops. Which is what Triangle was really about in the beginning: workshops. So, I think there are commonalities, which then means that a lot of exchange can happen, but that depends on funding as well. And Triangle Network is not independently funded as a network. I think it is really decentralised. (Bahana, 2019: Annex C)

In addition to this Antonioli explains the type of relationships that happen in the network and how they change and evolve:

the network has a very organic nature and partnerships are like friendships that evolve and change. While I don't believe that money (funding) is everything, it is

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often what turns some of the ideas, aspirations and visions possible. Its constant flow means that sometimes partners pause their activities, some relationships break for a while, but the Network does not end as a result of it. Its organic nature and approach are what can easily create a flurry of projects when support is available and can slow down when money is not available. [...] In the last few years, the lack of international and local funding means that several of our partners have had to consider closing down. While this can be very sad, in some cases stopping something has been very regenerative, allowing new things to start and changes to take effect.⁵⁰ (Antoniolli, 2018: Annex A)

This leads to the fourth principle that defines a rhizome: the principle of asignifying rupture, standing “against the oversignifying breaks separating structures or cutting across a single structure. A rhizome may be broken, shattered at a given spot, but it will start up again on one of its old lines, or on new lines” (Deleuze, Guattari, 1987: 9). Following this thought, a rhizome is prone to transformation, instead of having an ending point. It is resistant to changing circumstances and characterised by its high adaptability, alleging for its resilient nature. In the words of Deleuze and Guattari: “You can never get rid of ants because they form an animal rhizome that can rebound time and again after most of it has been destroyed” (Deleuze, Guattari, 1987: 9).

The fifth and sixth principles are called the principles of cartography and decalcomania. By this, the authors mean that “a rhizome is not amenable to any structural or generative model. It is a stranger to any idea of genetic axis or deep structure” (Deleuze, Guattari, 1987: 12). Rather than a tracing, the rhizome is described as a map, being “entirely oriented toward an experimentation in contact with the real” (Deleuze, Guattari, 1987: 12). According to the authors, “the map does not reproduce an unconscious closed in upon itself; it constructs the unconscious” (Deleuze, Guattari, 1987: 12). The map is taken as opposed to the tracing, since it is thought of as having multiple entryways, as in

⁵⁰ In response to diminishing international funding for cultural exchange and the visual arts, “which is threatening the life of many of its Network’s partners across the world” (Triangle Network, “Support”), the Triangle Network is in the process of establishing a Fund. It was set up in 2018 “to honour the legacy of its co-founder Robert Loder” (Triangle Network, “Support”) and it secures the future of the Network through the creation of a financial base that enables partners to continue developing and thriving. (Triangle Network, “Support”)*

* “Support”, Triangle Network, [trianglenetwork.org/triangle-network/support/](https://www.trianglenetwork.org/triangle-network/support/), retrieved from: <https://www.trianglenetwork.org/triangle-network/support/>, last accessed in March 2019.

opposition to the tracing, “which always comes back ‘to the same’” (Deleuze, Guattari, 1987: 12). Among the VAOs from the network, this is recognisable in the fact that “there are connections and collaborations that develop and spread without having to constantly relate back to their source” (Antoniolli, 2018: Annex A), as Antonioli defends.

The critique on power structures and hierarchical models by Deleuze and Guattari is based upon their commenting on two examples from psychoanalysis, the case of Little Hans (treated by Freud) and Little Richard (treated by Melanie Klein). They disapprove the rhizome-breaking power structures that were implicit in the treatment of these patients and based on these cases, comment in a more general statement:

Strike the pose or follow the axis, genetic stage or structural destiny – one way or the other, your rhizome will be broken. You will be allowed to live and speak, but only after every outlet has been obstructed. Once a rhizome has been obstructed, arborified, it’s all over, no desire stirs; for it is always by rhizome that desire moves and produces. Whenever desire climbs a tree, internal repercussions trip it up and it falls to its death; the rhizome, on the other hand, acts on desire by external, productive outgrowth. (Deleuze, Guattari, 1987: 14)

Desire, instead of an evil that needs to be suppressed, as in the cases mentioned above, is understood as a creative source that allows productivity – it is indeed seen as an important trait to promote the growing of the multiplicity.

In a very succinct fashion, the rhizome can be understood as an anti-genealogy (Deleuze, Guattari, 1987: 21). Having no units but dimensions, no beginnings nor ends, but always a middle, *A Thousand Plateaus*⁵¹, a plane of consistency: when its multiplicity changes, the whole rhizome goes through a transformation, a metamorphosis. In addition to this, it can be differentiated from a structure, which is made up of points and positions that stand in binary oppositions towards each other. Opposing to this model, the rhizome is made of lines that hinder hierarchical or binary relations: “the rhizome is an acentered, nonhierarchical, nonsignifying system without a General and without

⁵¹ The original title of the publication is here consciously used as a metaphor for a characteristic of the rhizome, in the sense that the authors use it to explain it: “A plateau is always in the middle, not at the beginning or the end. A rhizome is made of plateaus” (Deleuze, Guattari, 1987: 21).

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organizing memory or central automaton, defined solely by a circulation of states” (Deleuze, Guattari, 1987: 21).

The Triangle Networks’ focus on process instead of product, can be related to one of the characteristics that make up the rhizome as described by Deleuze and Guattari. Relating to Gregory Bateson’s use of the word ‘plateau’, they use it to designate “a continuous, self-vibrating region of intensities whose development avoids any orientation toward a culmination point or external end” (Deleuze, Guattari, 1987: 22). They continue to explain that “it is a regrettable characteristic of the Western mind to relate expressions and actions to exterior or transcendent ends, instead of evaluating them on a plane of consistency on the basis of their intrinsic value” (Deleuze, Guattari, 1987: 22). It is in this sense, that the Triangle Network could be said to pursue a rhizomatic way of working, based on the acknowledgment that the arts and artistic practices as such, have an intrinsic value.

Even though it might be argued that the rhizome theory as a base for defining the structure of the Triangle Network holds a metaphorical component that might outweigh the conceptual one, the analysis above shows that the network shares, indeed, many of its characteristics and relational configurations. Having said this, and after this general introduction to the history of the Triangle Network, a brief impression of the potential of the concept ‘network’ as a space of encounter and bringing-together, and a short introduction into the rhizome theory formulated by Deleuze and Guattari (1987), in the following pages the specific case studies for the present inquiry will be introduced.

2.3 Three Case Studies

Gasworks – London, England



Figure 5. Gasworks (n.d.), 'Front of the Gasworks building in London'.
Photo credits: Iona Marinescu. Courtesy of Gasworks.

Gasworks is a non-profit visual arts organisation located in South-East London, United Kingdom. As already denoted before, it was established in 1994 and is presently the main hub of the Triangle Network. Gasworks develops long-standing work “at the intersection between UK and international practices and debates” (Gasworks, “About Gasworks”).⁵² For instance, it provides studios for ten London-based artists, commissions work from emerging artists (UK-based and international) and runs an international fully funded and context-bound residency programme. This residency programme allows four emerging artists at a time to further explore their practice for the duration of three months in a highly stimulating environment for the arts such as the city of London is. Additionally, this residency programme stands for an active diversification of the arts scene, giving rare opportunities to commercially not-yet established artists. Antonioli describes the residencies as having “a flexible structure designed to introduce artists to the London art scene through talks and outreach projects, providing time and space for the production of

⁵² “About Gasworks”, About Us, Gasworks, [gasworks.org.uk](https://www.gasworks.org.uk), retrieved from: <https://www.gasworks.org.uk/about-us/>, last accessed in December 2018.

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experimental new work and its informal presentation, usually during an Open Studio” (Antoniolli, 2007: 32).

Through these Open Studios and participatory workshops, Gasworks aims to bring artists and audiences into direct contact and create spaces for inquiry, dialogue and exchange. As stated on their website: “We establish long-term relationships with artists and work with them to test out new ideas and establish dialogue with peers and the public” (Gasworks, “About Gasworks”). While this contact between artists and audience is not something new, it can still be said to be somewhat uncommon and thus a character-shaping trait for the organisations that promote it. Furthermore, Gasworks stands for the belief that such regular support throughout the artistic process and the feedback from other arts professionals “allows artists to confidently make a significant new step in their professional career, whether the outcome is a work-in-progress, an event or an exhibition” (Gasworks, “About Gasworks”).

As described on their website:

Over the last two decades Gasworks has worked with over 250 artists from 70 countries around the world. Many of [their] alumni have gone on to exhibit at major institutions and art events, and have received nominations for – or won – prestigious awards including the Turner Prize, Absolut Award and Pinchuk Art Prize. Alumni include Yinka Shonibare, Goshka Macuga, Marvin Gaye Chetwynd, The Otolith Group, Lynette Yiadom-Boakye, Tania Bruguera, Song Dong, Hassan Khan, Alexandre da Cunha, Renata Lucas, Cinthia Marcelle, Subodh Gupta and many more. (Gasworks, “About Gasworks”)

It becomes clear that even though the organisation’s aim is to promote emerging artists, it operates in a wider artistic scene and context in which the commercial and institutional success of artists is still a fact that adds value to the non-commercial initiatives that have supported them in their initial stages. As director Alessio Antoniolli says when asked about the relation of the work developed by the Network in relation to knowledge production and the knowledge economy:

We are all interconnected and very dependent from each other, from funders, the art scene, etc. We operate in a neo-liberal and capitalist context and often transform out of the need or pressure or both! For instance, Gasworks started

as an alternative, artist-run space and is now more institutionalised and run by staff with diverse roles and expertise. Often this happens to artists who start by showing in places like Gasworks and eventually become ‘integrated’ into more mainstream and canonising museums and galleries (Tate, etc.). (Antoniolli, 2018: Annex A)

Not only because it has now twenty-five years of practice to look back upon, but also because it has transformed from an artist-run-space, which it was in the beginning, to a more institutionalised entity, Gasworks is an interesting case study for the analysis of VAOs. At the moment, Gasworks’ team consists of Alessio Antoniolli, as director of both the organisation and the Triangle Network, and eight collaborators, including among others a curator, a programmes manager and a front of house coordinator (Gasworks, “Staff”).⁵³ This structural change comes partly due to the fact that it holds the responsibility for the Triangle Network, which necessarily comes with an increased workflow that needs to be managed by a bigger and more specialised team in different areas. Gasworks has indeed the biggest team from the VAOs analysed in this thesis and it will show that it is thought of as the most ‘institutionalised’ organisation of the three.

⁵³ “Staff”, About Us, Gasworks, [gasworks.org.uk](https://www.gasworks.org.uk/about-us/), retrieved from: <https://www.gasworks.org.uk/about-us/>, last accessed in December 2018.

HANGAR – Lisbon, Portugal



Figure 6. HANGAR (n.d.), 'Interior of the ground-floor hall (now restaurant and exhibition space) of HANGAR in Lisbon'. Courtesy of HANGAR.

HANGAR is a non-profit visual arts organisation that opened its doors in the neighbourhood of Graça in Lisbon, Portugal, in 2015. Since then and looking back on what could be said to be 'just' four years of practice in the form of an organisation with a physical space⁵⁴, it has already accomplished to have immense impact and recognition in the city's arts and research scene through its unique approach and programme.

This VAO is run by three directors. Artist and researcher Mónica de Miranda is the artistic director, while Bruno Leitão is the curatorial director – among them they take care of a big portion of the programme. Leitão is focused on the exhibitions and de Miranda on the talks and seminars. The third director is Ana de Almeida, who is the head of the so-called Participatory Service. As explained by Leitão, this Service functions like an educational department and as such it organises guided visits to the exhibitions and workshops for children

⁵⁴ Before the establishment of HANGAR, some of the researchers, artists and curators involved in the project were already working together in the Association called Xerém, that among other 'nomadic' activities (taking into consideration the absence of a permanent space in which to develop their practice) were organising Triangle Workshops in Lisbon. In this sense, Bruno Leitão, current curator and one of the directors of HANGAR says: "HANGAR is not a 'product' that comes out of nowhere. It grows out of an association [Xerém] that had already organised four editions of the Triangle Workshop"* (Leitão, 2018: Annex B).

* Translation by the author from the original in Portuguese: "o HANGAR é um produto que não sai do nada, sai de uma associação que já tinha quatro edições do Triangle workshop".

and other specific audiences in relation to the patent exhibitions. Its somewhat unusual name is due to the fact that apart from these ‘more traditional functions’ of the educational programme that supports the ‘main’ programme of the space, it has a certain autonomy, meaning that it also develops independent programmes that do not have to be necessarily related to the talks and the exhibitions. Leitão puts it like this:

The public conversations and the seminars go in one direction; the exhibitions go in another one and the participatory service goes again in another one. Sometimes they relate to each other, but other times they do not. Sometimes they converge. But they are three different programmes.⁵⁵ (Leitão, 2018: Annex B)

Besides offering lodging spaces/studios for international artist residencies normally ranging from one to three months, they have a few local artists that work in their permanent studios in HANGAR on a regular basis. Compared to Gasworks, there is an inversion in the percentage of studio spaces for local and international artists. While Gasworks rents most of its studios to local artists and organises a fully funded residency programme for artists from abroad, at HANGAR most of the space is used for international residencies and significantly less studios are rented to local artists. While Gasworks relies on several funders and supporters, counting also on private initiative, HANGAR struggles in the face of little public funding in its context, Portugal, and is thus partly dependent on the income from the residencies. Leitão explains the difference in relation to private funding initiatives in London and Lisbon respectively:

Gasworks has a dynamic that responds to its own context, [...] it has a reasonable amount of private support. In Portugal, private support is almost like an illusion. It is a completely new way here. [...] We are battling in this sense; I think it will be successful. Sooner or later. But in England it is different; over there it is very normal that the rooms for the residencies in Gasworks have the name of the patron. Like a hall in a museum, with the name of the family that supports. In this

⁵⁵ Translation by the author from the original in Portuguese: “As conversas públicas, os seminários, vão por um lado, as exposições vão por outro e depois o serviço participativo vai por outro. E às vezes tocam-se, mas outras vezes não. Às vezes convergem. Mas são três programações diferentes”.

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aspect, regarding this type of funding, we are also lacking a legal backdrop that makes it worthwhile considering.⁵⁶ (Leitão, 2018: Annex B)

Even though this might be no surprise to the readers, it is still important to recall how different – and often even lacking – funding structures in the varying contexts directly affect the functioning of VAOs and the way they are able (or not) to develop their programme. Indeed, it seems to be one of the striking characteristics for the ‘level’ of institutionalisation that each of the VAOs embodies. Seen from this perspective, HANGAR stands for a less institutionalised structure than Gasworks, while having a smaller team and less access to funding. However, they still embrace their institutional role. Leitão sees this with some humour, stating that “for good or for bad, we are an institution”⁵⁷ (Leitão, 2018: Annex B), continuing to clarify that “an institution can be many things, it can be an HANGAR, but HANGAR is not one of the smallest projects, there are smaller ones that are also institutions”⁵⁸ (Leitão, 2018: Annex B).

Another specificity about HANGAR and that makes it one of a kind is its focus on research and the bringing together of academia, artists and other arts professionals. As put by Leitão, “from the very beginning [their] attempt was to bring together artists, curators and researchers”⁵⁹ (Leitão, 2018: Annex B). Because they see artistic creation as the creation of specific knowledge, they work closely with two research centres: the Centro de Estudos Comparatistas, from the University of Lisbon and TrAIN, a research centre associated to the University of the Arts in London. The first is specialised on African culture

⁵⁶ Translation by the author from the original in Portuguese: “A Gasworks tem esta dinâmica que responde também ao seu próprio meio, [...] têm bastante apoio privado. O apoio privado em Portugal é quase uma espécie de miragem. [...] é um caminho completamente não traçado. [...] Nós estamos a lutar nesse sentido, eu acho que isto vai dar frutos. Mais cedo ou mais tarde. Mas em Inglaterra é diferente, lá é completamente normal e os quartos de residências da Gasworks têm o nome do patrono. À semelhança de uma ala de museu, com o nome da família que apoia. Nesse aspeto, cá, neste tipo de apoios, também não há uma lei de mecenato que faça com que mereça a pena”.

⁵⁷ Translation by the author from the original in Portuguese: “Eu acho que para o bem e para o mal somos uma instituição”.

⁵⁸ Translation by the author from the original in Portuguese: “uma instituição pode ser muita coisa, pode ser um HANGAR, mas o HANGAR não é dos projetos mais pequenos, há projetos mais pequenos que também são instituições”.

⁵⁹ Translation by the author from the original in Portuguese: “a nossa tentativa desde o início foi juntar artistas, curadores e investigadores”.

and the latter focuses on Latin-American and African cultures, as well as on the study of the diasporas. These partnerships allow for insightful guidance through consultancies (Leitão, 2018: Annex B) and promote the highly qualitative conference programme that HANGAR has partly become known for, including speakers such as John Akomfrah, Irit Rogoff, Filip de Boek and Sammy Baloji, Ângela Ferreira and Françoise Vergès among others throughout the last two years.⁶⁰ The talk with the artist John Akomfrah for instance, took place in the format of a conversation with researcher Manuela Ribeiro Sanches from the Centro de Estudos Comparatistas. This is an example of HANGAR's effort to bring together artists, researchers and other arts professionals, while including a wider audience into the exchange, making it part of the public programme that is freely accessible to all and which normally includes a Q&A⁶¹ session at the end of each talk, that encourages the active participation of the audience in the discussion.

⁶⁰ To see the full list of past events, please visit: "Novidades", Sobre, HANGAR, hangar.com.pt, retrieved from: <https://hangar.com.pt/novidades/>, last accessed in December 2018.

⁶¹ Commonly used abbreviation for "Questions and Answers".

32° East | Ugandan Arts Trust – Kampala, Uganda



Figure 7. Steinvorh, Sofia (2019), Entrance to 32° East Kampala, private archive

32° East is an independent and non-profit organisation that focuses “on the creation and exploration of contemporary art in Uganda” (Ugandan Arts Trust, “What We Do”).⁶² As Teesa Bahana, the current director of 32° East explains,

that exploration part really captures the knowledge production. Because it is not only about encouraging artists to make work and experiment and have the space to be in residence, but also to learn things in new ways and for people who are not even artists to learn about contemporary art. (Bahana, 2019: Annex C)

Located in the capital of Uganda, Kampala, in the neighbourhood of Kansaanga, 32° East defines itself as a multi-purpose resource centre including “studios, [...] a contemporary art library, computer & editing suites, meeting areas and outdoor workshop space” (Ugandan Arts Trust, “What We Do”). Additionally, they offer one-on-one drop-in sessions, giving artists in residence and members the possibility to get critique and advise in relation to their

⁶² “What We Do”, Home, Ugandan Arts Trust, ugandanartstrust.org, retrieved from: <https://ugandanartstrust.org>, last accessed in January 2019.

professional development. Workshops and the regularly held discussion series called Artachat, in which topics about contemporary art and social engagement find a space to be addressed “with the intention of creating discussion and dialogue between artists and audiences [fostering] an environment for the exchange of ideas and debate, and act[ing] as a starting platform for further research” (Ugandan Arts Trust, “Programmes”)⁶³ complement the programme. In this sense, promoting research and exploration, mostly within the creative scene, can be said to be one of the main goals of the Ugandan Arts Trust. Through their membership programme, that has an annual cost of 50,000 UGX (~12 EUR), enabling artists, researchers and other creatives (and everybody else who would like to use their space) to use the library and the organisations’ resource centre, the space has evolved into a meeting point for the creative scene in the city. By providing access to “catalogues, books, magazines, journals, films, a digital library and internet access” (Ugandan Arts Trust, “Home”) 32° East has become a key hub for the acquisition and the production of knowledge.

Moreover, and mostly due to its specific context, in which the organisation is one of a kind, offering unique material, space, guidance and opportunities, it attracts not only artists, but also other professionals who take advantage of their resources, converting it into a VAO highly characterised by its interdisciplinarity. Bahana recalls that “just because we are the only space that exists like this, we work with so many people. This, in terms of being interdisciplinary, and from emerging to artists that have been practicing for thirty years, just because there aren’t many spaces like that” (Bahana, 2019: Annex C).

A crucial part of their programme is the regular hosting of artist residencies, which usually, as in the case of HANGAR, take up from one up to three months, depending on the proposal of each artist. The residencies are fully funded and normally addressed to local artists, since there are no other institutions that promote artistic practices in this way in Kampala. As Bahana explains, “we are in service and working in partnership with artists. That is our *raison d’être*. And in a city that completely dismisses artists and undervalues them both in terms of them as people, their craft, what it brings to the world, that is a really valuable position to take” (Bahana, 2019: Annex C). It might not come as a surprise

⁶³ “Programmes”, Home, Ugandan Arts Trust, [ugandanartstrust.org](https://ugandanartstrust.org/programmes/), retrieved from: <https://ugandanartstrust.org/programmes/>, last accessed in January 2019.

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then, that this situation is mirrored in the lack of national funding that this institution finds itself confronted with, making it almost completely dependent on international sources.

Since the opening of their permanent space in 2013, 32° East continues to play a crucial role in promoting public art by organising the biannual KLA ART festival that was held for the first time in 2012. In the framework of this festival, artists are encouraged to show their works “outside of the traditional white cube and interact with new audiences” (Ugandan Arts Trust, “Home”). Deeply rooted in its local urban context of Kampala by using the city as a stage, KLA ART shows very well that the organisation is interested in promoting art and artists that are crucial to the local conditions and to engage in new ways with the surroundings. At the same time, a central motivation for this event is that artists are challenged to engage with a different scenario than the commercial and often alienating concept of the white cube exhibition, bringing art to audiences by inserting it in unexpected places. This interaction also allows artists to experiment within their practice by putting it in new contexts, as well as with it through the feedback from a different public. In addition to this, the fact that art is promoted in places in which it is traditionally not to be expected, shows how 32° East shares one of the characteristics of the Triangle Workshops and how it has incorporated it into their regular programme. As Loder explains:

The Triangle model offers audiences something different from a museum or gallery by stimulating interaction. It takes art out of the sometimes intimidating ‘white institutional space’ and puts it in the most unlikely places, from a leprosy hospital in Uganda to a film studio in Bangladesh. In this way art is not only to be admired or owned, but to be questioned, touched and argued about. Triangle helps translate the freedom of expression that art stimulates, into a means of communication that touches the communities in which the workshops and residencies take place. (Loder, 2007: 22)

By promoting the activity of local artists in the city that contextualises their practice, KLA ART functions as an invitation to new audiences and promotes the discussion and engagement with artistic work outside of institutions.

PART II

The Three Vertices of Knowledge in Visual Arts Organisations: Mediation, Representation and Conviviality

CHAPTER 3

From Education to Mediation: Breaking Down Barriers

As the first of the three chapters that engage with the means through which VAOs are taken to put knowledge production into practice, Chapter 3 will start by arguing that mediation, besides being a key concern in curatorial and artistic practice nowadays, is one of the main pillars of VAOs' working philosophy. Starting from a theoretical backdrop on education and curating, addressing the educational turn and the role of educational departments in museums, the development towards a more recent discourse focused on mediation will be traced. This is precisely the development to which the title of this chapter owes its origin. The last sub-chapter of this analysis of mediation in VAOs, concerned with the mediating potential that architecture holds, gives a brief insight into less examined aspects of it, intending to highlight the numerous channels through which mediation can take place.

3.1 Curating and Education

When addressing mediation in relation to culture and especially contemporary arts and curating, there is another crucial concept to consider: education. As stated by the editors in the preface of the book *Contemporary Curating and Museum Education*,

Since the beginning of the professionalisation of museum work, curation and education have stood in a hierarchical relationship to one another, whereby curation comes first, and education then does its best to smoothly communicate the content of the former to the largest possible audience. This static arrangement was never undisputed and, particularly in the last two decades, has begun to

shift: the boundaries between the two fields are becoming more permeable. (Mörsch, Sachs and Sieber: 2017: 9)

This shift and permeability have crystallised mainly in a discursive formation called the educational turn in curating.

The educational turn is defined by the online platform tranzit.hu as

a tendency in contemporary art [...] in which different modes of educational forms and structure, alternative pedagogical methods and programs appeared in/as curatorial and artistic practices. Initiatives related to the educational turn revolve around the notion of education, gaining and sharing knowledge, artistic/curatorial research, and knowledge production. The emphasis is not on the object-based artwork. Instead, the focus of these projects is on the process itself, as well as on the use of discursive, pedagogical methods and situations in and outside of the exhibition. (tranzit.hu, “educational turn”)⁶⁴

Even though this is believed to be a discourse that has been developing since the mid-1990s (tranzit.hu, “educational turn”), the concept ‘educational turn’ itself was coined years later by mainly two important and quite recent publications: one essay by Irit Rogoff called *Turning*, published for the first time in 2008, and an editorial project by Paul O’Neill and Mick Wilson including various authors and released in 2010, whose title is *Curating and the Educational Turn*.⁶⁵ The latter includes the first one.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ “Educational Turn”, Curatorial Dictionary, tranzit.hu, retrieved from: <http://tranzit.org/curatorialdictionary/index.php/dictionary/educational-turn>, last accessed in January 2019.

⁶⁵ It seems relevant to recall that the potential value of concepts such as the educational turn is not without problems and thus questioned by some authors. As identified by Mick Wilson, in one of his contributions to *Curating and the Educational Turn* (2010), in an e-mail exchange with Tom Holert, he identifies that there is a perceivable scepticism about the value of such a construct as the educational turn. He notes that “many artists, curators and critics are anxious to avoid any suggestion of a single homogeneous ‘style’, ‘movement’, ‘theme’ or ‘tendency’” (Holert, 2010: 324). Sarah Pierce even notes that the educational turn as a discursive formation misses its point, unable to grasp “what is at stake – other discussions, elsewhere” (Pierce, as quoted by Wilson, 2010: 324). Acknowledging not only the broadness and thus the difficulty in being an inclusive discourse, she pinpoints the crucial role that changes outside institutions play in the formation of such developments that turn into discourses.

⁶⁶ However, already in 2007 Robert Loder, one of the co-founders of the Triangle Workshops identified that “there is a growing interest in the mechanisms of informal learning — and learning by exchange — that are made possible during Triangle workshops and residencies” (Loder, 2007:

Simply put, the educational turn addresses a curatorial practice that “increasingly operates as an expanded educational praxis” (O’Neill and Wilson, 2010: 12). In the eyes of the authors, the interesting development is not so much the fact that discussions, conferences and other educational programmes take place within art institutions, but the value that is attributed to them. O’Neill and Wilson recall that more recently the discursive practices that had been peripheral to the exhibition, are taking up a central role in contemporary art practice, becoming the main event (O’Neill and Wilson, 2010: 12).⁶⁷

20). He recalls how in 1997 there were only two studios in London offering residencies for artists from abroad: Delfina* and Gasworks. In addition to this, he notes that “there is also an increased interest in providing different channels of communication with the public that are far more personal and more direct than those afforded by relatively formal spaces” (Loder, 2007: 20). Even though the word ‘mediation’ is not mentioned in his statement, it can be read as a clear reference towards the sensed changes in the field that started with an increased preoccupation around education.

* Founded in 2007, Delfina Foundation is “an independent, non-profit foundation dedicated to facilitating artistic exchange and developing creative practice through residencies, partnerships and public programming” (Delfina Foundation, “Mission”). On its website, the organisation’s activities are described as follows: “Delfina Foundation promotes artistic exchange and experimentation. We create opportunities for emerging and established artists, curators and writers to reflect on what they do, position their practice within relevant global discourse, create career-defining research and commissions, and network with colleagues. We forge international collaborations to build shared platforms to incubate, to present and to discuss common practices and themes” (Delfina Foundation, “Mission”).**

** “Mission”, About, Delfina Foundation, [delfinafoundation.com](http://www.delfinafoundation.com/about/mission/), retrieved from: <http://www.delfinafoundation.com/about/mission/>, last accessed in March 2019.

⁶⁷ The question remains why this turn towards education gains *momentum* in art and cultural institutions at this specific moment in time. Trying then to track this development from a historical perspective, it shows how closely related the educational turn and new institutionalism — in which curators give a great focus to artists working with research and audience-engaging practices — are, and how difficult it can be to talk about them as separate developments. For instance, the educational turn seems to be linked to artistic practices from the 1960s and 1970s within for example institutional critique and is believed to find its roots in the curatorial practices from the 1990s, linking immediately to new institutionalism as explained in the correspondent sub-chapter in Chapter 1. Surely, the rise of the curator as an authorial figure in the curatorial process, and the often-nomadic working conditions that this entailed, can also be included in the list of phenomena that influenced the formulation of the educational turn, bearing in mind the sharing of ideas and the exchange of knowledge that this circumstance brought with it.



Figure 8. Steinvorth, Sofia (2018), Poster at the Entrance of Gasworks, private archive

As an example, the picture above shows one of the posters outside Gasworks explaining its activity. Even though the exhibition is still listed first, the typography and the size of the letters, which is the same for all the activities presented, suggests that the importance of the exhibition as an exclusivity within the programme is not the case. It is just as valuable as the other activities promoted, such as artist residencies, studios, talks, screenings and workshops, which are almost all characterised by involving discursivity.

From the VAOs analysed, 32° East might be the best example when it comes to this, since, even though they have hosted exhibitions in their space, it seems to be the organisation that places less attention on this format, their focus being more on the promotion of discussions about and based on contemporary art and artistic practices. With this, it is not only the focus that goes from the exhibition towards other formats of knowledge and cultural production, but also the understanding of education that is challenged. Far from replicating the traditional teacher/student hierarchy, knowledgeable vs. less-knowledgeable, their discursive events are defined by a far more dynamic and inclusive model with a focus on “Q&A, which is often the more enriching part of the experience. Having a good amount of time for discussion is really good” (Bahana, 2019: Annex C), as Teesa Bahana, the director of 32° East clarifies. This example shows how the engagement with knowledge and education challenges and distances itself from what has been often thought of as education, promoting exchange rather than one-way communication. This is a significant point that forecasts the sometimes-ambiguous relation of VAOs with education and

mediation. While clearly engaging with knowledge and knowledge production, mainly through discursive, audience-oriented activities that could be categorised as educational programmes, they distance themselves, in different degrees, from the subscription of being educational platforms.

An example for this is the ‘participatory department’ at HANGAR. While its name still holds a recognisable familiarity to the so-called educational departments known from museums⁶⁸, it wants to distance itself from them by introducing an alternative (and more engaging) name. Among other activities, it organises workshops for adults, children and other specific audiences. The autonomy given to this department, making it one that develops its own programme, sometimes based on exhibitions or talks, but not necessarily bound to them, makes it an interesting case for the weight that is given to education within VAOs, considering it an independent department that complements and adds to the realisation of the organisation’s aims. In addition to this, part of HANGAR’s programming consists of talks, conferences and seminars – formats that point to the educational as traditionally put in practice by universities and other strictly educational institutions. These events evolve mainly around specific topics that were (and still are) considered urgent matters at the time of the organisation’s establishment in 2015, especially related to African and Latin-American contexts, such as post-colonialism.

Moreover, the bringing together of researchers, artists and other arts professionals such as curators through open events that foment interdisciplinary exchange motivates the decisions behind the programming. In this sense, Leitão describes HANGAR as a special institution, because they “understand

⁶⁸ As succinctly summarised by Nora Sternfeld and Luisa Ziaja, “the modern museum since the French Revolution conceived itself as an educational institution. Traditionally, in addition to collecting, preserving, and researching, the tasks of representing and mediating were understood precisely as the educational tasks of the museum. Moreover, the educational aspect of the museum – we owe these ideas to the reflexive turn of the New Museology – has first and foremost been a technique of power, aimed at absorbing and internalizing bourgeois values” (Sternfeld and Ziaja, 2012). Furthermore, the authors give special attention to the fact that education in the educational turn as defined by Rogoff, “is not about handing down existing national and bourgeois values, but about exploring possibilities of an alternative and emancipatory production of knowledge that resists, supplements, thwarts, undercuts, or challenges powerful canons” (Sternfeld and Ziaja, 2012), highlighting the crucial role that the active and critical engagement with representation (see Chapter 4) plays for the production of knowledge.

artistic creation as the creation of specific knowledge”⁶⁹ (Leitão, 2018: Annex B), tackling particular topics related to certain geographical areas and historical times. He recalls that it is rather uncommon “that artists talk to researchers in an arts center and to an arts audience”⁷⁰ (Leitão, 2018: Annex B).

Based on the activities mentioned above, HANGAR might at first seem to have a clear educational programme. However, this categorisation is revendicated, when Leitão takes position against a classification of the programme as being pedagogical, clarifying that their aim is not to educate, but “to discuss things”⁷¹ (Leitão, 2018: Annex B). This notion is in tune with the idea of the cultural institution as *forum*, as introduced by Duncan F. Cameron (1971)⁷² and not as one that hegemonically imposes a certain knowledge. At the same time, it exemplifies how the knowledge production in VAOs is intended to remain one that happens in places that do not prescribe such activity, leaving it open when and from which perspective each participant wants to engage with the topic and what she makes of it. In this sense, the aim of the VAO is to provide a space for discussion around important contemporary matters, based on the belief that this will have an impact on the advancement of the topic, but without the aim to evaluate or measure a specific outcome of such a programme.

This notion can well be related to Bahana’s description of 32° East as an ‘open space’, “because [...] it is not as though we are very clear and say: ‘we believe in this kind of knowledge’. It is more like being a space for these questions, for critical thinking and critically engaging with things instead of taking them at first value” (Bahana, 2019: Annex C). In the same way, the use of the library and the access to computer, internet and printer that is made possible for all members of 32° East, helps to promote this engagement with critical inquiry. In this organisation, the production of knowledge starts by creating a space in which the access to information is made available in a context in which public libraries and free internet access are rather rare. By providing

⁶⁹ Translation by the author from the original in Portuguese: “nós vemos a criação artística como a criação de conhecimento específica”.

⁷⁰ Translation by the author from the original in Portuguese: “não é comum que num centro de arte, eles [os artistas] falem com investigadores, para o público da arte”.

⁷¹ Translation by the author from the original in Portuguese: “queremos só discutir as coisas”.

⁷² See: Duncan, Cameron (1971), “The Museum, a Temple of the Forum”, in *Curator, the Museum Journal*, Volume 14, Issue 1, March 1971, pp. 11-24.

materials and space for research and inquiry, individuals are encouraged to formulate their questions and to delve into the process of exploring them. Also in tune with the educational role that this institution partakes, are the Lab-series' developed over the last two years, in which artists are invited to take part in scheduled talks and seminars with a duration from four to six weeks, addressing and creating discussions around fundamental issues related to artistic practices, curatorial approaches and the relationship of art/context and artist/curator, among others, in preparation for the biannual KLA ART festival. In the same way in which HANGAR promotes the encounter of artists and researchers through their programme, 32° East is known for being a platform and catalyser for professionals from the arts but also other areas that use the space and materials provided, promoting the exchange of knowledge among disciplines. This is made possible not less due to the unique role this organisation holds in Kampala, that makes it an attractive gathering point for people from areas not necessarily or exclusively related to the arts.



Figure 9. Ugandan Arts Trust (2018), 'Members gather in the library of 32° East in Kampala'. Courtesy of 32° East, Ugandan Arts Trust.

Furthermore, Bahana describes the organisations' engagement with knowledge as an "exploration" (Bahana, 2019: Annex C). She clarifies that, among other things, the aim is to "learn things in new ways" (Bahana, 2019: Annex C). For her, 32° East's engagement with knowledge is mostly:

in terms of unlearning and considering that there are alternative ways of knowledge, [...] trying to value alternative kinds of knowledge. Question what the typical modes for knowledge production are. We have formal institutions, and it is often seen as if you are educated when you went to those places, but because we often see how formal education affects people's practice, it is to point at

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those things and say: what is it like to be in a completely different space where there is not a focus on results, and the right answer? So, I think it is around questioning what knowledge we have been taught and what we perceive as knowledge. Why do we interpret this one thing as knowledge vs. this other thing? Particularly, being in a space where education is still so colonial in many ways and how power is also really tied into that. If you have not been through these systems then you are seen as being less knowledgeable (on a societal level), so elevating these different kinds of knowledge and questioning knowledge in a general way. (Bahana, 2019: Annex C)

As Bahana explains, in Kampala there are context-bound reasons for the conscious engagement with the discussion around knowledge and education, such as the colonial history and how entangled it is with contemporary art practice. Even though in Europe the rise of the post-colonial discourse is surely a driving force, as seen from the example of HANGAR, there seem to be other defining reasons for the preoccupation around education to come to the fore in the field of curating at this specific moment in time.

One of these reasons is the growing commodification of knowledge and the capitalisation of education in the knowledge economy. These were issues fiercely discussed around the time of the Bologna-Process and the years to follow. The Bologna Accord was signed in 1999 by twenty-nine European countries to create a standard of quantifiable and comparable outcomes for the educational systems across Europe. This was a decision that fostered a wide range of discussions and theoretical as well as practical work evolving around the topics of knowledge and education, not less from and within the cultural and more specifically the contemporary arts sector. O'Neill and Wilson find that the Bologna-Accord is just one example on how "education has more recently been globally re-engineered as a sector of the service economy and a space of private enterprise" (O'Neill and Wilson, 2010: 17). For these authors, the Bologna-Process does not "primarily propose an international homogenisation of *curricula* and programme content or a standardization of 'outputs', but rather an inter-operability of service provision and a system of exchange equivalence for 'outcomes' – a common market" (O'Neill and Wilson, 2010: 17).⁷³

⁷³ Following the same line of thought, María José Sbrancia acknowledges – in a text about youth in the fifth issue of *Electra Magazine* (Issue 5, 2019) – the importance that should be given

Therefore, the critique of a model that questions the value of education as a public good and sees in it rather a potential for profit.⁷⁴

As Tom Holert situates them, the visual arts dwell in an isolated position in the societies based on a knowledge economy, in which immaterial labour is one of the most important sources for social and economic value production. Following his argument, visual arts and its cultural agents must either adapt to

to abstraction in the educational system: “Degree courses have been cut to three years on the pretext of standardisation and every assessment has to be quantifiable, as if the success of the model depended on eradicating abstraction” (Sbrancia: forthcoming). This seems to be a crucial aspect when talking about knowledge production nowadays, which is also why the working philosophy of VAOs is such an interesting proposal that gains value – not less due to its rarity – amid the current system.

Furthermore, another author in this issue points out that “more than biopolitics linked to state sovereignty, youth is now processed and produced according to a ‘sovereignty of markets and commodities’, centred on ‘education and pedagogy’ as a paradigm for the production of consensus” (de Miranda: forthcoming). These examples showcase the increased attention that has gone towards education, addressing its highly political stake, even twenty years after the implementation of the Bologna-Accord.

⁷⁴ It must be mentioned, that even though educational practices seem to be present in all of the VAOs, the original discourse around the educational turn has a close relation to the European context regarding the Bologna Process, as exposed above. In the case of 32° East, however, Bahana explained that, “It is interesting because I think Kampala and Uganda in general are not super capitalist. They are obviously in the system and like so many of these global, rampant things – it is a machine – every country and city are a part of it. But if you compare Kampala to Nairobi, or even larger cities, like Lagos, there are certain things like for example how businesses choose to open or not open. Sometimes people prioritise enjoying life as opposed to making money. And so, I think there are quite a few people who come here from other places like Nairobi and decide to exist as an artist because they can operate a little more outside the system [...]. Food might be cheaper; it is just a bit easier to not hassle constantly. In other places there might be this conversation, but here we are not countering gentrification all the time, and artists being a part of that” (Bahana, 2019: Annex C).

This is the case for Lisbon, for instance, a place in which the awareness: about gentrification has increased not less due to its sudden and aggressive development over the last few years. That gentrification is a driving force behind some of the decisions taken by HANGAR, mirrors this condition. As Leitão says: “because we are a driver of gentrification – besides this not being a wish of ours, it is true, it is like this – we wanted to give something back to the community. This is why all the events are free, the talks, the exhibitions; the prices at the bar are affordable, too. I would like to think that the people who live here, regardless of their social class, have gained something with the existence of HANGAR. This is what we aim for” (Leitão, 2018: Annex B).

*Translation by the author from the original in Portuguese: “porque nós somos uma força gentrificadora apesar desse não ser o nosso desejo, mas é verdade, é mesmo assim – queríamos devolver alguma coisa à comunidade. Por isso é que todos os eventos são gratuitos, as conversas, as exposições; e os preços do bar são baratos também. Quero acreditar que as pessoas que vivem aqui, de qualquer estrato social, ganharam com a vida do HANGAR. Essa é a nossa tentativa”.

this reality or “oppose the very logic and constraints” that this capitalist model stands for (Holert, 2009). At another point he puts it in other words, stating that

In knowledge production, the post-Fordist interchangeability of creativity and innovation, of criticality and employability, has probably found its perfect discursive emblem. But knowledge production has also been deployed in a decidedly political and empowering sense, as the carving-out of self-organised and alternative modes of generating and disseminating knowledge(s). (Holert, 2010: 322)^{75, 76}

3.2 Process- vs. Product-Oriented

As seen above, the educational turn is a tendency in contemporary art and curating that starts giving increased value to the notion of process over product. This can be interpreted as an answer to the implemented standardisations in higher education through the Bologna Process, in which the focus is on comparable and quantifiable outcomes. It is in this sense, that the focus on process as one of the main pillars that define the working philosophy of VAOs can be understood as a countermodel to the one that has become the norm. Primarily challenging the idea of having a product, they offer an alternative to the usual way of working that aims to commercialise. As the author of *All About Process* (2017) recalls, “accompanying the recent prominence of artistic process is a corresponding decline of the artist’s product as an object

⁷⁵ This line of thought is also explored in a highly regarded publication by Paolo Virno from 2004, in which he explores how the culture industry overlaps with the space for political action, based on the realisation that process-orientation is nothing less than communication having itself as its own end and this activity is believed to have taken on a dominant role in the knowledge economy. In his words: “Within the sphere of a culture industry, in fact, activity without an end product, that is to say, communicative activity which has itself as an end, is a distinctive, central and necessary element. But, exactly for this reason, it is above all within the culture industry that the structure of wage labor has overlapped with that of political action” (Virno, 2004: 56).

⁷⁶ One example of a statement, made with a conscious emphasis on deciding to be one that tries to see the positives among the conditions of the knowledge economy and especially the signing of the Bologna-Accord, is made by Irit Rogoff. She tackles the fact that “these reforms, with their emphasis on quantifiable and comparable outcomes [...] might be an opportunity to see how the principle we cherish in the education process might be applied across a broader range of institutional activities” (Rogoff, 2008a), bringing them into cultural institutions. In other words, she aims to “think of ‘learning’ as taking place in situations or sites that don’t necessarily prescribe such activity” (Rogoff, 2008a).

of independent aesthetic interest. This places concern for artistic process in counterpoint to formalist approaches derived from Kantian concepts of beauty and disinterested evaluation, and it challenges the commodity status of artworks” (Grant, 2017: 3). She continues to explain that:

As far back as ancient Greece the art object’s status as a commodity contributed to the low social status of the artist-craftsperson. In accordance with the widespread cultural suspicion of industrial production and commodification in the modern era, artists increasingly stressed the distinctions between artistic and nonartistic processes of production in ways that elevated the significance of the resulting artworks. The artist became a very special type of maker, engaged in important human processes. The art objects produced were increasingly valued as signs of the artist’s distinctive processes of making rather than independently valuable commodities. Considering art in terms of process is thus to trace the history of strategies used to define the value of art outside the scales of value usually employed for other luxury commodities. In broad terms, the artist’s process becomes the site for a distinctly human, nonutilitarian, purposeful activity of immense value in itself. (Grant, 2017: 3-4)

Resulting from these developments is not only the intrinsic value that is associated to the artistic process, but another

significant effect of the increasing focus on the artist’s process as the locus of value and meaning is that the possibility of external standards of evaluation disappears. *Experience*⁷⁷ becomes a, and often the, primary value – and experience is a value that resists standardisation and critical evaluation. (Grant, 2017: 4)

The aim in this sub-chapter is to explore further how the focus on process is reflected in VAOs’ programmes as well as delving into the exploration of how the process itself can be investigated as a mediating tool.

That VAOs’ focus is on process rather than product shows best in the fact that this is precisely one of the main guidelines they have set for their residencies. Artists are invited to develop their practice without having the pressure

⁷⁷ My own italics.

to deliver. As already stated by Antonioli in his description of the working philosophy of the Triangle Network, there is “an interest in dialogue, *process*⁷⁸ and development as a learning tool rather than a commercial one” (Antonioli, 2018: Annex A). The aim is thus to foster the artistic process as such, instead of the production of finished work. The VAOs’ aim to “continuously change with every new generation of artists and their ideas” (Antonioli, 2018: Annex A) also resembles the process orientation and high adaptability that characterises the working methodology of the organisations as flexible spaces for exploration and inquiry.

The same goes for 32° East, while they might add an extra layer to the idea of process, since artists in residency are not ‘sheltered’ from the rest of the organisation’s activity. While at HANGAR and Gasworks artists can decide to remain private to a certain extent, meaning that they live and work in a space clearly defined for the artists in residency, this differs at 32° East. This is made possible partly because here the artists’ studios are only meant to be for work, as opposed to the space being also their private accommodation. As mainly local artists take part in their residency programme, they normally have their home’s nearby and do not need to have accommodation at the VAO. Secondly, the structure of the studios around a main garden or what could be called a plaza, two of them being on the same ground level as the meeting area and the library, turn them into ‘constantly open studios’. Visitors and other members are encouraged to pop-in while artists are working and the artists on the other hand are prepared in advance to know how the residencies are structured and what to expect.



Figure 10. Ugandan Arts Trust (n.d.), 'View of the main green area or 'plaza' linking the studios and the library/editing suites at 32° East'.
Courtesy of 32° East, Ugandan Arts Trust.

⁷⁸ My own italics.

This spatial arrangement sets up the possibility for unplanned encounters, conversations and exchange among the artists but what is most interesting in this specific case, the people dropping-in from outside, that can potentially influence the process of the artistic work at any time. Considering this, Bahana emphasises the importance of the physical space that the organisation holds, since it is highly relevant to the development of their work, partly due to the fact that “for the artists in residence [...] having people popping in to their studio [...] can be so much more impactful than even we can sometimes” (Bahana, 2019: Annex C), opening up new possibilities for development and knowledge production through the process that the residency is.

Leaving the artists residencies behind and coming to talk about other activities promoted by VAOs, the curatorial director of HANGAR adds another dimension to the relevance of the process, when explaining that the whole programme of the organisation is intended to value the process over the product (Leitão, 2018: Annex B). Even the exhibition, that tends to be considered a ‘finished product’ can be challenged in this aspect. For instance, at HANGAR the exhibition curated by Violeta Janeiro called “Continuous Movement” (2017) invited four artists to work for one week in the exhibition space in Lisbon. The artists invited were Marco Godoy (Spain), Aimée Zito Lema (Netherlands/Argentina), Priscila Fernandes (Portugal) and Nuno da Luz (Portugal), a group that mirrors the international and collaborative exchange promoted by HANGAR throughout its whole programme. In this specific exhibition, the audience was engaged in the process, since the artists would work during the exhibition opening hours. In addition to this, each artist was challenged to engage with the materials that the preceding one left behind (Leitão, 2018: Annex B). Besides this being a way to experiment with different forms of mediating and making art approachable, it is a project that resembles some characteristics of the educational turn, especially through its focus on process.



Figure 11. HANGAR (2017), 'Photo of the press material for the exhibition *Continuous Movement* (2017) at HANGAR'. Photo credits: Mario Godoy. Courtesy of HANGAR.

The process as such can thus be seen as an opportunity that allows new forms of interaction and understanding among artists and audiences, promoting not only the critical and active engagement with the work being developed but adding discursiveness as a tool for inquiry. Instead of being confronted with an artwork as such, the audience has the chance to engage with the way of working of an artist and the opportunity to get into direct conversation. In this way the more common dealing with (finished) art objects is expanded into a confrontation with the creative process behind the piece, which might open new possibilities for the understanding of artistic works as such and the ideas and decisions that motivate their creators. If this is the case, it is not only the process as such that is made transparent and thus understandable, but also questions that become comprehensible to an audience. How this discussion and confrontation with the artists questions and processes is important for knowledge production, will be discussed in the next sub-chapter.

3.3 Dialogue, Conversation and Mobility

Acknowledging the very importance that is given to conversation in the educational turn, it seems crucial to reflect on the weight of this word for a moment. While Rogoff praises the introduction of conversation into the art world as “the most significant shift [...] within the past decade” (Rogoff, 2008a) and pleads for its maintenance, she acknowledges that the ‘turn’ faces a new challenge in which one must learn to recognise “when and why something important is being said” (Rogoff, 2008a).

Tom Holert, on the other hand, reduces some of the emphasis placed on conversation in the art world, stating that “From today’s standpoint, the discovery of talking as a medium of agency, exchange, and self-empowerment within an art school or the art world no longer seems to be a big deal, though it is still far from being conventional practice” (Holert, 2009). While acknowledging that it is still not possible to speak of conversation as being a common practice in cultural institutions, he does not seem to see it as the ‘site for possibility’ that Rogoff sustains (Rogoff, 2008a).

One project that is often cited in relation to the educational turn is *unitednationsplaza*, initiated by artist Anton Vidokle and that he calls an “exhibition as school” (Vidokle, 2010: 149). *unitednationsplaza* was structured as a seminar/residency in Berlin, involving more than a hundred artists, writers, theorists and audiences for one year. Furthermore, following the tradition of Free Universities all of its events were free and accessible to all those interested (Unitednationsplaza, “Introduction”).^{79, 80}

In the case of VAOs, it should have become clear by now that be it through talks, conferences, seminars, labs, workshops or open studios their focus is clearly on a dialogical and conversational approach to knowledge. Antonioli makes this point stand out when he describes the Triangle Network as working based mainly on the mobility of artists, curators, and other professionals, for example through the organisation of international residencies and trainings for the people who run VAOs. Mobility is taken to be a key factor for the moving

⁷⁹ For more information about this project, please see: “Unitednationsplaza Introduction”, Introduction, Unitednationsplaza, sulki-min.com, retrieved from: <http://sulki-min.com/unitednationsplaza/intro.html>, last accessed in December 2018.

Alternatively, see the chapters by Anton Vidokle and Liam Gillick in O’Neill, Paul and Wilson, Mick (eds) (2010), *Curating and the Educational Turn*, London; Amsterdam, Open Editions / de Appel.

⁸⁰ Another project that must be mentioned (not only, but also) because of its magnitude and its relation to conversations in the art world is the ongoing conversations and interview projects by Hans Ulrich Obrist, in which he explores “the idea of a conversation with an artist as a medium” (Obrist, 2015: 55). Furthermore, he describes the interview/conversations, of which he has an archive of more than two thousand, as having become “a research method and the basis for [his] curatorial practice” (Obrist, 2015: 56). This would need further analysis, but for now it seems important to note the parallels of the lexica used by Obrist in this statement and the notion of art as research and the development towards an understanding of the curatorial as being a practice based on research.

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of ideas, people and knowledge, which makes it a requirement for the sharing, exchange and thus the production of knowledge:

People are the carriers – moving someone means moving ideas and knowledge and for this, it is important to be actively engaged in the conversation, to both listen and contribute. Each partner or participant in the conversation should realise that in order to learn something they need to give something of their own – mutuality is key. (Antoniolli, 2018: Annex A)

It is also through mobility that artists can engage with other practitioners, expand their perspectives on their work and frame it through the close contact with others working in the same field. While mobility might be at first thought of on an international level, it seems as if even on the local level it can be impactful and relevant, when for instance 32° East in Kampala happens to be the only meeting space of its type for the creative scene in the city, allowing for the exchange among professionals and people interested in contemporary art. This exchange, that happens mainly through residencies, is a key component of the work developed in VAOs. In this sense it is not only through the contact with the audience as in the case of the open studios or with interesting figures through talks, conferences and seminars, but also through the artist-artist contact that the production of knowledge takes place. While in Kampala the focus is largely on the national promotion of the development of artistic practices through their mainly locally oriented and fully funded residency-programme, HANGAR hosts mostly international residencies that partly cover the costs of the organisation. Gasworks on the other hand allows international artists to participate in a fully funded residency programme. In this sense, both Gasworks and HANGAR promote the exchange among national and international artists by bringing them together under the same roof. This resembles pretty much the concept of the Triangle Workshops in a more institutionalised form through the constant structure of the visual arts organisation that promotes similar ideas under comparable conditions throughout its programme.

Exemplary for the focus on conversation is the programme hosted at 32° East called “Artachat”. The name, combining the words ‘art’ and ‘chat’ already draws attention to the importance that is given to dialogue and conversation, particularly in an informal and rather casual manner, such as the word ‘chatting’ implies. As the organisation’s director says, “With something like Artachat [32°

East] is trying to reach people who need spaces to have critical dialogue and really have conversations that might be difficult or might really stimulate a lot of thinking that is not typical" (Bahana, 2019: Annex C).

In the same way, the Triangle Network as such, is focused on promoting "international dialogues" (Antoniolli, 2018: Annex A). Antoniolli even talks about "art as alternative platform for communication" (Antoniolli, 2018: Annex A), but stating that

how we use this platform is a big question that I am both compelled and scared to answer. Saying that, I am both seeing the activities of Triangle partners and others as positive attempts to create spaces for dialogue and exchange, as I believe that they are the places where isolation and fear can be tackled. (Antoniolli, 2018: Annex A)

He addresses the highly political component of communication, by recalling for instance that in terms of digital communications "not everybody operates in the same way"⁸¹ (Antoniolli, 2018: Annex A), as is the case with the limited access to certain platforms and social networks in China or Cuba, for example. Even though not strictly made inaccessible, in the case of Uganda, similar problems are encountered. As Bahana from 32° East clarifies

there is digitalisation, but I do not think it is at the same rate everywhere. Data is still very expensive [and there is a tax on social media since July 2018, which makes it hard for a big part of the population to have access to it]. [And it] is not only expensive, it is political. It is censored and there are limitations on it. When the elections happen, we probably will not be able to get on social media. So, you cannot rely on it. (Bahana, 2019: Annex C)

Facing these considerations, VAOs' focus and promotion of communication through mobility, dialogue and conversation cannot be taken as a mere

⁸¹ Barbie Zelizer, a well-known scholar for her work in the fields of communication and journalism, reinforces this in her text published in *Electra* Magazine in January 2019, when saying that: "though technology's cyber-utopian promise seems to offer more access, availability and speed, less discussed is how this promise is curtailed by restrictive environments in many places of the global South that limit who can speak and what they can say, on the one hand, and by a global media industry that silences local journalistic initiatives, on the other" (Zelizer, 2019: 103).

exchange and sharing of knowledge in a specific field but takes on wider dimensions touching on socially and politically relevant issues. Consequently, the creation of physical spaces with a focus on visual arts allows also for conversations outside of the field, exploring local questions through a globally informed lens.

3.4 Mediation

Now that the role of – and the relationship with – education in VAOs has been analysed, there is a solid ground on which to start the discussion about the more recent discourse on mediation in contemporary art and curating. In the same way as the educational turn, mediation has become a widely discussed topic associated to pedagogy, the arts and curating over the past decades. This has shown not only in the implementation, but most of all in the shift of attention that is given (1) to educational departments (not yet called mediational departments) in cultural institutions, making them almost a must-have and (2) in the increased exploration of mediation strategies to make the educational programme of these departments more successful in terms of reaching (new) audiences and making visitors actively engage with the artworks.⁸²

Several of the big events in the art world, such as *Manifesta* for example, have implemented mediating strategies in their programmes. For instance, on the website of *Manifesta 10*, which took place in St. Petersburg, Russia, in 2014 one reads:

Mediation – as opposed to the traditional model of the guided tour – instigates debate and intellectual discussion around the artwork from the visiting group. The mediator wants to slow the visitor down in order to ask questions, gather responses and discuss varying opinions so that the groups' own perceptions

⁸² An interesting example on the exploration of mediation strategies and the understanding of the relationship museum/cultural institution with the audience that this entails, is given by Inês Ferreira in her inquiry into the 'space in between' in her PhD thesis called *Criatividade nos Museus: Espaços Entre e Elementos de Mediação* (2015). It is based on Umberto Eco for instance, that she develops her research starting from the belief that the visitor creates his own reading in what is taken to be a creative act when faced with an artwork (Ferreira, 2015: 10). This is just one example of how this thinking has influenced and changed the way in which educational departments approach their task.

form the basis of collectively understanding the work. (Manifesta 10, “What is Art Mediation?”)⁸³

This statement reveals how inquiry and discussion based on the standpoint of the visitors is one of the main concerns of mediation. This is taken to stand in opposition to the notion of the guided tour, in which the audience is a passive receiver of information that she is believed to lack.⁸⁴ In this sense, mediation can, through the focus on a dialogical encounter seek not for “the masterful production of expertise and the authoritative pronouncement of truth [but] rather the coproduction of question, ambiguity and inquiry, often determined by the simple contingencies of where people happen to begin a conversation” (O’Neill and Wilson, 2010: 14). The focus that is placed upon dialogue seems to be of crucial importance for the educational turn and mediation, taking into account that other theorists preoccupied with these topics have already addressed its importance, as is the case of Irit Rogoff.⁸⁵ As shown in the previous sub-chapter, a big part of the programme of VAOs engages with conversation and dialogue. Through the analysis of the way in which these events are organised, it is possible to define them not only as educational but at the same time as having a mediating character, facilitating a contact point for (new) audiences with contemporary art and artists.

From today’s standpoint of the discussion around mediation, curator and professor Maria Lind is one of its leading references. One of her most well-known contributions *Why Mediate Art?* (2013) is an essay included in Jens Hoffmann’s publication *Ten Fundamental Questions of Curating* (Hoffmann, 2013). In it, she starts off by explaining how one of the most iconic museums of our times, MoMa in New York, was one of the first institutions to actively integrate pedagogy into its exhibitions. Among other audience-oriented strategies

⁸³ “What is Art Mediation?”, Art and Education, Manifesta 10, m10.manifesta.org, retrieved from <http://m10.manifesta.org/en/education/art-mediation/>, last accessed in December 2018.

⁸⁴ This approach to education is one that is generally related to Paulo Freire, who engaged critically with pedagogy in his work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, published for the first time in Brazil in 1968. In this book, Freire argues for a relationship between teacher, student and society at large, based on the idea that the student is a co-creator of knowledge, and not an empty vessel to be filled. In a very succinct way, this metaphor reveals the differences between the guided tour and mediation, showing how Freire’s powerful theoretical work is one of the most influential ones in stirring such a differentiation in the first place.

⁸⁵ See the previous point in which this is developed in more detail.

implemented, MoMa is believed to have “openly borrowed display techniques from department stores and other commercial settings” (Lind, 2013: 100). Regardless of this being one of the most influential museums – or exactly because of this – the use of commercial marketing strategies in this context is not without problems. Without subscribing to this methodology, Lind still argues for the implementation of more mediation strategies, considering that there is a noticeable tendency, which she explains by describing the following:

[...] the art and curated projects at the forefront of experimentation, which formulate new questions and create new stories, are growing increasingly remote from the mainstream. These sidestreams, many of which test various forms of ‘Constructivist spectatorship’, trickle further and further away from the situations where most people encounter art and curated projects (large institutions in big cities), and here mediation, whatever type it may be, is marginal. This kind of strategic separatism is in many ways a survival strategy in order to guarantee other proportions of self-determination; the mainstream is not particularly welcoming to the sidestreams and the sidestreams prefer to stick to themselves. And yet the inevitable result is self-marginalization, where only the already-converted are reached. (Lind, 2013: 105-106)

While this might be true for European (and other) contexts, in Kampala, a city in which art centres are rather rare, 32° East benefits from such a situation by being a space for experimentation and mediation at once. Bahana acknowledges that in Kampala “just because in some ways [they] are the only space that exists like this, [they] work with so many people” (Bahana, 2019: Annex C). She continues to explain that “while the more spaces, they are able to specialise more, and we do not specialise a lot, in that we work with visual artists in Uganda. [...] even though we are focused on creating and exploring contemporary art in Uganda, by virtue of what the needs are we work with so many people” (Bahana, 2019: Annex C). Furthermore, Antonioli wishes for the organisations from the Triangle Network to be “a space where the widest diversity of audiences can come to discover something new” (Antonioli, 2018: Annex A), which reflects their shared interest in bringing people from different backgrounds together through the activities around visual arts.

Recognising the apparent over-specialisation and isolation of experimental spaces (that as argued above should be taken as a very context specific

condition), Lind recognises the potential of mediation as lying in the opportunity to reach new audiences. This understanding seems to stand for the belief in the democratisation of art and the fostering of exchange through dialogue not only among different strata of the art world but what is going to be taken as an expanded notion to include people from different areas and backgrounds, activating an interdisciplinary space of exchange.

Addressing one of the main concerns when it comes to mediation, Antonioli shows his preoccupation about the diversification of the audiences that visit Gasworks while being loyal to the organisation's purposes. He states that

At Gasworks we try to accompany our exhibitions with events, activities, talks etc. so that we reach more people [...] How can we make our programme accessible? How can you reach more people without losing yourself, your purpose or the rigor and investigation that is part of the artwork or artists' inquiry? (Antonioli, 2018: Annex A)

Based on this example, the efforts for mediation in VAOs include a wide range of activities, rather than focusing only on the guided tour to an exhibition, as it used to be traditionally the case at educational departments in more formal and established cultural institutions. In the same way, Leitão's explanation of the independence that the 'participatory department' has in HANGAR, working in collaboration and also independently from the exhibition's programme, stands for the importance that is given to activities that go further than being solely an accompanying programme to the main exhibition, even though they hold on to the importance of having guided tours to exhibitions (Leitão, 2018: Annex B).

In the case of 32° East, the biannual KLA ART festival is a highly interesting example for mediation, if it is understood as having more formats than the guided tour to the exhibition. KLAR ART's programme evolves around the idea of "reaching people who art does not typically reach, and making art accessible to people, [...] democratising it in some ways" (Bahana, 2019: Annex C). By providing a platform for art in the public sphere, the festival does not only bring artists and audiences together in unexpected spaces, but also has the focus of "having people [artists] think about their audience, having people think about the space" (Bahana, 2019: Annex C). Through this approach, artists are seen

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themselves as carriers of a mediating potential if going through a conscious consideration about the challenges that accompany a public art project. As stated in the introduction of the programme that was handed out to audiences for KLA ART's last edition, "it remains critical to have high-profile, large platform events to bring art into our city, into what feels real and relevant to people who work, move, play and live here in Kampala. For artists to connect directly to audiences and find new meaning in their work. For art to do what only art can do, question what is and show what can be" (32° East Ugandan Arts Trust, KLA ART 18 Programme, "Off the Record").



Figure 12. Ugandan Arts Trust (2018), 'Funky Glass Ride by Stacey Gillian Abe during the *Off the Record* 2018 KLA ART edition'. Courtesy of 32° East, Ugandan Arts Trust.

If Lind states that the moment has come to insist on experimentation while simultaneously attempting to develop new forms of mediation – to consider earnestly the question of what art does in culture, what its function can be in society, and to be more generous with the material at hand (Lind, 2013: 107), she might be addressing relevant considerations for big cultural institutions, but she also oversees that there are in fact some organisations doing precisely this. In this sense, the interest in mediation does also have a social component, asking: what does art do and how can it have a positive impact in society? It is through this approach that an opening of the art space to include more and more varied audiences through programmes that facilitate this entry point is pleaded for. This notion is very much in tune with what VAOs are trying to implement through their practices. Antonioli explains that "Art has the potential to instigate the kind of change that comes from seeing things from a different perspective, or from offering tools and methods that open further channels of communication between social hierarchies" (Antonioli, 2007: 50).

It might be from this realisation and experience through Triangle Workshops that in all of the three organisations presented as case studies there are events that focus on the presentation and mediation of the artistic process, instead of the (exclusive) presentation of exhibitions and/or finished objects. This is exemplified by the open studios, normally held at the end of each residency, in which the artists present what they are working on, making the process and the discussion of it the main event. As described by Robert Loder, one of the co-founders of the Triangle Workshops,

It is interesting that Open Days (during workshops) and Open Studios (during residencies), when the public is invited to view works and speak with the artists, attract considerable interest even among people who have never been near a gallery. People enjoy the direct connection with the artists, which helps them understand their work. (Loder, 2007: 20)

It is in this context that open studios can clearly be interpreted as mediation strategies. There are several possible scenarios for the structuring of an open studio: at Gasworks, there is a very regular plan in which the open studios are held once during the three months of the artists' residency. Through the well-structured three-month period that applies for all of the international artists in residence, it seems easier to organise the open studio at a certain time for all of them. At HANGAR on the other hand, artists can choose when and how often they want to participate at the open studios, normally held once a month, in relation to the work they have developed and the period of time they are in residence, which is variable and dependent on the proposal of each artist. In addition to this, during their residency they are in contact with an invited curator whose role is to help them think about possible ways to further develop and contextualise their practice, as well as finding possible ways to present the work in progress at the open studio. In this case, the curator can also take on a mediating role between the artists and the audience. At 32° East it is again a little bit different. This has to do with the current architecture of the space, which permits a closer contact between visitors and residents, because at least two of the three studios are at ground level, where one also finds the main meeting area, the library and the exhibition space. Here, a certain culture of 'popping in' has established itself. While artists are working in their studios, they know that they can expect visitors that are curious about their practice.

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As can be seen in the following excerpt of a conversation between Anthony Caro and Robert Loder, two co-founding members of the Triangle Workshops, the importance of the exchange between the artist and the audience around a work in progress has been of crucial importance since the very inception of the workshops – a priority that remains in VAOs' practice.

RL

We were trying to make something new; but we needed response from the artists, and from the public, otherwise it would not work.

AC

And then there was the issue of showing work at the end. People were in tears, because they wanted to make work, not show it. But we are living in the real world.

RL

The response from the audience is definitely part of the discussion.

AC

That is so important. They could be delighted or horrified, but that is the other side of making work. You ask yourself the question: What are they going to say?

(Caro and Loder, 2006: 305)

Even though at VAOs there are some minor organisational differences in the ways the contact between audience and artist is managed, all of the organisations focus on the artistic process as such, intending to bring artist and audience together by encouraging dialogue and conversation around the artistic process, holding on to the importance given to the exchange and sharing of knowledge.

Another influential curator who engages critically with the growing focus on mediation in the context of contemporary art exhibitions, addressing the problems that come with it, is Sofía Hernández Chong Cuy. According to Tensta Konsthall, her curatorial practice derives from the belief that the voice of the ventriloquist,

who performs a voice in place of another [and which] at best complements an artwork, at worst makes its visual language or performative nature irrelevant, is

commonly expressed by an arts curator, educator, or mediator in a belated way, mostly didactically and un-sensually, and thus far from what differentiates the visual arts from other kinds of cultural production. (Tensta Konsthall, "What Does Art Mediation Do?")⁸⁶

She places the attention on the representative role that the mediator takes for the artworks and addresses the problems that arise through this speaking for another, especially if this 'other' speaks another language. By language, what is meant here is not an-other spoken, narrative language but one that 'speaks' through other means, such as the visual and the sensual. In other words, what is encountered here is a problem with the translatability of visual art.

Hernández Chong Cuy is believed to comprehend the call for mediation acknowledging the context of a contemporary arts field that privileges narrative but misses to reveal itself entirely through the curatorial practice. By this she is introduced as a curator tackling a missing or failing critical address of the sources and the research which precede the exhibition as well as "the public's own presumed will and skill in the exercise of contemplating the forces shaping art, its discourses and its institutions" (Tensta Konsthall, "What Does Art Mediation Do?")⁸⁷. Based on this, she is introduced as representing a curatorial practice that is on the one hand more transparent, telling the whole story, and on the other hand working from the beginning of the project for the audiences that are expected to visit the exhibition, turning it into a project curated for someone and not just for its own sake. This seems to be the same working philosophy to which Jens Hoffmann subscribes to when stating that "my curatorial practice has always been based on creating an experience for an audience" (Hoffmann, 2015: 27). As analysed above, in the case of VAOs they offer a programme based on the awareness of mediation, by engaging directly with the artists through the open studios held at the end of the residencies and by trying out different formats in which the audiences can engage directly with contemporary art.

Considering their focus on the local community and the local art scene which shows through an engaging programme directly related to either specific

⁸⁶ "What Does Art Mediation Do?", Uploads, Tensta Konsthall, tenstakonsthall.se, retrieved from: www.tenstakonsthall.se/uploads/114-whatdoesartmediationdo.pdf, last accessed in December 2018.

⁸⁷ *Ibidem*.

topics that seem relevant to a certain context (as in the case of HANGAR and 32° East especially) or trying to fill gaps through open spaces for artistic and curatorial exploration and knowledge production where they are missing, VAOs represent an alternative to more ‘established’ or ‘formal’ institutions. They create possibilities to get in direct and more personal contact with audiences and through a focus on dialogue and conversation, they create different access points to interact with art and artists.

Furthermore, and bearing in mind that the two understandings of mediation discussed so far have been from the point of view of curators, it seems important to recall on the fact that mediation does not necessarily have to happen by curators or even by the exhibited artists themselves, even though this often happens to be the case. For example, the collective TLC – *Tráfico Libre de Conocimientos* – organised by eight Mexican artists and founded in 2011, understands art itself “as a mediator and generator of knowledge” (Muñoz, 2017). Based on this belief, their research “explores different ways of connecting and various ways to inhabit; seek[ing] to generate critical thinking, bridges of interaction and to reactivate spaces of collective learning” (Muñoz, 2017). This collective has collaborated with several educational departments from cultural institutions in Mexico City, such as the ones from Museo Tamayo and Museo Jumex, in which they looked for new ways to mediate between the public and the exhibition. Muñoz recalls that while working in these institutions, their aim was never “to illustrate what was shown in the galleries, but to continue with a research for future action” (Muñoz, 2017). With this motivation the collective looks for new and playful ways to interact with audiences, starting from the idea of collectivity “as a principle generator of symbolic, affective and language bridges always within the social, political, historical and urban contexts of [the] environment. [They] propose to understand the game as a way of thinking that allows for meaningful learning” (Muñoz, 2017). TLC develops their working methodologies based on several theorists that explore the notion of games and playing and how they influence the individual’s understanding and embeddedness in its surroundings. The game as a tool for creation and experimentation is seen as “a source of new symbolic ways of understanding art and the museum in a collective manner” (Muñoz, 2017).⁸⁸

⁸⁸ For further reading on the work of TLC and their approach to mediation via dialogue, games and playfulness, please see: Muñoz, Estrella Luna (2017), “Inside and Outside the Museum, Sym-



Figure 13. TLC (2015), 'Children playing on an installation in the framework of the project developed by TLC at Museo Tamayo in 2015'. Courtesy of TLC (www.tlc.org.mx).

In all of the approaches that have now been briefly discussed, there is, be it before or after the exhibition, a recognisable interest for the reception of the work: be it through mediation as a reformulation of the traditional guided tour, as in *Manifesta 10*, an opening of the art space that welcomes new, and not only highly specialised audiences or through the curatorial approach outlined by Sofía Hernández Chong Cuy. This is to say, one does not do exhibitions or other contemporary art events just to do them, but to communicate something and in order to reach someone. This seems to be one of the key preoccupations that drive the field nowadays. What is missing when addressing mediation from a curatorial perspective that focuses mainly on the exhibition as the strict format of curatorial work, is the notion of mediation as happening through other channels and as curatorial practice having taken on other formats than the exhibition. As argued in this sub-chapter, if understood as having a wider scope, mediation could be taken to contain such events as open studios and public art festivals. Moreover, and as introduced in the following sub-chapter, even the architecture of a (cultural) institution can be understood as a mediating tool.

bolic Forms of Understanding Art", in *Wrong Wrong*, 24.04.2017, wrongwrong.net, retrieved from: <http://wrongwrong.net/artigo/inside-and-outside-the-museum-symbolic-forms-of-understanding-art>, last accessed in January 2019. The collective's website also gives useful information on other projects developed so far: "Inicio", Tráfico Libre de Conocimientos, [tlc.org.mx](http://www.tlc.org.mx), retrieved from: <http://www.tlc.org.mx>, last accessed in March 2019.

3.5 Architecture as a Mediating Tool

In order to draw attention to the sometimes less analysed ways in which mediation can take place in VAOs (and other cultural institutions) and wishing to open up the inquiry on to other possibly ‘hidden’ aspects of cultural mediation, this sub-chapter briefly introduces the notion of architecture as a mediating tool. Far from being an exhaustive analysis of the implications of the architectural structures of VAOs in terms of their mediating potential, it functions more as an invitation to inquire into and question ‘other’ aspects of VAOs in relation to the production of knowledge.

If “architecture is a mediation between the world and our minds” (Pallasmaa, 2018), as Finnish architect Juhani Pallasmaa said in an interview from the Louisiana Channel re-published on Archdaily in May 2018,⁸⁹ then it can be assumed that a building has the power to communicate.⁹⁰ Based on this realisation, and applying it to the cultural field, it will be no surprise that the kind of building that hosts a cultural institution will have an impact in the way it is perceived from the outside, precisely because the building as such can already be considered a communicative act. Though presumably no one would argue that it is the same to stand in front of a Tate Museum or the MAAT Museum than to stand in front of an organisation like Gasworks, HANGAR⁹¹ or 32° East, it seems important

⁸⁹ Pallasmaa, Juhani (2018), Interview from the Louisiana Channel, vimeo.com, retrieved from: <https://vimeo.com/270345281>, last accessed in March 2019.

⁹⁰ In her thesis “Architecture as Mediator”, Lindsay Keyes Edwards draws on the mediating potential of architecture in physical, cultural, and social terms to develop a project for an orphanage in Nairobi, Kenya. In the introduction to her project, she explains that “architecture can be designed effectively to mediate extremes to the degree which it acts as an ambassadorial element. Ambassadors [being] those having a temporary mission [...] for negotiating” (Keyes Edwards, 2007: 11). Even though most of the buildings that VAOs inhabit are not specifically build for their purposes (since it can be assumed that they are most of the times not owned by the organisations, who thus need to rent and adapt to what is already available) as architectural projects that stand for the values of the institutions, the fact that the building they inhabit communicates a message seems to be highly relevant.

32° East | Ugandan Arts Trust, seems to be an exceptional case among VAOs at large (Triangle Network) since the organisation finds itself in the process of planning the construction of a new site for their own purposes. This seems to be an interesting inquiry in architectural terms, to analyse in detail how and under which design criteria an architectural proposal for this kind of organisation is developed.

⁹¹ Especially in the framework of this sub-chapter’s topic, architecture, the meaning of the word ‘hangar’ seems to reveal something about the organisation called like this. Looking the word up in the dictionary, one finds that an hangar is usually a ‘shelter’ or ‘shed’, especially “a covered

to recall on the role of architecture as the origin for certain perceptions and thus the creation of a specific relation between an individual and an institution. Assuming that each building serves as a mediator, that it communicates something, is thus an important fact to take into account when analysing the role of an institution in relation to mediation as a key factor that influences the mediation of contemporary art and the production of knowledge.

Foucault might have been one of the first scholars to think about architecture in disciplinary terms. Through his theoretical analysis of the Panopticum designed by Jeremy Bentham he addresses the constraining effect that the built environment can have on human beings through the analysis of the prison system and how this can expand to other institutions such as schools.⁹² Seen from this perspective, architecture has shown to hold not only mediating but even repressing and controlling power. Following this line of thought it seems less surprising that many of the buildings that cultural institutions inhabit stem from the times of radical regimes such as is the case with the Haus der Kunst in Munich, that opened in 1937 as first representative building of the National Socialists as the “House of German Art” (Haus der Kunst, “Archive, Architecture, Memory”).⁹³

and usually enclosed area of housing and repairing aircraft”.* This way, it can be understood as a metaphor at least in two ways: (1) as making an allusion to the sheltering of visual arts, in as protecting and giving a house to this practice and (2) as making a reference to the focus on process (as in ‘repairing’, as the original usage of the word suggests) that the VAO has as one of its working guidelines.

* “Hangar”, Dictionary, Merriam Webster, merriam.webster.com, retrieved from: https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/hangar?utm_campaign=sd&utm_medium=serp&utm_source=jsonld, last accessed in March 2019.

⁹² See: Foucault, Michel (1995) [1975], *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, New York: Vintage Books.

⁹³ “Archive, Architecture, Memory”, Events, Calendar, Haus der Kunst, hausderkunst.de, retrieved from: <https://hausderkunst.de/en/events/archiv-architektur-gedaechtnis-2?locale=en>, last accessed in January 2019.



Figure 14. Haus der Kunst (1937) (postcard). Courtesy of Haus der Kunst, Historisches Archiv.

In order to give one example of how different architectures communicate in distinct ways taking into consideration the present inquiry of visual arts organisations, the following two images show MAAT and HANGAR respectively.



Figure 15. Best Time Tour (2017), 'Entrance to MAAT Museum', blog.besttimetour.com



Figure 16. Steinvorh, Sofia (2019), 'Screenshot from the building of HANGAR in Rua Damasceno Monteiro Lisbon', private archive

Not only due to the fact that the picture from HANGAR taken from Google Street-View was taken at a time in which the building that currently houses this institution was still for rent, is it necessary to give extra information on which building exactly is meant. Till the present-day HANGAR remains a space that partly due to its ordinary architecture, could easily be mistaken for a regular apartment or office building in Lisbon. It goes without saying that this is a trait MAAT misses.

What will be argued along this sub-chapter is that what could be called 'quotidian architecture' describes a specific characteristic of the buildings the case studies inhabit. Normally, they operate in buildings that are seamlessly integrated into the urban tissue, what keeps them from causing a big (visual) impact on the one hand but allows them to ground their activity into this same context, making possible what could be described as a 'breaking down of barriers', as suggested by the subtitle of this chapter, creating different conditions for the accessibility to contemporary art and artistic practices.

When thinking about accessibility to contemporary art it seems central to recall on the intimidating character that (cultural) institutions, specifically big museums can have. A good example for the either inviting or frightening character a building can have is the newly built entrance at the V&A Museum in London. This was a project by Amanda Levete, the same architect that designed the already mentioned MAAT Museum in Lisbon. In an article published in *The Guardian* under the revealing title *V&A's 'less scary' entrance drives up visitor*

numbers (2018),⁹⁴ the author informs about the impact the newly designed entrance has had on the visitor numbers of the institution. This statement is reinforced through a testimony from Tristram Hunt, the museum's director, who says that "All the data we have shows that it [the new museum entrance] is much more attractive to non-traditional museumgoers" (Hunt, 2018). And he continues to say, "It is less, frankly, scary" (Hunt, 2018), pointing out the intimidating character that architecture can have.



Figure 17. Hufton + Crow (2018), 'The new courtyard welcoming visitors to the V&A Museum'. Courtesy of Hufton + Crow.

This is a struggle that VAOs can be taken to be less concerned with, since their buildings lack the potentially intimidating monumentality often ascribed to museums. This being said, there are clearly downsides to the 'ordinariness' of the buildings that VAOs usually inhabit, one being as simple as not having a specific physical, architectural trademark that stands for the uniqueness of the institution. In addition to this, the impact and call for attention, what we could sometimes even call the spectacle,⁹⁵ stays out of the equation.

To give a second example, the following images show the building that Gasworks owns.

⁹⁴ For full article, see: Hunt, Tristram (2018), Interview by Mark Brown, in Brown, Mark (2018), "V&A's 'less scary' entrance drives up visitor numbers", in *The Guardian*, Wednesday 18 July 2018, theguardian.com, retrieved from: <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2018/jul/18/v-and-a-museum-less-scary-entrance-drives-up-visitor-numbers>, last accessed in March 2019.

⁹⁵ As coined by Guy Debord in his book *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967).



Figure 18. Steinorth, Sofia (2018), Gasworks, private archive



Figure 19. Steinorth, Sofia (2018), Entrance to Gasworks, private archive

Besides the impact the difference between owning (as is the case for Gasworks) and renting (as is the case for HANGAR) has in terms of security and financial planning for the institutions, it can be argued that there is no significant difference between the appearance of the physical spaces as such. Regardless of more technical details such as the amount of space available, etc., that, even though they could be analysed and would surely shed light onto other interesting aspects of this inquiry, the buildings as communicative structures do not show major differences. Both are quite seamlessly inserted into the

surrounding architecture and do not act as disruptive forces, underlining their quotidian and familiar character.

Last but not least, 32° East offers another interesting example on how architecture and the organisation of space do not only communicate a message but influence the dynamics and behaviour of people that visit it, functioning as a mediating tool and even a co-producer of knowledge by providing an organisational structure that promotes encounter and conversation.



Figure 20. Steinvorth, Sofia (2019), Main green area or 'plaza' at 32° East, private archive

Through the simple fact that the main building, in which exhibition space and office space are located, and the containers that provide the structure for the hosting of the library and the studios, around a main green area or 'plaza', the crossing of ways is something quite usual at 32° East. Furthermore, and since staff members have been uniting forces over the past years to come up with an architectural proposal for a new space for this VAO, Bahana explains that they have had a lot of sessions, in which it came to discussing the needs of artists working at a visual arts organisation. For instance, there has been a high interest rate in

openness, community, that the space and how it is designed should allow both for people to have their small meetings on the side but also a communal field. And then with the new space having studios that are more short term and studios that artists can lease out for one to two years and how those spaces can [...] interact with each other and allow also for interaction and maybe a mentorship. (Bahana, 2019: Annex C)

In addition to this, in the context of Kampala, there is also the aim of

Being [...] aspirational [...] in terms of: if you move around the city architecture is like the lowest priority. In so many projects there is not even an architect, there is your contractor, and they build the thing. I want four walls and some windows, just build it. And the design and aesthetics are not a consideration. So just that the building, the centre itself, can be a work of art in itself and motivate people to think differently about architecture and how spaces are built, what can be special about a space in Kampala, as well. (Bahana, 2019: Annex C)

She continues to give an example about a new Japanese restaurant called Yamasen, that has made “traffic slow down and guys point [...] at it” (Bahana, 2019: Annex C).



Figure 21. 'Yamasen Japanese Restaurant, Tank Hill Park, Kampala'.
Courtesy of Cots Cots Limited and Terrain Architects.

It is projects like these, she says, that show “that you can really have really beautiful things that everyone can appreciate and a space that can be different” (Bahana, 2019: Annex C), an aim that is clearly at stake when thinking about the conception of the new space for 32° East.

In a different yet similar way this is what has happened in Lisbon with the construction of the MAAT Museum. As described in *The Monocle Guide to Building Better Cities* (2018) “some buildings have the power to transform not just the way a place looks but the way it sees itself. Maat has done just that”

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(Monocle, 2018: 306). The authors rightly identify that “Maat has become a city emblem [...] The building has also inspired pride. Every taxi driver or local will ask what you think of it – and tell you how great it is” (Monocle, 2018: 306), which shows the impact architecture can have not only as physical space but even in the way people relate to their context. This is what 32° East is conscious about and what they are trying to implement through the design of their new space.

CHAPTER 4

Representation – Curating ‘Other’ Knowledge(s)

“The purpose of the arts is not only to entertain; their more important role is to provide insights into reality”

(Loder, 2007: 21)

As identified by Ana Cristina Cachola and Luísa Santos in the accompanying publication to the Conference ‘Conviviality and the Institutional’ held at the MAAT Museum in Lisbon on 4-5 December 2017,

the insistence on the Other – or in what, through a millennial construction of stereotypes, has been designated as the Other – and what can be called a discursive excess of otherness, is in itself symptomatic of a world in conflict. A conflict that is born in the binary opposition of an ‘I’ and an ‘Other’, a ‘Us’ and an ‘Other’. (Cachola and Santos, 2017: 1)

In the face of this condition, and starting from Loder’s understanding of the purpose of the arts being to provide insights into reality, this chapter will analyse the way in which the three case studies engage with representation, as a process that is concerned with the production of meaning and thus the understanding of reality(ies). As outlined by Ansgar Nünning, representation can be defined in the broadest sense as “a process of meaning constitution, in which throughout its course the components reference and performance play a prominent role as they create ambiguity and newness”⁹⁶ (Nünning, 2005: 189). He continues to state that representation is an essential feature of linguistic

⁹⁶ Authors translation from the original in German: “ein Prozess der Sinnkonstituierung in dessen Verlauf die Komponenten Referenz und Performanz insofern eine eminente Rolle spielen, als sie Ambiguität und Neues schaffen” (Nünning, 2005: 189).

processes and that understood as the mediation process⁹⁷ it is, functioning based on referencing and ‘substituting’, it is an integral part of language(s) and systems of signs in art and music (Nünning, 2005: 189).

VAOs, that provide a space for the questioning of knowledge(s) and often address precisely the question of what is supposedly ‘other’, as identified by Santos and Cachola, play a crucial role in terms of spaces for visibility and the (mediation of the) production of meaning. Along the lines it will become clear that, even though there are similarities in that they are all concerned about the importance of representation in relation to the production of knowledge through curatorial work and artistic practices, the way this inquiry is put into practice varies from organisation to organisation. This is not less dependent on the context each organisation operates in, a key feature that will be investigated in this chapter along with the importance of heterogeneity for representation and the impact this can have in the scope of identity politics between the local and the global.

4.1 Making Heterogeneity a Point

When asked in an interview about the criteria when choosing the artists for the Triangle Workshops, Robert Loder explains:

There are various strands. You want to have a reasonable gender balance. You want diversity of practice; you do not want everybody making art in exactly the

⁹⁷ As seen in the previous chapter, in which education and mediation were discussed in relation to the practices implemented in VAOs, it seems interesting to draw a parallel to the understanding of representation as mediation process as characterised by Nünning. It could be argued, that through the focus on mediation in their programmes, VAOs stand not only for an engagement with process, but for the visibility and transparency of the process of representation and meaning making as such.

Furthermore, Nünning addresses that “the fascination and the problematic with representation lies within the fact that we express our intention through it, while it simultaneously separates this intention in the political and aesthetic realm from us. Each representation leads to a loss, to a gap between an intention and a realisation, an original and a copy” (Nünning, 2005: 189). This entanglement of representational processes with the communication of our will and our experience of reality, will be important for the next chapter, in which conviviality, shared time and experience will be under analysis.

same way. Most of the artists will be in mid-career; you will have some younger ones, and some older ones. If there is one principle apart from the quality of the work, it is diversity, in order to create a situation with maximum stimulus. (Loder, 2006: 82)

This brief description of the principle of heterogeneity as a core element of the workshops that were at the beginning of the Triangle Network, is a characteristic that has maintained itself throughout time and that can now be found in VAOs. These organisations have made heterogeneity one of their core values and give it a space in a more institutionalised and constant form. Even though the methods through which heterogeneity is implemented in their programmes varies according to the local context, it is still one of the main pillars that characterises their practice.

The focus on heterogeneity happens through different ways of engaging with it. Gasworks for instance, is a space that gives opportunities to artists who are at the start of their careers and that might not yet have had their first solo-exhibition. Adding to this, their fully funded residency programme is addressed towards artists from other geographies who would else not be able to spend three months researching and developing their practice in London. Antonioli explains:

All residencies at Gasworks are fully funded as we aim to reach artists who would not otherwise be able to spend three months in London. [...] The aim is to identify an artist for whom being at Gasworks and in London can make a difference in their career, not particularly in terms of art-scene exposure but more in terms of research and development of their practice and/or inquiry. Our programmes also aim to prioritise artists who have not had many previous opportunities to research and show their work, we hope that we can provide them with a step change of sort (Antonioli, 2018: Annex A).

Regarding the aim of the organisation as a place for representation, he elucidates that “it is about creating spaces for visibility, where voices can be valued and heard without needing to be ‘boxed up’ or branded” (Antonioli, 2018: Annex A). He continues to say that he

would like to think that it is difficult to identify a typical ‘Gasworks or Triangle artist’ as it would be uncomfortable for [him] to know that ‘we have a type’.

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I would like our organisations and network to be a platform for hosting ideas and projects rather than designing a profile for artists. I would also like to think that it is their ideas and practices that shape us rather than the other way around. (Antoniolli, 2018: Annex A)

Through this statement it becomes clear that the institution and the Triangle Network as such have a strong commitment to remain open for new artistic practices and the exploration, adaptability and constant regeneration that this entails.

As analysed in the previous chapter on mediation, the effort to be a space for heterogeneity also comes across in the way the programme is planned, in that they make a point out of diversifying it as much as possible to reach multiple audiences without losing their main purpose and the rigor and investigation that is part of the artists’ work (Antoniolli, 2018: Annex A). In his words: “I hope that we can be a space where the widest diversity of audiences can come to discover something new. I would like to know that they walk away having had a productive experience, whether they liked what they saw or not” (Antoniolli, 2018: Annex A). In this sense, Gasworks positions itself as an organisation that is interested in diversifying not only the artistic scene through the promotion of upcoming artists but also the accessibility to art for varied audiences.

In her book *Knowledge in Context: Representations, Community and Culture* (2006) Sandra Jovchelovitch develops “a social psychological approach to knowledge that can retrieve its connection to the personal, interpersonal and sociocultural worlds in which it is produced” (Jovchelovitch, 2006: 2). To do so, she undertakes a thorough analysis of the role that representation plays in this process, arguing that it is nothing less than “at the basis of all knowledge systems” (Jovchelovitch, 2006: 2). By exploring the social and psychological components of knowledge production, she also points out the importance of different public spheres as places in which “the empirical realisation of these interrelations [self-other-object] [...] shapes different modalities of representation and the multiple dimensions of representational processes – the ‘who’, ‘how’, ‘why’, ‘what’ and ‘what for’ of representation” (Jovchelovitch, 2006: 3). Furthermore, she argues that different modalities of representation contend different forms of knowledge, recognising that “knowledge is a plural, heterogeneous phenomenon that comprises multiple rationalities, whose logics are not defined by a transcendental norm but

relate to the pragmatics of context”⁹⁸ (Jovchelovitch, 2006: 3). In this sense, she dismantles the traditional understanding of representation, “that sees knowledge in terms of a progressive scale where superior forms of knowing displace lower forms” (Jovchelovitch, 2006: 3). Finally, addressing the coexistence of different knowledges that respond to different needs in social life as an asset of all human communities, she identifies that dialogue can be seen as a source for knowledge in that it “constitute[s] the difficult but necessary resource that can enlarge the boundaries of all knowledges” (Jovchelovitch, 2006: 3).

As analysed in the previous chapter, dialogue and conversation are key components of the programmes of the three case studies. Through Jovchelovitch’s investigation, in which she acknowledges the crucial role that heterogeneity plays for representational processes and in which she declares dialogue a source for knowledge(s), the significance of the programmes developed at VAOs increases considerably.

4.2 Representation and Identity Politics

Stuart Hall, one of the first scholars working towards the inclusion of the discussion around race and gender in Cultural Studies, firstly through his involvement along Richard Hoggart and Raymond Williams as one of the founders of the school of thought called British Cultural Studies or The Birmingham School of Cultural Studies, also addressed the social implications of cultural representation making it a political concern.⁹⁹ He points out the production of meaning as being context- and time-bound, drawing on the constant production of new meanings and interpretations:

⁹⁸ Acknowledging the artificiality of knowledge, Katerina Gregos addresses the potential of artistic research to re-evaluate and re-contextualise historical processes and evidence. She calls artistic research as a method “a form of correctional historiography, which challenges the failures of cultural memory and historical amnesia, creating new forms of knowledge that we have hitherto suppressed. A key issue underlying such practices is questioning the act of representation itself: who is representing whom and how, and what responsibilities come with this representation – a fundamentally political question in itself” (Gregos, 2017: 33).

⁹⁹ His book *Representation, Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (1997) is one of the leading references when it comes to the topic of (cultural) representation.

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If the relationship between a signifier and its signified is the result of a system of social conventions specific to each society and to specific historical moments – then all meanings are produced within history and culture. [...] This opens representation to the constant ‘play’ or slippage of meaning to the constant production of new meanings, new interpretations. (Hall, 1997: 32)

In this sense, the production of meaning is not one that is carried out one-sided. Instead, producer and consumer are involved in an interplay, in which both are important parts of the process of meaning-making. In Hall’s words: “The *reader* is as important as the *writer* in the production of meaning. Every signifier given or encoded with meaning has to be meaningfully interpreted or decoded by the receiver” (Hall, 1997: 33). It is following this line of thought that the production of meaning can be understood as a dialogical process, in which both parties involved take on a protagonist position and influence each other. Again, the focus on dialogue and conversation in VAOs seems to do just this – being a platform for the production of meaning and the production of knowledge(s) bringing varied audiences and artists that work on specific (underrepresented) topics together in a space where certain knowledges can be challenged, and novel/alternative ones explored.

Nora Sternfeld identifies that

since the 1960s, representation has been confronted with increasing scepticism in the field of art (especially in institutional critique), in theory (especially in cultural studies, postcolonial and post-structuralist theories) and in activism (especially in the new post-identitarian social movements). (Sternfeld, 2013: 146)

Even though Culture Studies, the field from which this inquiry is undertaken,

take the interest for the manifestations of popular and material culture, as well as the forms of mediation and representation and the interaction between the power structures and the cultural manifestations from the British School, they do also hold on to the hermeneutic interest for the reading and interpreting of the diverse signifying systems.¹⁰⁰ (Capeloa Gil, 2008: 146)

¹⁰⁰ Author’s translation from the original in Portuguese: “Os Estudos de Cultura, se bem que retirando da escola britânica o interesse pelas manifestações da cultura popular e pela cultura

This interrogation of meanings and signifying practices through the programmes and residencies of VAOs – understood as signifying systems –, besides giving opportunities to artists in their beginning career and artists who would benefit from a residency to deepen their practice or experiment with it without the pressure of delivering a product, does bring urgent topics to the fore, creating spaces for visibility not only for artists but also for specific issues.

Bahana, from 32 East for instance, understands the mere existence of the organisation as a representational act, in the sense that they take a specific stand in a context in which there are no similar spaces. She explains that:

just by virtue of us existing and running the space there is a standing that we have. Whether or not we wear that bat, people are still like ‘32 has knowledge of some kind’ and the people who run 32 are all women. So just by existing it is already a statement. That then translates in how we work and who we choose to work with. A lot of things that we are interested in. [...] Because we understand what it means [...] to be underrepresented. It is not just *gender*, it is *age*¹⁰¹ as well... to often be seen as lesser, or not being taken seriously, or not seen as fully human. I think that probably comes across in who we work with and the kinds of things we work on. When it comes to applications, it is a good question. It is actually important; we do think about gender parity when we pick applicants. (Bahana, 2019: Annex C)

Furthermore, Bahana reflects on the nature of the organisation and the values it stands for, saying that

whether or not it is intentional, it just is [a representational act]. I think people just notice. We do not need to be ‘we are an all-female run organisation’ (*imitates a parole-like way of carrying out a statement*). People come and see and then pick up on that, which influences how artists work in the space. We have had people, guys, male artists, who have sometimes not responded well to feedback. Things like that. But that is also instructional and feels important in some ways, too. (Bahana, 2019: Annex C)

material, bem como pelas formas de mediação e representação e ainda pela interação entre as estruturas de poder e as manifestações culturais, retêm o interesse hermenêutico pela leitura e interpretação dos diversos sistemas sógnicos” (Capelo Gil, 2008: 146).

¹⁰¹ My own italics.

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Further developing on the certain kinds of knowledge that the people in the organisation share an interest for and promote, Bahana clarifies that the focus is on “certain ways of knowledge [...] whether or not that is things like thinking about *colonisation*, thinking about *feminism*, *gender and sexuality*¹⁰² [...]. Beyond that it is quite open” (Bahana, 2019: Annex C).

Summing up, she sees the value of the work that 32° East develops as being grounded in the stand they take providing an alternative to some of the everyday ideas of the society it is inserted in:

in a city that completely dismisses artists and undervalues them both in terms of them as people, their craft, what it brings to the world, that is a really valuable position to take [to be in service and working in partnership with artists]. In counter to the day-to-day ‘this is how you are meant to grow up’, ‘this is what you are meant to do when you get older’, ‘this is what success looks like’. These people are really important, what they do is really important and if we are supporting it financially and in terms of time, I think it is in some ways counter to what society tells us about its importance. (Bahana, 2019: Annex C)

Even though Leitão also addresses gender parity as one of the organisation’s concerns, he pinpoints the importance of another criteria when it comes to choosing artists for residencies: looking beyond nationality and making the place of residence the criteria for certain applications.

there is a preoccupation around minorities. We pay a lot of attention to gender parity. [...] To give just one example of equality in all aspects, in all of the open calls, we are always careful to have at least the same number of male and female participants. There is also a notion around citizenship and nationality. All of our open calls follow the same principle, for instance, Gasworks ran an open call from HANGAR in the UK for two years, which addressed artists from the UK or who *live* in the UK. The first year it was an artist from Vietnam, but who lived and worked in the UK.¹⁰³ (Leitão, 2018: Annex B)

¹⁰² My own italics.

¹⁰³ Translation by the author from the original in Portuguese: “há uma preocupação com minorias. Há uma atenção muito grande à paridade de género. [...] Para te dar um exemplo da paridade em todos os aspetos, tudo o que são convocatórias, temos sempre cuidado de ter no mínimo o mesmo número de homens e mulheres. Existe, também, uma noção de cidadania e de

Through the focus on the place of residence as defining for the suitability for the application to artistic residencies, they acknowledge the increased mobility that characterises the globalised world and provide more inclusive conditions to everyone based in a specific geographical area. This twisted understanding of ‘nationality’ is also a guiding principle for the recently published first book of Hangar Books called *Atlantica: Contemporary Art from Angola and its Diaspora* (2018). In one of the introductions to *Atlantica*, Paul Goodwin briefly and succinctly explains the meaning and importance of transnationalism for the present conditions of the world:

We live in a world of flows. Conditions of non-stop changeability, uncertainty, flexibility, movement and migration have increasingly come to define the world in which we live, work and make art. This increasingly all-pervasive understanding of flow, migration and flux is at the heart of the idea of ‘transnational’ and what might be termed the transnational perspective on art. Most dictionaries define transnational as ‘extending or operating across national boundaries’ (Oxford English Dictionaries Online), implying movement or traversing across national borders. The etymology of ‘trans’ is based on notions of *across*, *beyond*, *through* and *changing states*, as in *transcending*. The ‘trans’ element in ‘transnational’ implies continual movement – from one place to another or from one state of being to another – a kind of flow that can be applied to the notion of objects or art works that travel across and beyond contexts, and change their state or character as they cross geographies and cultural contexts. Thus the ‘trans’ constantly challenges the national by continually crossing, and thereby transforming the character and identity of the national. (Goodwin, 2018: 9)

Summing up, one could say that, as Sally Tallant rightly identifies “By undertaking external, place-based or locally-situated projects, it is possible to think about a renegotiation of the role of the gallery and museum as a site of production which operates beyond the demands of the market and in relation to wider socio-political concerns” (Tallant, 2010: 190). Linking this to the practice of VAOs, it leads to the realisation that they develop their work in precisely this

nacionalidade. Todas as nossas convocações têm o mesmo princípio. Por exemplo, a Gasworks fez durante dois anos uma convocatória do HANGAR no Reino Unido, que era para artistas do Reino Unido ou que *vivam* no Reino Unido. O primeiro ano foi um artista do Vietname, mas que vivia e trabalhava no Reino Unido”.

‘space-between’ that the author recognises as an opportunity for museums and galleries. Grounding their practice through a very local and community-oriented programme, addressing ‘site-specific’ topics, not only through artistic actions, but as an institutional statement by providing opportunities focused on the local context, they do create a space for the exploration of artistic practices that operates, as stated above, “beyond the market and in relation to wider socio-political concerns” (Tallant, 2010: 190).

4.3 Context-Specific Knowledge Production Between Local and Global

For her analysis of representations of Portuguese cultural identity in contemporary art after April 25th of 1975, curator and researcher Ana Cristina Cachola identifies, based on Anthony Giddens (1991) and Mike Featherstone (1990), “the condition of the contemporary artist as intrinsically nomadic, which transforms him in a privileged subject when it comes to reflect about issues that can be ascribed to a *glocal* current”¹⁰⁴ (Cachola, 2015: 25). It can be assumed that it is through this same condition that defines the contemporary artist, that the Triangle Network’s work evolves mainly around mobility of artists, curators and other professionals associated to the arts, the organisation of international residencies and training for people who run VAOs (Antoniolli, 2018: Annex A). Antoniolli explains that the network “functions as a bridge to the wider and international field, giving the opportunity to learn from peers in other contexts. It promotes international dialogues and the production and sharing of knowledge, the exchanging of information, ideas and experience” (Antoniolli, 2018: Annex A). Besides this being important in terms of sharing experiences and the production of knowledge, it is also a key condition to the development of artistic practices in the context of global economies. Even though the main focus of VAOs and the Triangle Network has shown to be clearly distanced from a commercial one, based on Appadurai’s analysis of the current circumstances for the acquisition of knowledge, their international positioning and bridging

¹⁰⁴ Translation by the author from the original in Portuguese: “A condição do artista contemporâneo é intrinsecamente nómada, o que o transforma em sujeito privilegiado para reflectir sobre questões identitárias que se inscrevem numa corrente *glocal* (Giddens, 1991; Featherstone, 1990)” (Cachola, 2015: 25).

of opportunities and exchanges for artists seems to play an important role for the gaining of knowledge in a *glocal* world. As Appadurai rightly identifies, it has become difficult for strictly locally operating professionals to improve their circumstances:

call centres, specialised production techniques, new methods of borrowing and investing money, and new technologies for organising information and expressing opinion, all make it hard for people with strictly local knowledge to improve their circumstances. [...] while knowledge of the world is increasingly important for everybody (from tourist to pharmaceutical researcher), the opportunities for gaining such knowledge are shrinking. (Appadurai, 2006: 176)

In this sense, the Triangle Network can be also understood as a platform for artists through which they get access to precisely the defined opportunities for gaining knowledge that transcends the local context from which they operate. Leitão also addresses the importance of mobility for artists nowadays, saying that “for good and for bad, mobility is a trait mark of our times in terms of visual arts. It is [...] a sort of surviving strategy of the artists nowadays. They have to be constantly moving”¹⁰⁵ (Leitão, 2018: Annex B). VAOs provide these opportunities in terms of residencies and their association to the international network.

Moreover, when transcending their own context, artists directly engage in the production of knowledge in another locality. It is important to recall the fact that Gasworks and HANGAR, the two VAOs (out of the three case studies) that are most often involved in hosting international residencies, do prioritise artists for whom it would be relevant to develop their work in another place, namely London or Lisbon, respectively.

Even though HANGAR was born out of the perceived necessity to address a specific and urgent thematic in the context of Lisbon and the wider context of Portugal, making it, in the same way as 32º East, a space that is deeply engaged with the local context and its needs, what seems to be of special importance for HANGAR is the engagement with a look from outside, a different way of seeing (Leitão, 2018: Annex B). This is put into practice through a

¹⁰⁵ Translation by the author from the original in Portuguese: “Acho que a mobilidade é uma marca do nosso tempo, em termos das artes visuais – para o bem e para o mal. [...] é uma certa forma de sobrevivência dos artistas hoje em dia. Têm de estar sempre a mover-se”.

programme that has a well-defined concern about topics related to post-colonialism and “North-South problematics”¹⁰⁶ (Leitão, 2018: Annex B), addressing mainly geographies such as Latin America and Africa. Leitão reflects on the beginning of HANGAR:

we knew since the very beginning that we wanted to work about what we call ‘North-South problematics’ and that was the starting point. We do not address the Global South; we have worked with Asian artists, but our main focus has been on Latin America and Africa, because we would like to think about HANGAR from where it is inserted: a city, that was the capital of a colonial empire. The Portuguese did not invent slavery, but they practically invented the transcontinental commerce of human beings. Back then we thought [around 2014] that this was an issue that was about to explode here in Portugal. I always said that this was an issue that was still in need of unpacking and that was about to explode in public space.¹⁰⁷ (Leitão, 2018: Annex B)

He continues to explain that HANGAR originated from a shared concern around these issues which seemed so urgent and still pending to be addressed in a city like Lisbon: “this is what we felt, that it was an urgent thematic and that we had to start helping to unpack and to discuss these issues in public [...] There was an invisible separation, not an Apartheid, but a separation”¹⁰⁸ (Leitão, 2018: Annex B).

¹⁰⁶ Translation by the author from the original in Portuguese: “problemáticas de Norte-Sul”.

¹⁰⁷ Translation by the author from the original in Portuguese: “Desde o início que soubemos que queríamos trabalhar sobre o que chamamos “problemáticas de Norte-Sul” e foi esse o ponto de partida. Nós não tratamos o Sul global, ou seja, temos trabalhado com artistas asiáticos, mas os nossos focos principais têm sido a América Latina e África, porque queremos pensar o HANGAR a partir do sítio onde ele se insere: uma cidade que foi capital de um império colonial. Os portugueses não inventaram a escravatura, mas inventaram praticamente o comércio transcontinental de seres humanos. E, na altura achámos que isso era uma questão que aqui em Portugal estava à beira de explodir. Eu dizia sempre, ‘isto é uma questão que está por desempacotar e que está mesmo por rebentar na praça pública”.

¹⁰⁸ Translation by the author from the original in Portuguese: “Foi isso que nós sentimos, que era uma temática urgente e que tínhamos de começar a ajudar a desempacotar essa questão e discuti-la em público [...] Havia uma separação invisível; não havia um Apartheid, mas havia uma separação”.

Following the same line of thought, John Picton addresses the crucial role that the Triangle Network has played in providing a platform for the questioning of Apartheid and other colonial structures. He says that

in Africa, [...] artists have all too often been kept apart, restricted to the places made for them via institutions, networks and conceptions originating with colonial government and apartheid. Strategies for developing trans-national relationships were missing, the possibilities broken – fractured – by conceptual and practical obstacles not of African artists' making. That that process of change has been successfully initiated in recent years is due, in good part, to the Triangle Network. (Picton, 2007: 262)

Following this statement, the VAOs associated to the Triangle Network share the mission to provide spaces for inquiry around traditional understandings of knowledge and what is believed to be the 'norm'. This point was already made through the afore mentioned excerpts from the interviews held with the directors of Gasworks, HANGAR and 32° East respectively. Nevertheless, and in order to provide a more practical understanding of the ways in which the artistic practices developed by the residents at these organisations align with the philosophy of the spaces and engage directly with the production of knowledge in the context in which they find themselves working, in the following pages some of the descriptions of the works of the residents hosted in the period between October 2018 and February 2019¹⁰⁹, will be analysed.

Gasworks for instance, had four artists in residence in the period from 1 October to 17 December 2018. Shah Numair Ahmed Abbasi's (Pakistan) practice is described on their website as drawing

on popular culture, anecdotes and colloquialisms to stage personal and social narratives. His work attempts to challenge the politics behind how gender is socially constructed and performed. The figure of the male nude [being] a recurring

¹⁰⁹ This timeframe is the same as the one for the visits to the organisations, the interviews and the closer observation and analysis of their spaces and programmes. For this reason, and to give an idea about the most recent practices and topics addressed by artists in residence that are being supported by these VAOs, it made sense to focus on the most recent residents.

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theme, often presented in ways that undermine or question idealised masculine virtues. (Gasworks, “Shah Numair Ahmed Abbasi”)¹¹⁰

During his residency in London, his aim was to explore some of these topics in relation to the context of the city through the engagement “with queer Muslim men of Pakistani origin living in London, to understand how they navigate issues related to their identity during interactions within and beyond the community, and across domestic, public and virtual environments” (ibidem).

Pilar Quinteros (Chile), the second artist in residency, is introduced as an artist working across mediums,

often using cheap recycled construction materials that are deliberately delicate and degradable. Physical labour and construction are central to the work, all undertaken by the artist and documented throughout the process in photography and video. Her projects often involve interventions in public space and consider the continual destruction and disappearance of what is taken for granted and to provide a bridge to imagining unexplored worlds. (Gasworks, “Pilar Quinteros”)¹¹¹

Drawing on the fragility of what is considered to be stable, Quinteros challenges the notion of what is believed to be a fact, opening up new possibilities to invent and imagine. Clearly a questioning and an inquiry into the surroundings, her residency at Gasworks aims to “respond directly to the immediate surrounding of London and her experience of inhabiting a new city, researching and producing a work that allows its context to dictate its creation” (ibidem).

Hikalu Clarke (New Zealand), another artist in residency at Gasworks in the last period of 2018, engages with the way

architecture affects and dictates the agency of those who occupy it. His work engages with the post-9/11 shift in architecture toward counter-terrorism and the implementation of ‘unfriendly’ spatial design philosophies. The result of these

¹¹⁰ “Shah Numair Ahmed Abbasi”, Residencies, Gasworks, [gasworks.org.uk](https://www.gasworks.org.uk/residencies/shah-numair-ahmed-abbasi-2018-10-01/), retrieved from: <https://www.gasworks.org.uk/residencies/shah-numair-ahmed-abbasi-2018-10-01/>, last accessed in January 2019.

¹¹¹ “Pilar Quinteros”, Residencies, Gasworks, [gasworks.org.uk](https://www.gasworks.org.uk/residencies/pilar-quinteros-2018-10-01/), retrieved from: <https://www.gasworks.org.uk/residencies/pilar-quinteros-2018-10-01/>, last accessed in January 2019.

measures is the diminishment of individual liberties in public space in the name of security justified by the 'greater good' argument. (Gasworks, "Hikalu Clarke")¹¹²

In terms of engagement with the local context of the residency, Clarke

will use the Vauxhall Nine Elms Battersea (VNEB) redevelopment as the basis for his research. The centerpiece of the project is the £9bn transformation of the Battersea Power Station into a hub of luxury retail and office space. Through engagement with individuals directly involved or affected in the development, he will attempt to gain an understanding of the strategies implemented within 're-invigorating' projects and coopt them into the vocabulary of his own practice to formulate an objective position. (ibidem)

Last but not least, the fourth artist in residence, Fátima Rodrigo Gonzales (Peru), explores

the lasting influence of modernism in Latin American architecture, art and popular culture. Gender identity is a central theme in her practice, specifically in considering how modernity, understood broadly as a historical period, philosophy and aesthetic movement embodied in landscapes and human bodies, enables forms of violence against women and non-binary people. Her work is rooted in encounters with objects and moments such as clothing, architectural motifs or lines of dialogue from telenovelas which are subtly subverted to reveal how such devices shape our desires and interactions. (Gasworks, "Fátima Rodrigo Gonzales")¹¹³

Her residency in London will allow her to

conduct research into how Pre-Columbian Peruvian iconography has influenced Western Modernism, with particular focus on its appropriation by the fashion and design industries. With her works she will aim to problematise the structures

¹¹² "Hikalu Clarke", Residencies, Gasworks, [gasworks.org.uk](https://www.gasworks.org.uk/residencies/hikalu-clarke-2018-10-01/), retrieved from: <https://www.gasworks.org.uk/residencies/hikalu-clarke-2018-10-01/>, last accessed in January 2019.

¹¹³ "Fátima Rodrigo Gonzales", Residencies, Gasworks, [gasworks.org.uk](https://www.gasworks.org.uk/residencies/fatima-rodrigo-2018-10-01/), retrieved from: <https://www.gasworks.org.uk/residencies/fatima-rodrigo-2018-10-01/>, last accessed in January 2019.

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of power that in a post-colonial context continue to organise the world in hierarchical binaries of nature/culture, primitive/civilized, past/present and female/male, veiling the fluid relations between colonizers and colonized that compose what we understand as ‘modern’. (ibidem).

As can be seen from the artists presented above, topics such as gender, architecture, colonialism and reality/imaginaries and their social and political implications dominate their practices. In addition to this, there is always a very clear aim for a project that will be developed in the context of London and research seems to be one of the most important tools that the artists have at hand to make these projects happen.¹¹⁴

In the case of HANGAR, that has the biggest number of international residents at a time and considering that they take in new artist at the beginning of each month, it is difficult to include here all the artists that were there between October 2018 and February 2019. In the following, four of them will be addressed.

Abel Jaramillo (Spain) inquires into “strategies to alternate or subvert the usual logic of understanding different contexts” (HANGAR, “Abel Jaramillo”).¹¹⁵ He is interested in the histories that stayed at the margins and how they are produced and developed in different discourses. During the time he spent in Lisbon he engaged directly with the landscape of the Sintra Natural Parks and visited a site on a beach of Sintra in which a scene of one of Wim Wender’s movies was shot to make a reference to it in his own latest work. During the case of Jaramillo, the geographical location of his residency was of utmost importance to further develop his ongoing work.

Irene de Andrés (Ibiza, Spain), whose practice revolves around mass tourism and is often focused on cruise ships, came to HANGAR to further develop a video project shot a few months ago on the island of Rügen in Germany, where she visited the National-Socialist complex at Prora, which was originally planned as a complex of vacation apartments to give the possibility to people from all social classes to go on holidays. Today, this abandoned project is

¹¹⁴ For more information about artistic research, please see: PART I, Chapter 1, point 1.1 Artistic Research of this thesis.

¹¹⁵ “Abel Jaramillo”, HANGAR, hangar.com.pt, retrieved from: <https://hangar.com.pt/abel-jaramillo/>, last accessed in January 2019. Translation by the author from the original in Portuguese: “estratégias que alteram ou subvertem a lógica habitual de compreensão de contextos diferentes”.

being renovated and transformed into luxury accommodation for tourists. During the last years, tourism has become one of the most important topics when it comes to Lisbon, which makes her work highly relevant to the city's moment. Besides this, the artist took inspiration from her surroundings, documenting directly from the window of her studio at HANGAR, where she could see the cruise ships passing every morning on the Tagus River.

Rosanna Bach (Switzerland) and Antonio Menchen (Spain) are two other artists that came to work at HANGAR, their projects not being specifically about a topic related to the context of Lisbon. Bach delves into her artistic practice by exploring fragility and notions around femininity and the ephemeral in nature through installations with hanging glass objects, fine black line drawings, natural objects and poetry, intuition being one of the driving forces for her methodologically less-rational work. She reflects mainly upon the uninterrupted harmony between nature and mankind (HANGAR, "Rosanna Bach").¹¹⁶ Menchen, on the other hand, works closely with images, of which he has a big collection and he aimed to organise it during his residency for an upcoming exhibition in Spain. This way, his work was more (auto)archival and closed within itself.

Even though probably not sufficient to make a general claim, based on these examples it can be argued that, even though the organisation is interested in the look from outside, not all of the artists at HANGAR engage directly with Lisbon as context. On the other hand, the issues addressed in the work of the artists, while not being directly about Lisbon or post-colonialism and North-South problematics, can still be seen as adding to the (local) contemporary art scene in terms of the variety of topics and different modes of addressing them.

Furthermore, it is through the existence of the organisation, specifically through the possibilities the existence of the physical space in a specific context entails, that a VAO can literally 'give space' to artists to develop their practice and concerns. For instance, the artists in residence at 32° East that started in January 2018 are Trevor Mark Aloka and Sarah Ijangolet. In a visit to Aloka's studio at 32° East he explained that his work focuses on the reconstruction of the cultural heritage of his ancestors through an inquiry into the stereotypes attached to it and the questioning of the different attitudes each generation has in relation to its cultural background. According to Aloka's research, each

¹¹⁶ "Rosanna Bach", HANGAR, hangar.com.pt, retrieved from: <https://hangar.com.pt/rosanna-bach/>, last accessed in January 2019.

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generation has different relations to this heritage, which shows in their body postures and the engagement (or lack thereof) with their history. Ijangolet on the other hand, “is fascinated by Ugandan folklore and mythology, a lot of her work being an exploration of the rich world of Ugandan fantasy and mythos as passed down from generation to generation” (AtWork, “Sarah Ijangolet”).¹¹⁷ Two artists who are deeply connected to their local context and its cultural heritage, they engage with it from a present perspective and interrogate its value for the contemporary world and the younger generations. Through the residency programme they explore not only the implications of their backgrounds and surroundings as part of identity building processes by diving into further research but address highly relevant context-bound topics.

In addition to the artistic practices that address certain topics and knowledge(s) that in most cases are closely context-specific and inspired by the local surroundings and conditions, the public programmes are also an important part of the organisations’ activities for which the context-specificity is a starting point to think about the relevance of their actions. In the case of 32° East, as already mentioned above, since the residencies are mainly for local artists, the impact of the look from outside comes through other parts of their programme. In this sense, Bahana expressed the interest that stands behind VAOs’ programming decisions, when explaining that, for example, one criterion for the Labs that work as preparations for the KLA ART festival is to know that whoever is invited to give workshops has to be someone where they can be sure that, “Yes, they are going to shake things up!” (Bahana, 2019: Annex C). She recalls how “being part of a larger international network there are really so many opportunities to hear from and work with different practitioners, who have alternative methodologies and different contexts and enough exciting different insight that can invigorate and stimulate artists” (Bahana, 2019: Annex C). Once again, the focus is on acknowledging heterogeneity and the importance of having people from different contexts and backgrounds to make the learning and exchange experience possible, profiting from a fruitful collaboration based on the specific positioning between local and global.

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¹¹⁷ “Sarah Ijangolet”, AtWork, at-work.org, retrieved from: <https://at-work.org/en/notebook/sarah-ijangolet-2/>, last accessed in January 2019.

In the field of curating, in which ‘the curatorial’ has taken on a dominant role, as explained in PART I of this thesis, one of the main concerns has been evolving around the question of how to ‘overcome’ representation. For example, Rogoff argues that

it is not that the curatorial needs bolstering by theory, philosophy or history, but rather that these arenas could greatly benefit from the modes of assemblage which make up the curatorial at its best, when it is attempting to enact the *event of knowledge* rather than to illustrate those knowledges. (Rogoff, 2013: 45-46)

Wanting to distance curatorial practice from a mere representational act, the curatorial takes on a less prescriptive and more dialogical role. In Rogoff’s words: “If curating can be the site of knowledge to rehearse its crises then it has the potential to make a contribution rather than enact representation” (Rogoff, 2013: 45).

Adding to this, if the curated space can be a space for the engagement with knowledge, even though not in prescriptive terms, then the production of knowledge cannot be far. As identified by Sternfeld,

if we think curating beyond representation as ‘being able to do something’, then it involves processes that produce themselves – so it is no longer about exhibitions as sites for setting up valuable objects and representing objective values, but rather about spaces for curatorial action in which unexpected encounters and discourse become possible, in which taking a stand (as unplanned as this may be) seems more important than, say, precise hanging plans. (Sternfeld, 2013: 146)

The space that Sternfeld describes, in which the exhibition expands and opens up to a programme focused rather on unexpected encounters and discussion, resembles pretty much the activity that VAOs are engaging with. Even though at 32° East for instance, there is no professional curator involved in the programming, their activities revolve, in the same way as the ones developed at Gasworks and HANGAR (where curators are involved), around the same preoccupations and can be called curatorial, if we bear in mind that:

In recent years, curating as a practice has come to signify an expanded field and is no longer exclusively associated with museological work or exhibition

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making within an institutional space. It has become something that goes beyond working with artists or showing or presenting art and involves commissioning, writing, editing, authoring, research, mediation, education, diplomacy, psychology, critical enquiry, fundraising, liaising, negotiating, activating, collaborating, assembling, publicising, educating, analysing, criticising, theorising and staging. (Gregos, 2017: 33)

It is following this argument, that the activities and artistic practices supported through VAOs’ programmes can be understood as curatorial endeavours in a wider sense. Even though their programmes include exhibitions, their focus is much more on dialogue and conversation as tools for the production and sharing of knowledge through mediation, educational activities, artistic residencies and their focus on process over product.

CHAPTER 5

Conviviality – What Being Together Means for Knowledge Production

After having now investigated how VAOs produce knowledge through an alert engagement with mediation and representation, this last chapter addresses conviviality as the third of the aspects introduced as the vertices of knowledge in these organisations.

Undertaking a brief etymological examination of the words ‘event’ and ‘knowledge’, as they come together in Rogoff’s and Martinon’s definition of the *curatorial*, one encounters that an ‘event’ is closely related to the notion of the social. A key characteristic of the ‘event’ is its physical reality and social, time-bound component, being one of the given definitions for this word: “a social occasion or activity” (Merriam Webster, “Event”).¹¹⁸

While knowledge is often thought of in an academic/theoretical sense only, as discussed in PART I of this thesis, at this point, looking at the definition of ‘knowledge’, it seems that many of the definitions tend to imply the source of knowledge as lying in experiences and associations. Opposed to the understanding of knowledge as something that is acquired and held individually, the reference to humankind as a plurality, when talking about ‘the sum of what is known’, introduces a social element. To name just two of the definitions given for ‘knowledge’ that address its social character based on a plurality: “the fact or condition of knowing something with familiarity gained through *experience*”¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ “Event”, Dictionary, Merriam Webster, merriam-webster.com, retrieved from: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/event>, last accessed in March 2019.

¹¹⁹ My own italics. See how the ‘experience’ is a possible source for knowledge and how the curatorial is about creating “events of knowledge” – thus the importance of the experience for the curatorial.

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or association”¹²⁰ and “the sum of what is known: the body of truth, information, and principles acquired by humankind” (Merriam Webster, “Knowledge”).^{121, 122}

A further indicative for the viability of the argument in favour of this re-definition of knowledge towards the embracement of its social element, can be found in the reference to the archaic usage of the word as being an allusion to sexual intercourse.¹²³ While this association to sexuality would need further analysis, delving not less into more nuanced understandings of the ‘social’ and its relation to embodiment and corporeality, in this context it seems striking that knowledge appears to have (or at least to have had) a clearly physical component, suggesting it to be rooted in time and space.

Moreover, pointing to the physical origin of knowledge, Franco Berardi’s interpretation of the skin as communicative tool comes to mind. He explains that:

The skin, which is covering our body and sheltering it from the external world, is also the most ancient and sensible of our sensory organs, our first tool for communication. Although covering and closing, skin is also opening the body to the world, as it is bringing messages from the surrounding environment towards mind. In the sensory system’s evolution, the sense of touch, whose organ is the skin, comes first and has fundamental importance, introducing our organism to the sensuous *knowledge*¹²⁴ of the world. The world becomes part of our *experience*¹²⁵ only when the other’s body (human or not human) enters in contact with our skin, and warmth can flow from an organism to the other. (Berardi, 2014 : 41)

¹²⁰ Associating and juxtaposing are some of the main tools used for curatorial practice, which suggests its closeness to the production of knowledge. See PART I, Chapter 1, point 1.2 The Role of the Curator of this thesis.

¹²¹ “Knowledge”, Dictionary, Merriam Webster, merriam-webster.com, retrieved from: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/knowledge>, last accessed in March 2019.

¹²² In addition to this, there is also a clear remittance to cognition, as in the definition “the circumstance or condition of apprehending truth or fact through reasoning”. While the reference to cognition can be seen as being related to the notion of academic/theoretical knowledge only, the fact that ‘experience’ and ‘association’ are also taken into account as sources for the acquisition of knowledge, poses an interesting question: is cognition necessarily thought of as something to strictly do on own’s own? If engaged in vivid conversations, for instance, could it not be advocated as a ‘thinking together’? This is an interesting question that would need further analysis.

¹²³ “Knowledge”, Dictionary, Merriam Webster, merriam-webster.com, retrieved from: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/knowledge>, last accessed in March 2019.

¹²⁴ My own italics.

¹²⁵ My own italics.

Starting from these reflections this last chapter defends the importance of a social component for the production of knowledge through curatorial practice. The term that will be used to talk about this social element, will be conviviality. Standing as a counter proposition to the usually more individualistic notions of knowledge acquisition through theory and embedded into academia, makes it important to look closely into the way VAOs put this ‘convivial knowledge production’ into practice.¹²⁶

It seems important to recall that there are many similar yet different discussions evolving around the question of how (different) people live together in contemporary societies. Since globalisation started to be an issue and the focus on the local gained relevance as a counter position, nowadays there are ever more complex entanglements that make it difficult to talk about these two spheres as standing in dialogical opposition. This is reflected for instance, in the description of interculturalism as being defined by its focus on openness, dialogue and interaction (James, 2008: 2). Based on this realisation, Keval argues that “as critics of multiculturalism allege that it has stunted interactive diversity, interculturalism is framed as a way to reinstate the fluidity of culture” (Keval, 2014: 16). He continues to state that “Indeed, a prominent feature of the move-on from the so-called corpse of multiculturalism towards interculturalism is the absorption of sociological and psychological ideas” (ibidem).

As a way of coming to terms with these, and many other prominent discourses around these and similar questions, the concept chosen for the framework of this thesis is conviviality.¹²⁷ Paul Gilroy, who has most recently coined

¹²⁶ For a deeper insight into the relationship of conviviality and cosmopolitanism, please see: Nowicka, Magdalena and Heil, Tilmann (2016), *On the Analytical and Normative Dimensions of Conviviality and Cosmopolitanism*, researchgate.net, retrieved from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/293803391_On_the_analytical_and_normative_dimensions_of_conviviality_and_cosmopolitanism, last accessed in March 2019.

¹²⁷ This concept is more recently gaining renewed attention and analysis through a European Cooperation Project co-founded by the Creative Europe Programme of the European Union called *4C's – From Conflict to Conviviality through Creativity and Culture*. This project, initiated by researcher and curator Luísa Santos at the Catholic University of Lisbon, “seeks to understand how training and education in art and culture can constitute powerful resources to address the issue of conflict as well as to envision creative ways in which to deal with conflictual phenomena, while contributing to audience development through active participation and co-production. The project aims at advancing the conceptual framework of intercultural dialogue and enhancing the role of public arts and cultural institutions in fostering togetherness through cultural diversity and intercultural encounters” (*4C's – From Conflict to Conviviality through Creativity and Culture*, “Project”).* “Project”, *4C's – From Conflict to Conviviality through Creativity and Culture*, 4cs-conflict-convivial-

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the discourse around conviviality, defines it as “the processes of cohabitation and interaction that have made multi-culture an ordinary feature of social life in Britain’s urban areas and in postcolonial cities elsewhere” (Gilroy, 2004: xi). He continues to express his hope that

an interest in the workings of conviviality will take off from the point where ‘multiculturalism’ broke down. It does not describe the absence of racism or the triumph of tolerance. Instead, it suggests a different setting for their empty, interpersonal rituals, which [...] have started to mean different things in the absence of any strong belief in absolute or integral races. (Gilroy, 2004: xi)

In this sense, “the radical openness that brings conviviality alive makes a nonsense of closed, fixed, and reified identity and turns attention toward the always-unpredictable mechanisms of identification” (Gilroy, 2004: xi). Closely intertwined with post-colonial discourse, the openness that characterises conviviality is in tune with the notion of conversation, dialogue and negotiation that VAOs cultivate through their programmes. Furthermore, the “always-unpredictable mechanisms of identification” seem to draw a parallel to the involvement of VAOs with representation and different kinds of knowledge(s), as analysed in the previous chapter.

5.1 Shared Space | Shared Time – The Importance of (the) Experience

In their questioning about post-representational curating, with which the present inquiry shares some interests, Nora Sternfeld and Luisa Ziaja ask: “**What is the time of the curatorial?**”, and they continue to develop: “If we think the post-representational as processualization time plays an important role. The classical curatorial discourse is about creating space – but how can we think curating as a creation of critical time?” (Sternfeld and Ziaja, 2012: 24). Through this statement they address precisely what is at stake in this chapter, namely the engagement not only with (curated) space but also with the factor time when it comes to curatorial practice.

ty.eu, retrieved from: <https://www.4cs-conflict-conviviality.eu/project>, last accessed in March 2019.

Already back in 2004 the writer and curator Ole Bouman had been invited to reflect on the future of Europe and had come to a similar conclusion by recognising the importance of time as a social bonding tool. He states that “the sharing of time is at the heart of social unity and solidarity” (Bouman, 2004: 155) and points out the potential that lies within the cultural sphere when it comes to social matters:

Culture could be the intensification of such moments, could ensure that this time is experienced by all and that a language is found in which to express those shared moments. Art specific time. This art requires new makers, new forms, new organisations and a new public. Culture must begin again from scratch. For a culture that serves the experience of time rather than of place must itself be time-bound. A moment. A momentum. It notes the course of events and makes use of this. It concentrates not on form but on process. It develops activities that we no longer recognize by the place where they occur, but by the artistic effect they produce. In short, activities characterized not by borders but by border-crossing. Their focus is not on eternity but on history. This art is in itself time, a creative moment in the ever so costly public time. (Bouman, 2004: 161)

It is in this sense that he speaks of culture as attitude and not as sector (Bouman, 2004: 162).

Adding to these thoughts, there are some identifiable parallels to the educational turn and its focus on process, as it is embraced as a key feature of the working philosophy of all of the VAOs analysed and the Triangle Network at large. Another important aspect seems to be the focus on the experience as a crucial component of culture and the preoccupation for social unity or as it is called in this chapter: conviviality. It is in this sense that when talking about conviviality there is a close connection to the notion of community, as it can be found in the organisations.

32° East for instance, that is an organisation that is very active on social media, such as Facebook, has turned ‘32Family’ into one of their most referential hashtags. This alludes to the strong connection that the organisation cultivates and encourages among its members. Clearly, the focus on relationships and the importance that is given to the being-together in a space is one of their highest priorities. Bahana explains why their community is their “biggest

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resource” and how serendipity can be something to take into account when programming activities:

So much is relationships. I cannot tell what you are like via e-mail. I can be polite, but it is not that we know that we get along or want to keep in touch. And I think when you are dealing with artists as well, so much is in the interpersonal. And the kinds of conversations that can come up and that you would not even anticipate and that happen because you are in the same space. Or maybe the two of you know each other and then you bump into someone else that one other person knows, and then she knows this other person and then everything seems so random but still makes you see things completely differently. For the artists in residence as well, having people popping into their studio, that can just be so much more impactful than even we can sometimes. And that is why we always say, that to us our community is our biggest resource and there are so many things we do not know but so many people in our community do know those things and that takes a lot of physical interaction. [...] you know, we come from an oral tradition, an oral culture, so conversation and being with people is really important. (Bahana, 2019: Annex C)



Figure 22. Ugandan Arts Trust (2018), ‘Team and Members from 32° East’, Facebook, December 11, 2018, facebook.com

By opening up and placing the source of expertise in the community and the audience, (alternate) knowledge(s) are welcomed in the space instead of

the institution claiming to be the only entitled, knowledgeable part involved in the process of exploration/knowledge production. In this sense, knowledge is seen as sometimes coming from unexpected, and thus, unplannable sources, which makes it difficult to pre-define, structure or commodify. Bahana's focus on relationships counters the often overemphasised connecting power of digital technologies, stating that they have not displaced the importance of the sharing of time and space for conversations and meetings.

Based on this, VAOs share a further preoccupation that Sternfeld and Ziaja pose in relation to post-representational curating:

Who is acting? – One characteristic of the post-representational is the redistribution of agency. Referring to Gabriele Brandstetter's post-dramatic thoughts on the 'grey zones' of the participation of the viewer post-representational curating would imply the organisation of such grey zones that make action possible – where something can happen. But who is acting? Actions could be triggered by objects and artworks in interplay with a variety of different agents such as activists, artists, theorists and curators. (Sternfeld and Ziaja, 2012: 24)

While having a focus on diversifying their programmes, such as seen through the example of the Labs-series' in Kampala, it could be argued that VAOs even tend to go a step further, by placing part of their attention on the community at large as a resource, openly taking a stand to let knowledge happen outside of their plannable (and more institutionalised) programme.

Moreover, what 32° East is doing is providing not only a space, but most importantly a space in which time for exploration is available and nurtured. Defending process rather than product¹²⁸, their focus is on time itself and what can happen when one dwells into it fully, suggesting that environments that secure this time-sense are prone to let the unplannable unfold through fleeting or unexpected encounters, for example. Here lies the possibility for collaboration and exploration, in ways that might challenge what is usually perceived as knowledge. Bahana explains that in their Labs-Programme for instance, "you get to collaborate and explore with people. Fail and play and try things in different contexts, but you are always questioning, and being pushed" (Bahana, 2019: Annex C). This exploration, freed from expectations in the sense of

¹²⁸ See Chapter 3 for more information regarding process-vs. product-orientation in VAOs.

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having to deliver a product, is also one way in which the organisation actively engages with the production of knowledge,

Because it is not only about encouraging artists to make work and experiment and have the space to be in residence, but also to learn things in new ways and from people who are not even artists to learn about contemporary art. This can be through the artists they meet here, or the library, through workshops. (Bahana, 2019: Annex C)

Therefore, there are several ways in which conviviality – this being together in a space that encourages certain communicative and social values through the focus on the community – may lead to knowledge production.¹²⁹ One is through the residencies, in which artists get to know other artists and professionals and expand their perspectives through this exchange. Then there is the community and the open studios, in which people are invited to visit the working place of artists and engage in conversations with them, what opens the possibility of knowledge production to a (wider) audience.



Figure 23. HANGAR (2019), 'Open Studio at HANGAR with artist Daniel Moraes', Facebook, January 12, 2019, facebook.com

¹²⁹ It seems important to highlight the parallels to the process of conjunctive concatenation, as introduced by Berardi. When he speaks about this, he means that “no original design is to be restored: conjunction is a creative act because the conjoining act is able to create an infinite number of constellations without following the lines of a pre-conceived pattern, or an embedded programme. At the beginning of the act of conjunction there is no design to fulfill, there is not a model at the origin of the process of emergence of the form, and beauty does not correspond to any hidden harmony embedded in the universal spirit or in the mind of god. Nor is there any code to comply with. Conjunctive concatenation is source of singularity, it is event, not structure, and it is unrepeatable because it happens in a unique point in the net of space and time” (Berardi, 2014:12).

In addition to this and as Bahana recalls, it seems important to point out that

There is usually an ecosystem surrounding an artist. An artist does not operate in a vacuum in order for them to thrive in their career – whatever thriving looks like. I think there is an artist, there are curators, writers, people who document the work, there is thesis', there are all these things. (Bahana, 2019: Annex C)

This 'ecosystem' needs a space to flourish, which is what 32° East is providing in Kampala. Besides this, the notion of 'ecosystem' is also used to describe the Triangle Network, showing how this characteristic is very close to the nature of the artist's working conditions. On the website of the Triangle Network, it is described as follows:

Rather than being a homogeneous structure, Triangle represents an 'ecosystem' where partners identify with the Network's focus on establishing diverse spaces and conditions for emerging artists and other arts professionals to learn from each other through dialogue and process-led activities. (Triangle Network, "About the Triangle Network")¹³⁰

When talking about the importance of space, a reference to architecture, the importance the space as such and the way it is designed have (see Chapter 3), seems inevitable. Bearing in mind that "an organisation whose main aim is to stimulate creativity through experience needs to develop a context in which this process can be understood and evaluated" (Loder, 2007: 18), suggests the importance of the space to create precisely these conditions. It is in this sense that again, architecture can be considered a key element when it comes to designing a platform for conviviality.

For instance, 32° East – looking forward to the construction of their new space – held sessions with the artists to ask what they needed. Bahana makes clear that one of the driving forces for the conception of this new project, was

¹³⁰ "About the Triangle Network", About, Triangle Network, [trianglenetwork.org](https://www.trianglenetwork.org), retrieved from: <https://www.trianglenetwork.org/triangle-network/about/>, last accessed in March 2019.

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the focus on the community and the way the space would make encounters and communication possible. The focus is thus on

openness, community, that the space and how it is designed should allow both for people to have their small meetings on the side but also a communal field. And then with the new space having studios that are more short terms and studios that artists can lease out for one or two years and how those spaces can also interact with each other and allow also for interaction and maybe a mentorship. (Bahana, 2019: Annex C)

Moreover, it is unavoidable to connect the concern around shared time and conviviality with the preoccupation for mobility which characterises the Triangle Network. Considering that, as Bahana says, “Being part of a larger international network there are really so many different opportunities to hear from and work with different practitioners, who have alternative methodologies and different contexts and enough exciting different insight that can invigorate and stimulate artists” (Bahana, 2019: Annex C). The Network thus opens up the possibility for the (international) exchange and sharing of knowledge across borders, focusing on the mobility of artists and arts professionals, again recognising the importance of sharing time in the same space through residencies or workshops that provide a convivial structure to the production and sharing of knowledge. In this sense, as explained by Antonioli, moving people through the programmes means moving knowledge and creating opportunities for exchange of knowledge:

Mobility of ideas, people, knowledge. People are the carriers – moving someone means moving ideas and knowledge and for this, it is important to be actively engaged in the conversation, to both listen and contribute. Each partner or participant in the conversation should realise that in order to learn something they need to give something of their own – mutuality is key. (Antonioli, 2018: Annex A)

Through the meeting of different practitioners in specific contexts that provide a structure for their conviviality, dialogue, conversation and shared experience the necessary platform for the production of knowledge is built. Antonioli recalls the importance of certain values, such as mutuality, for the functioning

of this process, which is what VAOs try to cultivate through their programmes, in which the audience is widely engaged.¹³¹

5.2 Coming Together at the Table: Food + Drinks = Knowledge?

As the title suggests, this sub-chapter will evaluate a very specific kind of conviviality that VAOs have made their own: the coming together through the sharing of food and drinks. At first, this might sound less surprising or revealing, but along the lines it will show how this has turned into a common practice in these organisations and that it serves specific purposes concerning the production of knowledge.

The relation food-art has seen several projects that have challenged the apparent separation existing between them. A very well-known venture for example, is Gordon Matta-Clark's restaurant *Food* which he opened in New York City in the Fall of 1971 alongside Caroline Goodden and others that would later form the collaborative group *Anarchitecture*.

This group, despite organising a few joint exhibitions, actually originated with the sole intention of meeting to exchange ideas and to debate. The notion of 'anti or non-architecture' was based on the use of space as a conceptual element, not only from an architectural dimension, but also in relation to social space. (Museo Reina Sofía, "Food")¹³²

This project exposes how intertwined food, architecture and the conception of (social) space and the exchanging of ideas and debating are. *Food* worked "as an artist's cooperative in which someone different would cook each day, yet it was not only a business as performances and meetings were also held there" (ibidem). Already with this project, the restaurant's potential as convivial tool in terms of meeting point for artists was explored.

¹³¹ For more on this, please see Chapter 3 on Mediation.

¹³² Hinojosa, Lola (n.d.), "Food", Collection, Artwork, Museo Reina Sofía, museoreinasofia.es, retrieved from: <https://www.museoreinasofia.es/en/collection/artwork/food>, last accessed in March 2019.

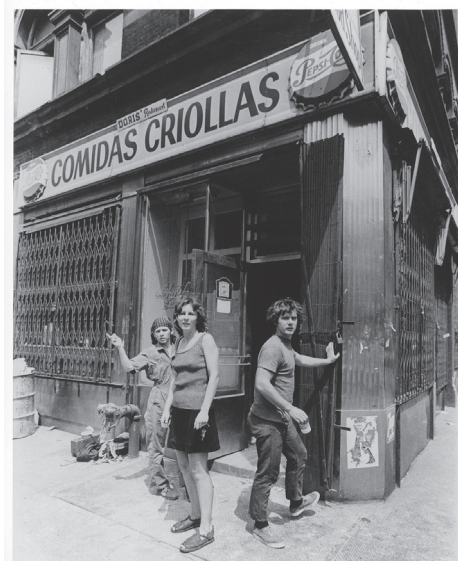


Figure 24. Landry, Richard (1971), 'Tina Girouard, Carol Gooden and Gordon Matta-Clark in front of the space that would turn into their restaurant FOOD, New York, 1971'. Courtesy of the artist.

Later on, performances around food, its cooking and especially its sharing, such as Rirkrit Tiravanija's, have followed this tendency and explored social relations, becoming the inspiration for the publication of Bourriaud's *Relational Aesthetics* in 2002, in which artistic practices are shown to function as social experiments, games that develop in time ("periods") and space ("contexts") (Bourriaud, 2002: 11). This conceptualisation adds another layer of meaning to this 'new' kind of art, that challenges the object by "taking as its theoretical horizon the realm of human interactions and its social context" (Bourriaud, 2002: 14). It is based on these developments that Bourriaud speaks about the 'community effect' in contemporary art (Bourriaud, 2002: 61). He explains that "reintroducing the idea of plurality, for contemporary culture hailing from modernity, means inventing ways of being together, forms of interaction that go beyond the inevitability of the families, ghettos of technological user-friendliness, and collective institutions on offer" (Bourriaud, 2002: 60).

As for the case studies analysed for the present research, it is not so much a question about artistic practices that engage with food and its convivial element or that subscribe to relational aesthetics, but more about the curatorial decisions behind the organisation's programmes. Even though they might be

influenced by the artists mentioned above, theirs is not an artistic practice but an active engagement with the creation of a specific space and time that fosters the production of knowledge.

Right away in the first sentence of the interview held with Leitão, he came up with a very symbolical and enlightening metaphor to explain the organisation's activity: "to bring artists, curators and researchers together at the same table"¹³³ (Leitão, 2018: Annex B). This metaphor does not only work as an informative tool to communicate the purpose of HANGAR, but it also pinpoints quite literally one of the main, and eventually the most natural means that VAOs have integrated into their programmes to connect people (that would otherwise not do so): food and drinks. The 'table'¹³⁴ serves thus not only the purpose of a meeting point but transforms into a social bridge for artists, arts professionals and, depending on the kind of event, audiences. It is in this sense, that VAOs explore the convivial potential of food and drinks in order to create the informal and welcoming atmosphere that stimulates people to meet and to engage in conversations and exchange. It is following this argument and based not only on the previous sub-chapter on shared time, shared space and the experience, but also on Chapter 3, in which the importance of dialogue and conversation as sources for knowledge were addressed, that the practice of VAOs in relation to food and drinks can be understood in terms of knowledge production.

The following paragraphs will give some examples on how all of the case studies have integrated these practices into their programmes.

To start with HANGAR: their decision to rent part of their space to a restaurant was based on their experience with the Triangle Workshops and how important it was for the setting to have a cook on board. As Leitão explains, this was on the one hand due to the fact that artists are very busy throughout the whole programme of the workshops, which makes it difficult for them to think

¹³³ Translation by the author from the original in Portuguese: "juntar artistas, curadores e investigadores na mesma mesa".

¹³⁴ It is important to mention that even though the table and the sharing of food at the table might have been the first inspirations to trigger certain types of conviviality, it is not necessarily linked to the actual existence of a table, at which the food is served, and people sit down. While this might be the case during Triangle Workshops, as explained by Leitão, there are other, less formal settings, for instance at the Open Studios, in which snacks and drinks foster conviviality and dialogue without prescribing the classic 'dinner table setting'.

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about their own food. On the other hand, they recognised that artists (and most certainly this is something that can be said about people in general) group up according to their affinities. Whereas this is something that happens naturally, the table is a setting that brings all of the participants together to share their meal. In the words of Leitão:

We had not thought of having a bar or a restaurant, we did the restaurant to support the Triangle Network, because it is so intensive that we must hire a chef that week and a half to assure that the artists do not have to think about food. In addition to this, when you have a group of artists, you always have several groups, because people get together based on their affinities. But later at the table, they all gather. We noticed how important this idea of eating together, of sharing the table, was. Later on, we ended up opening [the restaurant] full-time, which creates a kind of community experience here at HANGAR.¹³⁵ (Leitão, 2018: Annex B)¹³⁶

¹³⁵ Translation by the author from the original in Portuguese: “Nós não tínhamos ideia de ter um bar ou um restaurante, fizemos o restaurante para dar apoio ao *workshop Triangle*, porque é tão intensivo que temos de contratar um chef nessa semana e meia para que os artistas não tenham de pensar em comida. Além disso, quando tens um grupo de artistas, tens sempre vários grupos, porque as pessoas se juntam por afinidades. Mas depois à mesa, todos convergem. E nós percebemos o quão importante era a ideia de comer juntos, de partilhar à mesa. Depois acabamos por abrir a tempo inteiro, o que cria um tipo de experiência de comunidade aqui no HANGAR”.

¹³⁶ In addition to this, and conscious about the gentrifying power that art spaces carry, he sees the restaurant, among other things, as a way to give something back to the community: “we wanted to give something back to the community. This is why all of the events are for free, the talks, the exhibitions; the prices at the bar are affordable, too”* (Leitão, 2018: Annex B).

* Translation by the author from the original in Portuguese: “queríamos devolver alguma coisa à comunidade. Por isso é que todos os eventos são gratuitos, as conversas, as exposições; e os preços do bar são baratos também”.



Figure 25. A Li (2017), Pequeno Almoço? Breakfast?, Facebook, June 9, 2017, facebook.com

To think about the table and the sharing of food in this sense, as a possibility to overcome the usual groups that form between people and to create a certain openness that might not come at first hand, suggests that these elements facilitate meeting the ‘Other’ and can thus be interpreted as mediating tools.

In the case of 32° East their new space will not only have a café, that in the same way as in the case of HANGAR will be rented out, but part of their plans to become more self-sustainable is to finance a part of the project through the offering of accommodation at the organisation. Besides being a financial advantage, this decision adds another layer of potential conviviality and exchange to the already existent exchange among the community members, inviting people from the outside not only to pass by and drop-in for events, but also to spend more *time* at the space.

When it comes to Gasworks, they often organise breakfasts, as is the case with one planned for the 13th of March 2019. It is announced on their website with the following text: “Gasworks is pleased to invite local residents, community groups and businesses to a free breakfast event on March 13. Join us for coffee, tea and pastries, say hello to our team, and meet other locals! Drop in any time between 8.30 – 10.30” (Gasworks, “Gasworks Breakfast”).¹³⁷ Besides

¹³⁷ “Gasworks Breakfast”, Events, Gasworks, gasworks.org.uk, retrieved from: https://www.gasworks.org.uk/events/gasworks-breakfast-2019-03-13/?utm_source=Gasworks+Newsletter&utm_campaign=cfc0d76a62-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_Marchenews2019&utm_

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making the invitation for the breakfast clear, this is a text that highlights (1) the informal character of the invitation, and (2) the organisation's interest in inviting several audiences, such as residents, community groups and businesspeople. Moreover, the fact that they encourage people to pass by to meet other 'locals' demonstrates the bridging and connecting aim that this event has in terms of bringing people from different backgrounds together in a space dedicated to the visual arts. The organisation positions itself as a meeting point and community-fostering centre in the neighbourhood.

Surely, it is nothing new that institutions embrace social and community-oriented practices through the implementation of cafés and restaurants. The museum café implemented at Tensta Konsthall by its director Maria Lind, for instance, has proven to be a good example of how a restaurant can mediate between the institution and the community. Auel Coffee, how this Café is called, is located in the entrance hall and one of its trademarks is that it is a local, family-owned business, which makes it easier for the community to engage with it.



Figure 26. Tensta Konsthall (n.d.), 'Auel Café', google.com

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Last but not least, it seems fundamental to draw attention to the developing awareness and discourse in the field of curating around topics such as space and time and their implications in our communication behaviour. In the educational turn for instance the process is one of the main focuses, drawing

medium=email&utm_term=0_1536a223fe-cfc0d76a62-190122673, last accessed in March 2019.

on a time-bound culture by highlighting the importance of the ‘event’. This is also in tune with the kind of time-based culture Bouman imagined for Europe and the idea of conjunction defended by Berardi in his book *And. Phenomenology of the End. Cognition and Sensibility in the Transition from Conjunctive to Connective Mode of Social Communication* (2014), that has been mentioned at several points throughout this inquiry.¹³⁸ In addition to this and in relation to what has been called Slow Curating, a form of curating that makes a temporal instruction its main characteristic, Megan Johnston says that the emphasis is “about activating: the process, the space between art and audience, and the epistemological nuances found in knowing and not-knowing. The main aim of Slow Curating is to open up space for dialogue and discourse” (Johnston, 2014). By bringing this example to the fore, the aim is not so much to get a detailed understanding about what Slow Curating is about as a practice, but to mention that there are several contemporary curatorial practices that are engaging and even conceptualising practices around the awareness of time and the implications it has on our communication by opening up the space for dialogue and conviviality.

¹³⁸ For a detailed explanation of conjunction and connectivity, see: Berardi, Franco ‘Bifo’ (2014), *And. Phenomenology of the End. Cognition and Sensibility in the Transition from Conjunctive to Connective Mode of Social Communication*, Helsinki: Aalto ARTS Books.

CONCLUSION

Knowledge Production in VAOs – How to Make it Happen?

Looking back to PART I 'Visual Arts Organisations Within the Contemporary Arts Landscape', the first thing done was to outline a theoretical framework to understand the position VAOs take within the contemporary arts ecosystem nowadays. The drawing of this theoretical framework started from Chapter 1 'Knowledge Production: From Curatorial Discourse to Institutional Aim', in which, first, popular discourses from the last thirty years related to curatorial practice that have influenced and shaped the contemporary arts scene were introduced. The focus was on a critical engagement with three highly relevant discursive formations from this time: artistic research, the role of the curator and new institutionalism. Secondly, and in order to define the position that VAOs take within the contemporary arts, in Chapter 2 'Visual Arts Organisations: Three Case Studies from the Triangle Network' the Triangle Network was introduced not only as the binding element between the case studies but also as the frame for a discussion about VAOs in more general terms. Understanding the Triangle Network meant delving into the rhizome theory proposed by Deleuze and Guattari, since the director of the network, Alessio Antonioli, understands it as the model that inspires Triangle's working philosophy (Antonioli, 2018: Annex A). Moreover, the three organisations chosen as case studies to be analysed in detail, were individually introduced: Gasworks in London, HANGAR in Lisbon and 32° East in Kampala.

Directly tackling the theme posited in the title of this thesis, namely 'Knowledge Production in Visual Arts Organisations', PART II 'The Three Vertices of Knowledge in Visual Arts Organisations: Mediation, Representation and Conviviality', presented the three means through which VAOs are believed to actively engage with the production of knowledge. Divided into three separate

chapters, PART II addressed highly relevant issues related to culture in the broadest sense and analysed VAOs' engagement with these. Chapter 3 'From Education to Mediation: Breaking Down Barriers', for instance, explored the apparent transformation that is taking place in education and pedagogy with a special interest for (but not limited to) cultural institutions. For the understanding of these changes, it drew on the educational turn in curating, its focus on process rather than products in terms of artistic practices (one of the working guidelines adopted by VAOs) and the importance of dialogue, conversation and mobility for the exchange of information and the sharing of knowledge. Furthermore, mediation was investigated through the analysis of several understandings, from the side of (1) a big cultural event such as Manifesta, (2) a widely recognised curator who is well-known for her engagement with mediation history and implementation, Maria Lind, (3) a second curator, Sofía Hernández Chong Cuy, from Mexico, whose practice is influenced by the sensitivity for mediation and context-specific curating and last but not least, (4) the artistic engagement with mediation strategies coming from a collective called *Tráfico Libre de Conocimientos* from Mexico too. The last sub-chapter gave a brief insight into architecture's mediating potential and encouraged the further inquiry into less-discussed aspects of it, concluding that it can be an important tool for VAOs to reach audiences who might not feel addressed by (most of the times bigger and) more formal institutions and thus an opportunity to include people into the conversation that might otherwise stay out.

While VAOs' engagement with education and mediation is sometimes difficult to define as one thing or the other, their practice and programmes reflect a shared interest and preoccupation when it comes to making art and knowledge accessible to (new and) varied audiences. This is achieved through the hosting of open studios (which all organisations do) and through differentiated and context-specific activities such as creating access to a library and the internet, the KLA ART Festival and the Lab-series' at 32° East, talks, conferences and workshops organised by the participatory department or in cooperation with research centre at HANGAR and breakfasts, workshops and guided tours to exhibitions at Gasworks.

Chapter 4 'Representation – Curating 'Other' Knowledge(s)', continued the inquiry into the means through which VAOs engage with the production of knowledge by pinpointing some of the common topics in their programmes and the focus on international (and personal) collaborations to bring new

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perspectives and insights into a certain locality. The information provided in the interviews and the evaluation of the practices and topics that artists who have participated in residencies at these institutions address, such as feminism, colonialism, gender and age, were the main sources for such deductions. In more general terms, a common concern around equality, heterogeneity and the addressing of context-specific knowledge(s) (and knowledge gaps) and the exploration of the artistic process rather than focusing on commercial achievements, could be defined as driving forces for decision-making in these organisations.

Finally, Chapter 5 ‘Conviviality – What Being Together Means for the Production of Knowledge’, dived into the notion of “shared time” (Bouman, 2014) and how important the sharing of time and space is for the ‘experience’, that plays a key role in new conceptions of the curator’s (and the institution’s) task as producer of knowledge. Some of the contemporary reinterpretations of curating towards an understanding of ‘the curatorial’ (Rogoff and Martinon, 2013), post-representational curating (Sternfeld and Ziaja, 2012) and the formulation of a so-called Slow Curating (Johnston, 2014) are all approaches that reflect upon the importance of space and time for curatorial practice in terms of a platform for social happenings around (visual) arts. Further exploring this ‘being together’ and how to curate it, the significance of the integration of food and drinks as essential parts of VAOs’ programmes was addressed, affirming the mediating character they can have in advancing conversations and exchange. The restaurant at HANGAR, the planned café at 32° East’s new space and the breakfasts hosted at Gasworks served as examples for this.

Summing up, VAOs can be said to be spaces that promote the visual arts and (emerging) artists through the implementation of a community-culture based on an understanding of the meeting of the ‘other’ (be it artist, audience, arts professional – national or international) as a potential source for knowledge and the sharing of information. While acknowledging and engaging with digital technologies to advance their purposes, their focus is clearly on the physical, space-and time-bound, interpersonal encounter, holding on to the importance of this for the creation of meaningful experiences, encounters, conversations and thus, in the best of cases, knowledge.

Having undertaken this investigation in three very singular contexts and being now to a certain extent aware of the differences and similarities that characterise them, it seems as if besides their core interest for visual arts and artists,

they share an interest for addressing contemporary social and political issues that operate on a global scale. While the consequences of these developments might differ in the way they manifest themselves in each context, they equally motivate the programmes of these organisations.

For example, and despite of its fast development, we have not yet understood how digitalisation is affecting us on such elementary levels as individual and societal relations through an apparent decrease in (inter)personal communication. Moreover, the augmented mobility, that is evident in (but not only) big migratory waves in the last decades, has made the engagement with the 'other' regain an important role in contemporary discussions around the co-existence of cultures and knowledge(s), especially in big urban areas. Acknowledging and addressing this seems ever more necessary in the face of the recent rise of radical nationalist politics in many parts of the world.

Based on these observations, it can be concluded that these small, often still overlooked organisations must be understood as socially and politically pertinent community-oriented art spaces that engage with knowledge production through creative institutional practices. And in doing so, they advance the much-needed search for a language that allows us to be together and plural.

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ANNEXES

ANNEX A

Interview Alessio Antonioli, Gasworks Alessio Antonioli

Director of Gasworks and the Triangle Network, London, UK

General interview guide approach

9 October 2018

12:00 – 13:00

Gasworks, London

Transcript

My research is about knowledge production in visual arts organisations. The case studies being three VAOs from the Triangle Network: Gasworks, HANGAR and 32° East. I want to look at how the organisations involved produce knowledge, operating on a local level, but being open for the 'other'. Can you talk a little bit about the Network and the relation it has to the individual organisations?

The Triangle Network is heterogeneous. Each organisation is embedded in a different context and has its own identity, addressing local needs of artists and the art scene. The Network functions as a bridge to the wider and international field, giving the opportunity to learn from peers in other contexts. It promotes international dialogues and the production and sharing of knowledge, the exchanging of information, ideas and experience.

The network is mostly about mobility (of artists, curators, ...), the organisation of international residencies, training for people who run these spaces and so on.

Mobility of ideas, people, knowledge. People are the carriers – moving someone means moving ideas and knowledge and for this, it is important to be actively engaged in the conversation, to both listen and contribute. Each partner or participant in the conversation should realise that in order to learn something they need to give something of their own – mutuality is key.

Considering the constantly developing digitalisation, what is the importance of the physical space that the organisations hold?

Digital and analogue is a coexistence that works well in the network. The digital is an additional option, not a replacement. Also, not everybody operates in the same way (digital distribution and access are unequal – for example, certain platforms and social networks do not work in China, Cuba...).

Each organisation could be said to have at least two different roles: one being the organisation as independent space and the other one as a part of the Triangle Network. How does this relationship function and influence the programme and the way in which the work is being developed?

As mentioned, each organisation operates in its context and addresses the local needs. HANGAR in Lisbon and Gasworks in London are two examples of how similar yet different each partner in the network is. While Lisbon is providing a catalyst in the city for more emerging, experimental and international practices, it is important to recognise how many of its decisions and plans take into consideration the precarious situation of non-profit in a country where public funding is scarce and often volatile. Gasworks is a lot 'older' and is more institutionalised because of regular and diverse funding options. In Kampala it is again very different as not only is it more recent and has even less access to funding, but it is also the only space in the city of its kind and therefore its role and responsibility to the artistic community are much greater.

The network has a very organic nature and partnerships are like friendships that evolve and change. While I do not believe that money (funding) is everything, it is often what turns some of the ideas, aspirations and visions possible. Its inconstant flow means that sometimes partners pause their activities, some relationships break for a while, but the network does not end as a result of it. Its organic nature and approach is what can easily create a flurry of projects when support is available and can slow down when money is not available. Saying that it is incredible how much can be done through good will, commitment and dedication.... I worry about glorifying this aspect of things because it lends itself to exploitation (art often relies for too long on free labour for instance). Saying that, without vision and commitment there would be no network.

In the last few years, the lack of international and local funding means that several of our partners have had to consider closing down. While this can be very sad, in some cases stopping something has been very regenerative,

allowing new things to start and changes to take effect. I do not see the point in doing something that is not relevant to the context nor able to keep up with the changes and the needs of the constituency.

I have thought about the organisations as starting points for ‘ripple effects’, where a wider impact (e.g., knowledge production) starts at one specific place of origin.

Yes, a ripple effect, but the network works most of all as a rhizome. There are connections and collaborations that develop and spread without having to constantly relate back to their source. I think this is extremely exciting and challenges more formal (and often colonial) centralised structures.

How do you see the work of the network in relation to knowledge production amid the knowledge economy?

We are all interconnected and very dependent from each other, from funders, the art scene, etc. We operate in a neo-liberal and capitalist context and often transform out of need or pressure or both! For instance, Gasworks started as an alternative, artist-run space and is now more institutionalised and run by staff with diverse roles and expertise. Often this happens to artists who start by showing in places like Gasworks and eventually become ‘integrated’ into more mainstream and canonising museums and galleries (Tate, etc.).

How would you define a visual arts organisation and what are the things the organisations in the network have in common? On the other hand, what differentiates them?

Partners share a mission or philosophy, which they put into practice in different ways, according to their resources and the context in which they operate. What they have in common is an interest in dialogue, process and development as a learning tool rather than a commercial one. We have a focus on visual art and artists, and we aim to continuously change with every new generation of artists and their ideas.

We talk about Brexit and other recent fascist and right-wing movements. Brazil, Italy...

I am very worried about the way people seem to have become so instrumentalised by populist rhetoric. You see, it is very easy to have a conversation with you, because we already share a common ground of interests and values. But should we not try to find a way to open up this conversation with those people we disagree with? How can a non-profit organisation in the UK, for instance, become a space for debate? Are we all too complacent, and scared at the same time, to find a way of making this happen?

I see art as alternative platform for communication but how we use this platform is a big question that I am both compelled and scared to answer. Saying that, I am seeing the activities of Triangle partners and others as positive attempts to create spaces for dialogue and exchange, as I believe that they are the places where isolation and fear can be tackled.

Who does the organisation want to reach? Is there a special focus on certain audiences?

I see the potential of art as social agent, but it will not change the world which should be much more of a 'group effort'. The beauty of London, for instance is that it offers so many entry points to art and artists. At Gasworks, for instance, we try to accompany our exhibitions with events, activities, talks etc. so that we reach more people. How can we make our programme accessible? How can you reach more people without losing yourself, your purpose or the rigor and investigation that is part of the artwork or artist's inquiry?

In relation to the organisation of the residencies at Gasworks. Could you explain a little bit how they work?

All residencies at Gasworks are fully funded as we aim to reach artists who would not otherwise be able to spend three months in London. The selection is made based upon the decision of two people from Gasworks, an expert of the context in which the artist comes from (sometimes it is a Triangle partner, other times it is a curator, artist, etc.) and in some cases a representative of the funders is also in the panel. The aim is to identify an artist for whom being at Gasworks and in London can make a difference in their career, not particularly in terms of art-scene exposure but more in terms of research and development of their practice and/or inquiry. Our programmes also aim to prioritise artists who have not had many previous opportunities to research and show their work, we hope that we can provide them with a step change of sort.

Could you say a little bit more about the relation of the organisations with representation?

It is about creating spaces for visibility, where voices can be valued and heard without needing to be 'boxed up' or branded. I would like to think that it is difficult to identify a typical 'Gasworks or Triangle artist' as it would be uncomfortable for me to know that 'we have a type'. I would like our organisations and network to be a platform for hosting ideas and projects rather than designing a profile for artists. I would also like to think that it is their ideas and practices that shape us rather than the other way around. Similarly, I hope that we can be a space where the widest diversity of audiences can come to discover something new. I would like to know that they walk away having had a productive experience, whether they liked what they saw or not.

ANNEX B

Interview Bruno Leitão, HANGAR

Bruno Leitão, Curatorial Director of HANGAR, Lisbon, Portugal

General interview guide approach

23 November 2018

16:00 – 17:00

Rua Damasceno Monteiro, Graça, Lisbon

Transcript

Como podemos ler no site do HANGAR, uma das propostas que a organização tem é a produção de conhecimento. Como é que se pode definir este tipo de conhecimento e como é que isto acontece?

O HANGAR é único – único é uma palavra demasiado absoluta –, mas é especial, porque a nossa tentativa desde o início foi juntar artistas, curadores e investigadores na mesma mesa. Ou seja, nós vemos a criação artística como a criação de conhecimento específica e temos dois protocolos com dois centros de estudos: o Centro de Estudos Comparatistas, aqui em Lisboa, da Universidade de Lisboa, que são especialistas em cultura africana – os especialistas em cultura africana em Portugal. E por outro lado o TrAIN, que é também um centro de investigação na University of the Arts London, do Paul Goodwin e do Michael Asbury, especialistas em cultura latino-americana, cultura africana e as diásporas. Por um lado, temos esse apoio: as nossas conversas são muito apoiadas por eles, que desempenham também o papel de nossos consultores. Por outro lado, normalmente a estrutura das nossas conversas tem um artista e um curador, um investigador ou um investigador-curador. Por exemplo, a conversa do John Akomfrah foi com a Manuela Ribeiro Sanches, que é curadora e investigadora. Desta forma, pretendemos estabelecer uma ligação que, sendo bastante óbvia, não costuma acontecer assim tantas vezes. Ou seja, os artistas participam em conversas em centros de investigação, universidades e centros de arte, mas não é comum que, num centro de arte, eles falem com investigadores, para o público da arte.

O programa do HANGAR integra também residências artísticas, que privilegiam o processo (assim como todo o nosso programa), em vez do produto final. O HANGAR também apresenta um programa de exposições que, de certa forma, são sempre um objeto acabado. A exposição “Movimento Contínuo” foi

uma exceção: foram convidados quatro artistas e, em cada semana, cada um trabalhou no espaço da exposição com a participação do público e o resultado de cada semana era o que o artista fazia com o público. Ou seja, não houve apresentação de quatro artistas ao mesmo tempo. Cada semana a exposição tinha um artista e o artista que entrava na semana seguinte tinha de trabalhar com o que sobrava da semana anterior. Portanto, a nossa tônica sobre o processo é muito grande. Acho que isto responde mais ou menos à tua pergunta.

Sim. E há também programas como *workshops*, não é?

Sim, claro que sim, nós temos o serviço participativo. Nós somos três diretores. A Mónica de Miranda é a diretora artística, eu sou o diretor curatorial e entre os dois fazemos grande parte da programação. Eu estou mais ligado às exposições: sou o comissário das exposições ou então convido comissários; a Mónica está mais ligada às conversas. Mas entre os dois fazemos todo o programa artístico. A Mónica é artista, mas vem da investigação, está a terminar o *postdoc*, ela tem um *PhD* e está muito ligada ao Centro de Estudos Comparatistas. Eu estou a tentar terminar a minha tese de doutoramento, mas, nesse sentido, ela está mais ligada à investigação do que eu. E depois temos a Ana de Almeida, que é a diretora do serviço participativo. O serviço participativo tem este nome fora do habitual: é um serviço educativo (organiza visitas guiadas às exposições, *workshops* ligados às exposições, com crianças, com públicos específicos), mas tem uma vida própria que vai para além do apoio às exposições e é por isso que lhe chamamos serviço participativo, devido à sua autonomia. As conversas públicas, os seminários, vão por um lado, as exposições vão por outro e depois o serviço participativo vai por outro. E às vezes tocam-se, mas outras vezes não. Às vezes convergem. Mas são três programações diferentes.

E qual é a dinâmica para escolher os artistas para as residências? Por exemplo, eles têm de ter algum foco específico em *art as research* ou isto não entra bem na produção de conhecimento do HANGAR?

Nós temos vários tipos de convocatórias. Algumas são através de prémios, como o prémio de arte jovem de São Paulo. Nesse caso, os artistas vêm trabalhar cá durante dois meses. Mas pomos sempre a tônica e explicamos que não nos interessa tanto que os artistas produzam uma obra, mas sim que tenham um projeto. E tendemos a valorizar aqueles que beneficiariam de estar

em Lisboa. Tipicamente, as nossas residências são de um mês, em que nós fazemos acompanhamento (tutorias feitas por mim ou por comissários que vivem em Lisboa). Nós convidamos e valorizamos as candidaturas dos artistas que vão trabalhar especificamente sobre Lisboa e em Lisboa e que podem beneficiar diretamente de estar aqui presentes na cidade. A ideia é que o artista venha para o HANGAR, esteja aqui um mês, e que desenvolva a sua investigação cá. É sempre bastante intensivo. Nós ajudamos na parte da investigação, e depois, passados seis meses, os artistas acabam um trabalho ou fazem uma exposição que tem a ver com o trabalho que fizeram aqui em Lisboa. Mas nós não estamos à espera de que eles acabem um trabalho aqui.

Mas fica sempre algum tipo de relação, alguma coisa que é levada de Lisboa para outro sítio, certo?

Sim. Por exemplo, nós tivemos um residente que veio de um acordo precisamente com a Gasworks. O Louis Henderson esteve cá dois meses e trabalhou sobre um tema juntamente com a Filipa César, que estava a trabalhar sobre isto em Berlim, e depois fizeram uma exposição na Gasworks que, no fundo, foi o fim dessa pesquisa que eles fizeram. Depois, essa exposição passou por vários sítios, Paris (Khasma) foi o último, e agora em janeiro vai ser apresentada aqui, ou seja, fecha-se um ciclo que não começou aqui (mas praticamente) e acaba aqui.

Então, vêes também uma ligação entre o conhecimento que se produz e mobilidade?

Acho que a mobilidade é uma marca do nosso tempo, em termos das artes visuais – para o bem e para o mal. Está associada a uma espécie de precariedade dos voos de turística e é uma certa forma de sobrevivência dos artistas hoje em dia. Têm de estar sempre a mover-se. Nós não promovemos isso, aproveitamos essa dinâmica e tentamos dar as melhores condições possíveis aos artistas. E por isso é que as nossas residências são 99% de artistas estrangeiros. Depois, como sabes, temos um andar que é só de artistas portugueses, para que haja um contacto dentro do próprio edifício, mas esses artistas estrangeiros que vêm fazer projetos sobre Lisboa são estrangeiros; aí é quase tirar partido desta mobilidade e desenvolver trabalhos acerca de Lisboa. Não achamos que Lisboa e os temas que se podem tratar sobre Lisboa estejam cá só para serem descobertos pelos portugueses.

Também se cria a oportunidade de ter acesso a um foco de fora.

Sim, um olhar diferente.

Neste sentido, eu diria que o HANGAR e as outras organizações que estão dentro do Triangle Network têm duas identidades, uma que trabalha com o foco na comunidade, no local, e outra com uma ligação mais internacional, a mobilidade da qual já falávamos. Como é que tu vês esta dualidade? Qual é o valor que acrescenta estar dentro do *network*?

O *network* é uma espécie de enquadramento. Todas as associações que acolhem os workshops do Triangle Network, têm o mesmo formato de *workshop*, que é um formato que desafia a lógica, é muito curto. Onze, doze, dias, depende. Muito intenso. Posso dizer-te que a primeira vez que eu participei num *workshop* desse género achava que era uma ideia muito louca. Fiquei muito curioso, mas ia contra tudo aquilo que eu acreditava que devia ser uma residência. É pouco tempo, é demasiado intensivo. Os artistas têm atividades de manhã, à tarde e à noite. Eu achei que era uma espécie de *Big Brother*, porque os artistas internacionais convivem com os artistas nacionais, muito perto. Temos de entender que isto foi criado em associações de artistas para artistas. O HANGAR por pouco não é um *artist-run-space*, por uma única razão, porque eu estou cá. Apesar de ser comissário, tive uma carreira como artista. E então este *workshop* nasceu dessa lógica, de artistas pensado para artistas e é surpreendente, funciona muito bem. Costuma ser uma espécie de ponto de viragem no trabalho e no percurso dos artistas. Tem condições muito específicas e muito diferentes do habitual, o que gera resultados muito inesperados para os próprios artistas.

E foi de uma ideia como esta de um *Triangle Workshop* que também nasceu a dinâmica toda do HANGAR.

O HANGAR especificamente é um “produto” da associação Xerém. A associação Xerém já existe há muitos mais anos, apenas não tinha um espaço físico. Só teve um espaço físico quando começámos o HANGAR. Hoje em dia, o HANGAR é o único projeto da associação, mas antigamente a associação fazia vários projetos e um desses projetos recorrentes era o *workshop* da *Triangle*. Alugava-se um espaço para as pessoas dormirem e alugavam-se *ateliers*. Agora já não é necessário, pois temos um e incorporamos o *workshop Triangle* dentro do projeto desta casa. Eu não estive na fundação da associação

Xerém. Fui convidado como curador (pois existe sempre um curador convidado para acompanhar o *workshop Triangle*) três anos antes de o HANGAR começar. Correu muito bem. Fui convidado novamente no ano seguinte e depois decidimos fazer o HANGAR. Mas o HANGAR é um produto que não sai do nada, sai de uma associação que já tinha quatro edições do *Triangle workshop*.

Como definirias a importância do espaço físico como tal, para desenvolver, não só o *workshop Triangle*, mas a programação do HANGAR?

O espaço físico permite-nos ter esta polifonia de eventos, em várias direções, de vários tipos. Nós temos uma programação bastante intensiva. Acalmou um bocadinho no último ano e meio, fazemos as coisas com mais espaçamento, até porque a própria dinâmica da cidade mudou completamente. Desde que o HANGAR começou até agora, a oferta cultural cresceu exponencialmente. Mas o facto de termos um edifício permite-nos ter uma grande diversidade em relação aos eventos que podemos alojar; já fizemos aqui vários seminários, eu dirigi um seminário, com um investigador também, sobre colonialismo e curadoria no espaço ibérico. Permite-nos ter uma série de ações que, se tivéssemos de pensar em espaços específicos para cada ação, seria impraticável. Faz-nos ter mais liberdade nesse sentido. Desde a conversa com um artista emergente e desconhecido à conversa com o John Akomfrah, é tudo no mesmo espaço, e angariamos diferentes públicos com diferentes chamadas, diferentes aproximações também. E permite-nos fazer exposições.

Qual é a filosofia por trás do facto de estarem ligados a parte da história africana e o colonialismo, e à América Latina?

Desde o início que soubemos que queríamos trabalhar sobre o que chamamos “problemáticas de Norte-Sul” e foi esse o ponto de partida. Nós não tratamos o Sul global, ou seja, temos trabalhado com artistas asiáticos, mas os nossos focos principais têm sido a América Latina e África, porque queremos pensar o HANGAR a partir do sítio onde ele se insere: uma cidade que foi capital de um império colonial. Os portugueses não inventaram a escravatura, mas inventaram praticamente o comércio transcontinental de seres humanos. E, na altura, achámos que isso era uma questão que aqui em Portugal estava à beira de explodir. Eu dizia sempre, ‘isto é uma questão que está por desempacotar e que está mesmo por rebentar na praça pública’. Por exemplo, há um ano

e pouco fizeram uma estátua que é uma homenagem muito problemática, do padre António Vieira, portanto, há muito a dizer sobre isto, muito. E eu, como vivo desde 2007 entre Lisboa e Madrid, tenho tido sempre esta ligação, que em Lisboa não acontecia e que agora já acontece um pouco. A ligação com a América Latina acontecia a partir de Madrid e cá não. E ao contrário, a ligação com África, em Madrid não acontecia, e agora vai acontecendo: em Madrid surgiram muitos movimentos de afroconsciência. Mas onde se fazia a ligação com África era aqui em Lisboa; então, aproveitava o melhor dos dois sítios. A Mónica é investigadora nessa área com interesse por pós-colonialismo, portanto, fazia sentido.

Então, tem essa origem de produzir conhecimento a partir de uma temática urgente no contexto local.

Foi isso que nós sentimos, que era uma temática urgente e que tínhamos de começar a ajudar a desempacotar essa questão e discuti-la em público. Eu fico surpreendido como as coisas ainda são tratadas, especialmente pelos *media*, de uma forma muito reacionária cá em Portugal. Nós não queremos educar ninguém, queremos só discutir as coisas e fazemos a nossa parte. Eu cresci na linha de Sintra e, na minha adolescência, eu diria que noventa por cento dos meus amigos eram africanos ou descendentes de africanos, timorenses. E [quando se fala de] africanos, fala-se de Angola, Cabo Verde. Uma das maiores comunidades de cabo-verdianos fora de África no mundo é a Amadora. Então, isso para mim acabou por ser uma questão que fazia todo o sentido tratar. Estive envolvido com a capoeira desde miúdo até aos 21 anos, dos 11 anos até aos 21 fui instrutor de capoeira, e então tudo isso para mim fazia sempre sentido discutir. Ao mesmo tempo, a linha de Sintra sempre foi, de uma forma muito pouco evidente para uma criança branca, um sítio muito segregado. Não era normal os meus amigos brancos terem muitos amigos não brancos. Havia uma separação invisível; não havia um Apartheid, mas havia uma separação. Não era explícito, mas eu tive de entrar para a capoeira para ter contacto com as comunidades de descendentes de africanos. Isso é muito pesado. Numa zona que recebeu tantos imigrantes vindos de África, que [os] recebeu tão mal, e com tão pouco cuidado, com tão pouco esforço governamental de integração ou de partilha de experiências.

Há então, neste sentido, algum foco, acho que já vamos nessa direção, em atrair públicos específicos com a programação que se faz no HANGAR?

Nós queremos atrair todo o tipo de públicos. Não temos um público em especial. Temos tido essa preocupação desde o início. Nós não tínhamos ideia de ter um bar ou um restaurante, fizemos o restaurante para dar apoio ao *workshop Triangle*, porque é tão intensivo que temos de contratar um *chef* nessa semana e meia para que os artistas não tenham de pensar em comida. Além disso, quando tens um grupo de artistas, tens sempre vários grupos, porque as pessoas se juntam por afinidades. Mas depois, à mesa, todos convergem. E nós percebemos o quão importante era a ideia de comer juntos, de partilhar à mesa. Depois, acabámos por abrir a tempo inteiro, o que cria um tipo de experiência de comunidade aqui no HANGAR, e, porque nós somos uma força gentrificadora – apesar de esse não ser o nosso desejo, mas é verdade, é mesmo assim –, queríamos devolver alguma coisa à comunidade. Por isso é que todos os eventos são gratuitos, as conversas, as exposições; e os preços do bar são baratos também. Quero acreditar que as pessoas que vivem aqui, de qualquer estrato social, ganharam com a vinda do HANGAR. Essa é a nossa tentativa. É inevitável: o ciclo da gentrificação é sempre este, chegam os artistas e depois os preços sobem, mas nós quisemos dar alguma coisa em troca. Fazemos isso também porque temos apoios que ganhámos em concursos públicos da DGArtes, e faz sentido que não se cobre. Até haver, vai ser assim.

Sim; então, depende sempre também dos apoios que se tem.

Sim, agora temos algum apoio privado também, mas estamos obrigados a lutar por mais apoios, por diversificar as fontes de apoios para não correremos o risco de ficar sem financiamento para as atividades e para as pessoas que trabalham aqui. A Câmara de Lisboa também, tudo com base em concursos públicos que temos podido ganhar.

O prédio, é também da Câmara Municipal?

Alugado. Privados. O que é um desafio numa cidade como Lisboa.

Imagino que o bairro da Graça também tenha mudado muito nos últimos três anos.

Quatro anos. Desde que viemos para cá há quatro anos, isto era uma rua que não... aquelas escadas ali em baixo eram problemáticas, era um sítio [em] que não se passava à noite. E hoje em dia quase não se ouve português aqui, fala-se sobretudo francês. Por exemplo, neste prédio (*assinala um prédio perto do HANGAR*) já não vive ninguém, porque é tudo AirBnb, tudo. Há apenas um inquilino, que é um senhor velhote, que agora ultimamente não o tenho visto, costuma ir ao nosso café, mas é o único naquele prédio inteiro. E estes todos... (*refere-se aos outros prédios, também do outro lado da rua*). O impacto do regime fiscal focado em atrair fortunas estrangeiras aqui tem-se notado muito.

Quase se coloca como pergunta, para que comunidade se faz a programação do HANGAR.

Estamos muito perto do Martim Moniz e do Intendente. E há gente que vai continuar a viver aqui, quero dizer, não vão ser todos expulsos. Até porque a Câmara começa a reagir a essa questão. Eles agora estão a ter muita atenção às expulsões.

Nota-se ali uma esperança ou melhoria?

Acho que a Câmara está a reagir tarde, mas estão a tentar reagir. As juntas de freguesia também. Qualquer dia, não vive aqui ninguém, só turistas. Ou então milionários franceses.

Estamos quase a chegar ao fim da nossa conversa. Gostaria de saber se achas que há uma forte ligação da organização, do HANGAR, com o tema da representação?

Representação em que sentido?

Geral, de minorias.

Em todos os sentidos, então, mesmo. Sim, há uma preocupação com minorias. Há uma atenção muito grande à paridade de género. Se tu reparares, eu sou o único homem aqui a trabalhar. E temos isso sempre em conta. Se olhares para a nossa programação, há muitas artistas a trabalhar connosco. Sim, há um cuidado importante. Faz tanto parte do nosso *DNA* que já nem

te posso dizer 'ah, temos cuidado com isso', já faz parte da nossa forma de operar. Para te dar um exemplo da paridade em todos os aspetos, tudo o que são convocatórias, temos sempre cuidado de ter no mínimo o mesmo número de homens e mulheres.

Existe, também, uma noção de cidadania e de nacionalidade. Todas as nossas convocatórias têm o mesmo princípio. Por exemplo, a Gasworks fez durante dois anos uma convocatória do HANGAR no Reino Unido, que era para artistas do Reino Unido ou que *vivam* no Reino Unido. [N]o primeiro ano foi um artista do Vietname, mas que vivia e trabalhava no Reino Unido. Há uma convocatória também nas Baleares e a convocatória e as bases da convocatória também têm atenção a isso. Artistas nascidos lá ou que vivam lá. Não têm de ser espanhóis das Baleares. Quando fazemos protocolos, têm sempre a ver com isso, com o respeitar dessa mobilidade e que não seja só o lado mau. As pessoas que vivem e trabalham lá. Tu estás a trabalhar cá, porque é que tu não haverias [de] poder candidatar-te a um *open call* cá? Isso é um aspeto que temos em conta.

Bom, a última pergunta: podes, de alguma forma, definir o que é uma organização de artes visuais entre o ser ou não ser uma instituição?

Eu acho que, para o bem e para o mal, somos uma instituição (*ri-se*). Agora, uma instituição pode ser muita coisa, pode ser um HANGAR, mas o HANGAR não é dos projetos mais pequenos, há projetos mais pequenos que também são instituições. Por acaso, nós somos considerados uma instituição de interesse público. Uma instituição (eu não tenho presente agora aqui a definição, mas acho que é um grupo de pessoas, pode ser uma iniciativa da cidadania, neste caso), que oferece qualquer coisa à sociedade onde se insere. Ou até mais além da esfera estritamente local.

Estou pensando também um pouco no discurso do *New Institutionalism* e nos grandes museus, onde a dinâmica é diferente, e aqui talvez ainda haja algumas liberdades, que nos museus não há da mesma forma, por terem responsabilidades relativamente a uma coleção, etc.

Nós somos uma associação sem fins lucrativos, isso é muito importante. Agora, as nossas escolhas não são definidas por isso. Eu sei que os museus normalmente também são organizações sem fins lucrativos. Nós temos liberdade, por um lado, temos muita diversidade, e o facto de sermos uma

instituição pequena permite-nos improvisar mais e aceitamos que improvisamos. Ou seja, não procuramos uma espécie de imagem do extremamente bem acabado. Também porque isso aqui é inatingível, pelos nossos orçamentos e possivelmente também não seria desejável em termos ecológicos e tudo. Estou a pensar, por exemplo, no caso das exposições, onde estás sempre a montar paredes, a construir e destruir paredes, a mudar o chão. Portanto, fazemos das nossas fraquezas virtudes, por assim dizer. Não temos muito dinheiro, mas temos a diversidade, decidimos rapidamente, porque somos três pessoas a tomar decisões. Temos um conjunto de valores que nos guiam, que são aqueles [de] que estávamos agora aqui a falar; por esse lado temos muita margem de manobra e muita liberdade. Por outro lado, somos uma instituição pequena e isso quer dizer que não conseguimos fazer tudo o que nos apeteceria ou como nos apeteceria. Também tentamos sempre criar dentro das nossas possibilidades uma espécie de caminho de boas práticas, cada pessoa que fala no HANGAR recebe, nem que seja um valor simbólico, mas recebe. Os artistas recebem. Tentamos fazer as coisas de uma forma correta dentro do nosso orçamento bastante limitado.

E em comparação com as outras organizações do Triangle Network, quais são as coisas parecidas ou que podiam ser vistas como um protocolo que define o que é uma organização deste tipo e o que é que as diferencia?

A mais parecida connosco, a nossa instituição gémea, se pudermos dizer assim, se bem que somos diferentes, é a Gasworks. O Alessio Antonioli é um dos membros do nosso *board*, é um conselheiro do HANGAR, como uma espécie de padrinho, e nós “copiámos” o modelo. Esta parte de investigação, eles não a têm; portanto, já é diferente. Depois, há vários tipos, há organizações mais pequenas, como era a associação Xerém no início, que só tinha espaço limitado. Mas eu diria que a Gasworks é a mais parecida connosco. Nós copiámos assim à descarada. Copiámos com o consentimento do Alessio, claro.

E com o contexto de Lisboa.

Exatamente. Muito mais bonito (*ri-se*). A Gasworks tem esta dinâmica que responde também ao seu próprio meio, têm muitos pequenos-almoços com patronos, têm bastante apoio privado. O apoio privado em Portugal é quase uma espécie de miragem. Nós começámos, ainda não temos, mas espero

que tenhamos em breve, e eu luto nesse sentido, mas é um caminho completamente não traçado. Não tenho a certeza, mas penso que a Kunsthalle Lissabon tem algum apoio privado também, se calhar simbólico, não sei. Nós estamos a lutar nesse sentido, eu acho que isto vai dar frutos. Mais cedo ou mais tarde. Mas em Inglaterra é diferente; lá, é completamente normal e os quartos de residências da Gasworks têm o nome do patrono. À semelhança de uma ala de museu, com o nome da família que [a] apoia. Nesse aspeto, cá, neste tipo de apoios, também não há uma lei de mecenato que faça com que mereça a pena.

ANNEX C

Interview Teesa Bahana, 32° East

Teesa Bahana, Director of 32° East, Kampala, Uganda

General interview guide approach

29 January 2019

16:30 – 17:30

32° East, Kampala

Transcript

As you already know, my research is about knowledge production and visual arts organisations. What I would like to find out is if there is a specific aim at 32° East to produce knowledge and how this shows in the organisation's activity. Also, what kind of knowledge; how would you define it?

That's a good question. In terms of explicitness about knowledge production our aim or mission is for the creation and exploration of contemporary art in Uganda. I think that exploration part really captures the knowledge production. Because it is not only about encouraging artists to make work and experiment and have the space to be in residence, but also to learn things in new ways and for people who are not even artists to learn about contemporary art. This can be through the artists they meet here, or the library, through workshops. So yes, for sure it is a driving force for what we do.

Then you had a part B...

Yes, what kind of knowledge are we speaking about? I am also trying to see what the ways are in which art can engage with knowledge rather than academic and theoretical knowledge.

I think knowledge in terms of unlearning and considering that there are alternative ways of knowledge and trying to value alternative kinds of knowledge. Question what the typical modes for knowledge production are; we have formal institutions and it is often seen as if you are educated when you went to those places, but because we often see how formal education affects people's practice it is to point at those things and say: What is it like to be in a completely different space where there is not a focus on results, and the right answer? So, I think it is around questioning what knowledge we have been taught and what we perceive as knowledge. Why do we interpret this one thing as knowledge

vs. this other thing? Particularly, being in a space where education is still so colonial in many ways and how power is also really tied into that. If you have not been through these systems then you are seen as being less knowledgeable (on a societal level). It is about elevating these different kinds of knowledge and questioning knowledge in a general way.

Would you then define it a little bit like an ‘open space’, where you can explore and see what happens?

Yes, because I think it is not as though we are very clear and say: ‘We believe in this kind of knowledge’. It is more like being a space for these questions, for critical thinking and critically engaging with things instead of taking them at first value. Then whatever direction you are going we walk with people and see where they go. But it is not as though we drive people in certain ways. Probably just by virtue of our values as people in the organisation, probably there are certain ways of knowledge that we try to bring to the fore and share with people whether or not that is things like thinking about colonisation, thinking about feminism, gender and sexuality and things like that. Beyond that it is quite open. Even the residency, the way it is structured, is quite open.

This already leads me to the next question. How does the organisation engage with representation, and considering that 32° East is mostly led by women, what would you say is the relation between knowledge and representation? How might this affect the way in which you choose the artists for the residencies? And does it?

By virtue of existing as a space where there are no similar spaces. I think I can think of one other residency space in the country and a lot of their residencies are with British artists. It is a bit more classical, modern. So, it is very different. So just by virtue of us existing and running the space there is a standing that we have. Whether or not we wear that hat, people are still like ‘32 has knowledge of some kind’ and ‘the people who run 32 are all women’. So just by existing it is already a statement. That then translates in how we work and who we choose to work with. A lot of things that we are interested in.

We also disagree on some things, you know, it is not like: ‘oh, we are all women, and feminists...’. But it still probably comes through in the work that we are interested in, in the people that we work with when it comes to collaborating in projects, if we feel like there is some kind of political element then it

turns out to be more interesting. Because we understand what it means like to be underrepresented. It is not just gender, it is age as well... to often be seen as lesser, or not being taken seriously, or not seen as fully human. I think that probably comes across in who we work with and the kinds of things we work on. When it comes to applications, it is a good question. It is actually important; we do think about gender parity when we pick applicants. I do not think there has ever been a time where a female artist has not been as strong, and we choose her anyway. It has not been that kind of thing. But maybe if they are around the same, the female and the male artist, then we do think: how many artists do we have in general, and is there a way of making sure that it is more balanced in terms of gender.

Yes, it is interesting, because in Lisbon and London this is also an issue. In Lisbon especially, the post-colonial and the history that was not addressed in the public sphere. And I do agree that it is already a statement by being there and that the fact of the space being one of a kind already makes it a representational act.

Whether or not it is intentional, it just is. I think people just notice. We do not need to be 'we are an all-female run organisation' (*imitates a parole-like way of carrying out a statement*). People come and see and then pick up on that, which influences how artists work in the space. We have had people, guys, male artists, who have sometimes not responded well to feedback. Things like that. But that is also instructional and feels important in some ways, too.

And so, the residencies, they are between one week and three months?

No, one month is the shortest.

Ah okay, one month is the shortest and three months is the maximum.

Yes, there have been a few occasions in which we have had artists for four months.

And what happens exactly in the residency? Do artists get regular feedback sessions, do invited people come and work with them as well? In the other programmes it is a lot about engaging the international artists in the local scene, so what is the main intention here and how does it translate in the structure of the residency?

It is a lot about feedback. Nikissi (*programme manager at 32° East*) will talk to the artists on a one-on-one basis every one or two weeks. She is really good at asking questions, not doing too much leading, but just asking, 'where are you at in the process?', 'have you read this and that we have in our library?', 'have you gone online?'. It is a lot about linking artists to resources; in terms of books and references but also networks that we have.

There might be an occasion that Nikissi will notice that an artist is not clicking very well with her method of delivery or you know, it might just be personality or whatever, and then she will be like 'oh, I have seen him/her getting along well with this or that other artist in residency that we had a few years ago, let me invite that artist to come in and chat to them'. Or it might be something about the topics of interest. We had an artist at the end of last year who was interested in natural dyes, so then thinking about the fact that we know these four people who work with natural dyes, and they can then also do one intro and then they do another intro to someone else. It varies with every artist, but normally there is that engagement with the programme manager. Sometimes they might also be talking to Suubi (*community coordinator at 32*) or me, based on the structure of the space, but Nikissi meets them regularly.

Does she have a curatorial background?

No, her background is in film. Mainly as a filmmaker and production. And I am trying to think in terms of programme managers we have had at 32 – I do not think anyone has ever had that background. One of the co-founders was a co-director and she had a curatorial background and would work with the artists. She has remained available for programme managers afterwards to call her and to ask: How do I push this, how did you approach artists? She sort of left a guide in a way and has always been there to ask. But I think probably you noticed as well, there are not many curators here anyway. So, it is really difficult to find someone with a curatorial background.

Do you then define the organisation as an artist-run space?

No.

What then?

A centre for artists. But yes, I am not an artist. Suubi is an artist. But I think artist-run space, that comes from the origins of an organisation as well and there is often a different philosophy or way of working that comes from artist-run spaces. I think in some ways because of our context there is a lot of work that we do around professionalisation, structure, which may be various in an artists' organisation... but I do not know, that is just my impression.

And well, I do not know how it is here, but talking about the knowledge economy and how creativity gets absorbed by the capitalistic system, I have been thinking about this tension, as in: in which way can a VAO be seen as a space that works in tune with this capitalistic model and in which way is it opposed to it or trying to create alternative ways of knowledge that cannot be so easily seen as a product? I do not know if you want to say something in that relation, even though it is not the main concern, but it kind of happens to be a parallel development.

It is interesting because I think Kampala and Uganda in general are not super capitalist. They are obviously in the system and like so many of these global, rampant things – it is a machine every country and city are a part of it. But if you compare Kampala to Nairobi, or even larger cities, like Lagos, there are certain things like for example how businesses choose to open or not open. Sometimes people prioritise enjoying life as opposed to making money. And so, I think there are quite a few people who come here from other places like Nairobi and decide to exist as an artist because they can operate a little more outside the system. Food might be cheaper; it is just a bit easier to not hassle constantly. In other places there might be this conversation, but here we are not countering gentrification all the time, and artists being a part of that. But then for us a space, because we exist where there is no infrastructure to support the arts, which in part is also because of the lack of a money-class that wants to invest in it for prestige or investment, it means we often have to come up with strategies that make money and choose to go into that system in some ways that maybe other places do not have to so much. That was a very round about response.

But it is interesting. As you said, maybe it is not such a relevant discussion here. It is also more related to the potential of creativity as innovation in terms of 'feeding the machine'. But what I have seen so far for instance, is also that the focus on process in VAOs is already not so in tune with the idea of making products to sell.

Yes, actually also, although... now that you say that, there are a lot of artists that say: 'I want to be rich and make a bunch of stuff and can people buy them?', so sometimes we are existing in opposition to that. It is not about production. Yes, maybe you can produce, but you can also go to a residency and not make anything. And still have a really transformative experience. There have been some artists where we have been like 'we do not know what we can do for you, because if you just want to make money, why are you in art?'. And yes, there is a way to operate as a visual artist and have your clients and you know what to do, you have a formula and you know it will sell and to have the tourist that you will sell to, but it is maybe not what we are interested in.

But so, you have gotten that kind of reaction, let's say. Whereas, well, I have not talked to too many of the artists, but I did not get the feeling that there was this situation. I think it was more like a relief of being able to get out of the production system. So that is interesting, that you might have this other reaction: 'No, please help me to get into the system, instead of wanting to step back'.

We have a lot of artists that then maybe do not come to the space so much because they want to learn how to brand really well and how to price the work. Sometimes we get e-mails from people that want support to sell their work. In relation to the fundraisers though, there are some instances in which we do sell work to keep things running. It is interesting.

Yes. Also, because it already gives you direct feedback of the context. On the other hand, you are trying to give something to the context as well but in a different way...

In relation to the Triangle Network, which is kind of the umbrella to my work: the organisation as such exists as an independent space, but as well as a part of the network. So how do these two identities (and I know that there are more identities to each organisation as well, but focusing on these specific two), how is the relationship between being an autonomous, local institution and being linked to

this international network? How does it work, what does it give you and how does it influence the programme? How does this national-international, promoting the local but linked to the international, work?

I think in some ways the Triangle Network, it is very loose. The ties are quite loose, it is not super structured, it is not 'to be a Triangle you need to meet these five criteria' (*imitates a commercial voice*). You do not need to say, we, 32, are a Triangle. It is not like we are subsidiary or a franchise, or anything like that. It is an association, in that we have an affinity to or a connection with a lot of these independent spaces that share a struggle in some ways, just to exist as an independent space in the world-system that we have. And try to facilitate connections, exchanges and workshops. Which is what Triangle was really about in the beginning: workshops. So, I think there are commonalities, which then means that a lot of exchange can happen, but that depends on funding as well. And the Triangle Network is not independently funded as a network. I think it is really de-centralised. Even though Alessio is the director, and they are housed at Gasworks, it is still very de-centralised in some ways. If, for example, there was a fund that said, 'we are funding a Zimbabwe and Uganda exchange', then we know we have a Triangle Partner in Zimbabwe, let's contact them and see if we can do something together. Or if we know an artist that is going to India, we must know someone there. Let's look at Triangle, e-mail them, and by virtue of us being part of the network, they are more likely to respond. Even though we might not be involved in a residency with them, we can meet them, we can show them the space and connect them to these people. So, you already have that kind of platform. But then, too, sometimes there is funding. Particularly because it has an administration component with Gasworks, there are times where they put time to find funding for a particular exchange in a particular region. So, with that then that does affect the programme. If we have the opportunity to welcome an artist from the UK or have an artist go to Mauritius, then you work that into your plan for the year. That is how it is working. I'm curious, what did HANGAR say?

I think the main response was: "we copied Gasworks" (*laughs*).

Oh, interesting!

They have their focus on research and bringing researchers and artists together, that is very specific about HANGAR. And it is not happening the same way

at Gasworks. But I know Alessio is also on the board of HANGAR, so I think they got a lot of support in terms of how to build the organisation.

Yes, this is how we did it!

I think there has been, and still is, a lot of exchange around the question of how to run such a space and of course it is different each time but through Alessio's knowledge, also about different contexts, I think it really is a fruitful exchange.

Yes, for sure. And actually, I should say that I have also asked Alessio a million questions. He has also been, and Gasworks in general, very generous: sometimes they will send things like business plans and job descriptions. Just really those basic administration things, but it just really helps to know that people have gone through this before and this is what they did, this is what worked in their context, this is what we can tweak.

And have you had, by any chance, a direct exchange with Gasworks? Or with HANGAR, maybe?

Nikissi has been to HANGAR. But she has told you, right? That has been the one connection with them and then a month ago we just got a message from Alessio to say that there is an opportunity for funding for an artist from South-Saharan Africa, so for us to propose some artists, but beyond that we have not had any artists in residence at Gasworks. We did welcome an artist through Gasworks a few years ago, though it was before my time. (<https://cargocollective.com/rebeccadavies/RESIDENCY>)

So, is it more about trying to get you on board of the opportunities and linking opportunities with people?

Yes, yes, I think so.

Well, that seems really important.

Yes, for sure. It is huge. And then they are hosting a fundraiser for us, as well, in April to help us build the new centre, so that is also huge.

Especially because they have the structure already, with all the administration.

And have been through it and know what it is to raise money and help with contacts. And to be able to use those contacts for the network, I think it is really special.

Now that you mentioned the new space: I am writing a little bit about the architecture of the spaces as well.

I do not know how far you have been directly involved with the planning, but what are the main motivations for the architectural proposal and design? The guiding principles from the experience you have had here. Could you somehow say: ‘these are our needs, and we are going to put it into practice in an architectural structure that looks like x?’

So, we had a lot of sessions with artists when it came to think about needs. Just a lot of open sessions where we get feedback on what artists want the space to look like: what they are lacking, what they would be really excited about or things like just learning about the studio space and things like that. How a container, when it is hot, is pretty much unworkable. But also, things like how to store your stuff and sources of light and where the light faces. Natural materials have been really important. Openness, community, that the space and how it is designed should allow both for people to have their small meetings on the side but also a communal field. And then with the new space having studios that are more short term and studios that artists can lease out for one to two years and how those spaces can also interact with each other and allow also for interaction and maybe a mentorship. I think those are the big things we have talked about. Then also being in a way sort of aspirational as in terms of: if you move around the city architecture is like the lowest priority. In so many projects there is not even an architect, there is your contractor and they build the thing. ‘I want four walls and some windows, just build it’. And the design and aesthetic are not a consideration, so just that the building, the centre itself, can be a work of art in itself and motivate people to think differently about architecture and how spaces are built, what can be special about a space in Kampala, as well. I do not know if you have seen, on Tank Hill Rd. there is a new Japanese restaurant [Yamasen Japanese Restaurant in Tank Hill Park]. It is this massive site with a lot of glass and a bunch of wood, and it is really pretty. It stands out. So, you will see traffic slow down and guys pointing at it. It is things like that that show that you can really have really beautiful things that everyone can appreciate and a space that can be different and use the natural environment instead of these blue glass windows that people put up.

It is very nice; you could also think about it as a way of representation.

Yes, yes. Just to show it is possible.

Moving on with the questions: Considering the constantly developing digitalisation, in which way do you still see the importance of having a physical space? I guess the network is working pretty much based on the digital, but what does the physical space give you and allow you to do?

Yes, I mean, there is digitalisation, but I do not think it is at the same rate everywhere. Data is still very expensive.

And the tax on it.

Yes, exactly. And that is not only expensive, it is political. It is censored and there are limitations on it. When the elections happen, we probably will not be able to get on to social media. So, you cannot rely on it. For a lot of artists, they operate in the physical, still. And not all artists are really at ease with technology. So, I think we have not really been at a point where artists are like 'oh, just put it up online'. We still have artists that ask for physical forms for the residencies, because they cannot do it online. There is that. But I think, of course, so much is relationships. I cannot tell what you are like via e-mail. I can be polite, but it is not that we know that we get along or want to keep in touch. And I think when you are dealing with artists as well, so much is in the interpersonal. And the kinds of conversations that can come up and that you would not even anticipate and that happen because you are in the same space. Or maybe the two of you know each other and then you bump into someone else that one other person knows, and then she knows this other person and then everything seems so random but still makes you see things completely differently. For the artists in residence as well, having people popping into their studio, that can just be so much more impactful than even we can sometimes. And that is why we always say, that to us our community is our biggest resource and there are so many things we do not know but so many people in our community do know those things and that takes a lot of physical interaction. You know, we come from an oral tradition, an oral culture, so conversation and being with people is really important.

You see, that is so interesting, because I think for us, we are kind of re-discovering these things, like: how do you do it? Talk to people?

And I also thought about the open studio, which can almost be called a constantly open studio, I do not know if you have a more 'official' open studio at the end of residencies?

We do.

Okay, because this really intrigued me. It is a very particular dynamic at 32°. Also, the fact that the artists are prepared, they know that someone can pop in anytime. I think it opens up a lot more what you are saying, fleeting encounters and conversations, just things that you cannot plan.

Serendipity in some ways.

And in terms of who you want to reach with your programme: we already talked about the fact that you are very interdisciplinary, because of being this very specific place and that it brings more people from different areas together. Also because of having the meeting space and resources. Maybe you can expand a little bit on that.

I think there are two ways to go with that. There is who do you want to reach and who needs to be reached by us. Does that make sense? Just because in some ways we are the only space that exists like this, we work with so many people. This, in terms of being interdisciplinary, and from emerging to artists that have been practicing for thirty years, just because there are not many spaces like that. I think while the more spaces, they are able to specialise more, and we do not specialise a lot, in that we work with visual artists in Uganda. Except we do not work with visual artists in Uganda, we work with creatives, who are in Uganda, but they might be from somewhere else. So even though we are focused on creating and exploring contemporary art in Uganda, by virtue of what the needs are we work with so many people. But in some ways, with particular programmes, that is where we are able to see who you really want to reach. With KLA ART it is about reaching people who art does not typically reach, and making art accessible to people, and democratising it in some ways. Giving it a presence in the city as well, because in some ways it is sort of really ignored and undervalued. That is with KLA ART. And with something like Artachat it is trying to reach people who need spaces to have critical dialogue and really have conversations that might be difficult or might really stimulate a lot of thinking that is not typical. I guess, on broad, we have been describing

wanting to reach people who would benefit from alternative ways of seeing. But that is so broad.

But then maybe also alternative ways of exploring knowledge.

Yes, right.

And the Artachat, is it organised more like a presentation or is it a talk? A discussion? And what are the topics? As far as I understood you plan a general topic for the series for a year.

We have been trying to do that. It varies. But in general, it is just contemporary art and social issues. That is what an Artachat is and within that there can be a million different topics. But every year we try and have a theme that then at least allows for some cohesion. And the format in itself varies quite a bit. We have had researchers who have read from their papers, people with a power point, we have had numerous people skype in; and then the conversation between them, panels, etc. But most of the times there is a Q&A, which is often the more enriching part of the experience. Having a good amount of time for discussion is really good.

So, making it more engaging in a way. Is this also the focus for the Labs? What was exactly the aim of the Labs, for whom and what are the topics?

It has a lot of aims. It is really to provide more deeper engagement for artists, writers, curators, in the build-up towards KLA ART, so the festival itself. KLA ART is about art in the public sphere, so if you are looking at the build-up towards it, having people think about their audience, having people think about the space.

Are you already working with the artists you will be engaging with during the festival?

That is the goal: artists, and curators and writers.

Is it like a workshop for the team?

Yes, but without the team being formed. It becomes formed as we go through that. And actually, as I said, there are many reasons behind it, but part of it was that there is usually an ecosystem surrounding an artist. An artist does not operate in a vacuum in order for them to thrive in their career – whatever

thriving looks like. I think there is an artist, there are curators, writers, people who document the work, there is thesis', there are all these things, and just noticing that that is not super present here. That we do not have curatorial programmes at all in any universities, that when an artist graduates from university the research methods are often not there. Even something like getting feedback from peers, that is not something that happens much. So just noticing that there are a lot of gaps and how we can spotlight them and work towards creating something that meets those gaps in some way or gets people working on it. And then, I think because it is really sort of countering the formal education system. The Lab part is so important, because it is about experimentation and we do not know what the right answer is, and you get to collaborate and explore with people. Fail and play and try things in different contexts, but you are always questioning, and being pushed.

I guess that was a long roundabout answer, but it is partly because it just comes from our experience in running a festival and really seeing how formal arts education had influenced how artists think and make work and how the festival provides an opportunity to bring that to the fore and deal with it in interesting ways. And being part of a larger international network there are really so many opportunities to hear from and work with different practitioners who have alternative methodologies and different contexts and enough exciting different insight that can invigorate and stimulate artists.

You also have international artists coming for the festival, or the Labs?

For the Labs, yes.

So, you spot some people that you think will bring some challenges.

Yes, they are going to shake things up!

And do you have specific funding for the Labs?

Yes, from the Prince Claus Fund. The funding we have got from them is a network partnership grant, which is a three-year grant for a new programme that also looks at networks, collaboration and partnerships. And Arts Collaboratory as well. We receive co-funding, but then there are also opportunities for collaborative projects, so funding for projects within the network. And then we got funding specifically for a writing workshop, with Newcastle University and Nairobi Contemporary.

So, there is also the work of applying for specific funding for every programme and project and trying to keep things going individually.

Yes. Oh, yes. Always, money is always an issue... It would be nice if it was not, but I think there will always be some percentage of the budget that you have to try and raise. Even though when we hopefully build the centre that has income coming in... but there will still be need for grants.

And this income, is it going to come mostly through the rental of studio space?

Studio space and then we will also have accommodation. So, for example, you would stay at 32.

Yes! And not on the other side of town!

Exactly, exactly. I think there are enough people that would be interested.

And is there also, well, I do not know how the relationship with the Big Kafunda (restaurant on the same property as 32° East) is, for example, but are you thinking also about having some kind of restaurant?

A small cafe that we would not run but rent out. That is not our speciality.

But it creates a different possibility to approach the project as well. In HANGAR this works really well, I think.

Was she not going to come here (the owner of A Li, the restaurant at HANGAR)?

She was supposed to, yes. But the idea was that she would raise money to come, but then it did not work out.

And this was for a gastronomy-focused exchange?

It was because the fundraising that we do is around food and art, so we have food and art curated under a theme and for that evening it is like a one night only exhibition with an auction and a three-course meal. So that was the idea.

And are you still trying to do that, keeping that part of the programme up?

Well, we have had five now and it is quite a nice way of having a presence in the city for people who might fund programmes, to get patrons and to get people to know what we do. Either they might be an individual donor, or they might work for a company that can sponsor part of KLA ART or something

like that. It has been really useful in that sense, but it is a lot of work. And you know, the work and time that something like that takes is a trade-off. Because then that is less energy and time towards the residency programme. Especially since we are doing Labs this year, we have a lot of work. And annual hosting assembly for Arts Collaboratory.

We already talked about representation, the residencies... maybe, to wrap up: Do you also have exhibitions on a regular basis and if so, is there a guided tour or mediation programme for that?

That would be nice. We had them but not super often. We used to have around four a year, artists who have been to the residency maybe a few months ago or a year ago and had completed a body of work or had gotten work that they really wanted to show. So, we would have an exhibition. But they vary. Usually, it is a previous artist in residence. You have an opening; the artist would talk a little bit or be there to answer questions. Once you have the opening, the work stays up for a couple of weeks, but it is not like we have a lot of people coming in to look at the exhibition.

Yes, your focus seems to be much more on the process itself, stimulating the art scene and not so much producing an actual space to exhibit.

I think part of it, too, is that if you want to put on an exhibition you want to do it well. For this, the space needs more investment, even in terms of lighting, it is nicer when it is more curated and you have been able to work with the artist around what he is going to show and the kind of story that the work tells. Because we are just not able to do that it also feels like you do not want to just put it on.

Are there other spaces that allow that in the city?

They vary. Design Hub will have exhibitions. I do not know how they choose, if they have a selection process. But their standard is not as high. Even the space in which they show the work, it is not like the lighting is a particular way, etc. It feels more like an artist wanted to do it, so they did it. Sometimes there is a curator, sometimes there is not. I think for them it is more like having an exhibition adds to their programme and the idea of the space. And then there are the galleries, mainly Afri Art, to be honest, and Makerere will sometimes host exhibitions as well.

So, as a way of closing, could you say very briefly what you think your position in the city is or how you react to the general context? What is 32° East giving in terms of adding to the city?

I think I was going to say originally, that we operate for artists. We are in service and working in partnership with artists. That is our *raison d'être*. And in a city that completely dismisses artists and undervalues them both in terms of them as people, their craft, what it brings to the world, that is a really valuable position to take. In counter to the day-to-day: 'This is how you are meant to grow up', 'this is what you are meant to do when you get older', 'this is what success looks like'. These people are really important, what they do is really important and if we are supporting it financially and in terms of time, I think it is in some ways counter to what society tells us about its importance.

Thank you.

Thank you for listening, thank you for the questions. They made me think a lot, too.

