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Contemporary Art as a Catalyst for Social Change

Public Art and Art Production in a Community of Practice

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Abstract

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This master thesis contextualise, and discuss the contemporary art as a catalyst for change, and raises social issues through art production in the urban district Nima. Perspectives of "community", and "community of practice" affiliates with examples of placed based art, mainly mural paintings performed in the urban landscape of the community, in the stigmatised community Nima, an area in Ghana's capital Accra.

The study has identified an artistic climate that is emerging from within the community, where artists have created a system for various forms of arts education. The artistic climate is a process of social practice, and this study further discuss the interaction of people in the process of art production, which provides both local, and global perspectives of art. Issues of representation, especially who is in the position to represent others, and how others are in fact represented are discussed and analysed as well as the terminology of "African art".

Key words: Contemporary Art, Community, Community of Practice, Mural Painting, Ghana, Community Art, Public Art, Representation

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This master thesis is the result of a ten weeks Minor Field Study (MFS), performed as an ethnographical field study in Ghana during 2013. I have been living within the urban district of Nima, a slum area in the centre of Accra, and due to the ethnographic nature of the study the findings draw on participant observation and interviews.

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Situated in the heart of Accra is Nima, one of the most densely populated, multi-ethnic communities in Anglophone West Africa. It is a lively community with markets, traffic jam and street vendors. The places to meet are few and the community is crammed with people. Nima is a slum area, and many of the problems you find are due to issues associated with slums. The roads and streets are small and dirty, with drains and gutters placed openly on the streets. In Nima it is possible to find almost everything and it has something for everyone. Most importantly, the community displays the value of talent, creativity and social relations.

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1.0 Introduction

In an open exploration of place and its identity this study approach, and examines art and its relation to place as a community of practice. The centre of this study is the Nima community and the local art scene, where different approaches to art will be examined based on an inductive ethnographic field study, including interviews and observations. The socially stigmatized community placed in the central part of the capital city Accra in Ghana, provoke perceptions by creating venues for people to explore art in public spaces. In an attempt to explore the possibilities for contemporary art to function as a catalyst for change and raising social issues, this study focus on the local art scene, in order to examine existing activities connected to art.

The contemporary art is characterized as versatile and visionary with various ways of interpretation, but also imprinted with expressions used in totally different contexts of the society today, that makes the contemporary art complex but at the same time attractive and useful in learning environments.¹

This thesis studies the role of contemporary art in order to examine how contemporary art can function as a catalyst for social change in a community context. The role of contemporary artists as contributors to positive social change will be studied together with the implications they have on societal structures. In the given context of Nima community the study explores new ways, and initiatives of teaching art with mural painting as a way to rebrand, and change the perceptions of place. Thereby the study explores the importance of art by using examples from within the community, and placing focus on contemporary art produced with a community perspective. Essentially by capsulize art in the public space, and problematize the art produced with, and for the people and its implications on the urban landscape. In this study of *Contemporary Art as a Catalyst for Social Change* mural painting, and public art projects will be considered as branches of the contemporary idea of art, building from contemporary ideas of participation, and societal discussion. In Accra there are several organisations working to explore contemporary ideas connected to art, particularly by contextualizing, and placing art in the public spaces of the community.

¹ Noble, E. and Roxhage, A. (2009) *SE MER! Samtidskonst och lärande, Göteborgs Internationella Konstbiennal*

Nima Muhinmanchi Art (NMA), from now on referred to as *NMA*, is a non-governmental organisation, working from within the Nima community to provide avenues for the public to access arts and culture. The name of the organisation in itself, translated to English “the importance of art in Nima”, highlights the role art plays in shaping the cultural fabric of Nima. The co-founders Robin Riskin, Amin Larry Yussif, Nicholas Wayo and Musah Swallah who are the executives, define the organisation to be both a platform for art and learning, as well as an instrument for social change, transforming communities and changing lives through public art, and arts education. The organisation was initiated as a project in 2011 and brought artists in the area together, creating a network for sharing, and exchanging experience, and knowledge in the field of art. The project was so well received in the community that it turned into an operating organisation, located in the heart of the Nima community.² Essentially *NMA* provides a network for member artists with member-meetings every month, discussing the development of the organisation, and on-going projects. Secondly the organisation organises public mural paintings, and art exhibitions in the community, with the participation of, and interaction with community inhabitants, particularly the youth. Thirdly *NMA* provides after school activity on Saturdays with workshops for children and youth, where member artists educate in art production, and creativity. Altogether the organisation incorporates art as a crosscutting device for urban development objectives, and brings art to the public spaces of the community, mainly through mural painting projects. As an associated partner I was linked with the organisation through shared visions, and ideas of art as a catalyst for change, as well as the belief in art's ability to reshape perceptions, and social stigmas of the community.

1.1 Background and context

In Nima there is the implicit assumption that through art there is the possibility, and potential to accomplish change. Therefore this study explores, and examines the way people talk about, and discuss art and its ability to function as a catalyst for change, primarily through the interaction of people in a contemporary community setting. The study explores art as a catalyst for change in the given and specific context of Nima community, a slum area centrally located in Ghana's capital city Accra. The study

² Interviews with the *NMA* executives Robin Riskin, Amin Larry Yussif, Nicholas Wayo and Musah Swallah

provides knowledge of the local context and explores possibilities for the contemporary art to highlight, build from, and to expand the contemporary public debate. By doing so, and also by entering the global art scene, artists are exposed to conventions of the field, mainly associated with representation where the African is often regarded as a unity. The global art scene will be further problematized in the next chapter, presenting challenges connected to the field of locally produced art.

1.1.1 Ghana – The Gold Coast

Present day Ghana finds itself in a postcolonial context, where the nation is still under construction and endeavours to build and develop its own societal structures, including functioning educational and economic systems. The country's official webpage emphasise that the year of independence 1957, Ghana was the first African nation to gain independence from colonial rule. The event of independence is crucial for the nation of today.³ This is an important aspect of how the artistic climate is emerging from the urban district Nima, and the process of breaking free from the past, and expanding into a global art scene. I have chosen to narrate the history of Ghana based on perspectives from within the country, and thereby not interpret the historical writing based on Western values and perspectives. Therefore Ghana's official webpage will serve as the main source in this paragraph.

It is impossible to study the art scene without considering the colonial past, and the fact that the country is still in a postcolonial context. Although the colonial past of Ghana is not the focus of this research, it is ignorant, and misleading to perform a study about an African community without regarding the past, and the effects on the present, as well as the process involved in rebuilding an independent nation.

Before gaining its independence in March 1957 Ghana was called the Gold Coast. The Portuguese were first to arrive in the 15th century, and the area became known as the Gold Coast since Europeans knew the area was the source of gold. The centuries that followed, many nations saw the Gold Coast as an attractive land due to its wealth in gold, as well as its location on the West Coast. Historically the land has belonged to Sweden, Denmark, Germany and England and with the European plantations in the New World in the 1500s the demand for slaves increased. The slave trade soon overshadowed gold as the main export, and according to the official webpage the

³ <http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/history/> (2014-05-02)

West-Coast of Africa became the principal source of slaves, with about 5,000 slaves a year shipped from the Gold Coast alone.⁴ The Europeans established trading posts with local chiefs in order to exchange, and trade goods. Another aspect of impact in the trans-Atlantic slave trade therefore concerns the involvement and role of African chiefs, Muslim traders, and merchant princes in the trade.

Africa is a continent, and it is impossible for one country to be representative for all the others, and to view the countries in comparison does not give any reality.

Therefore this study focus on, and discuss Ghana and its art scene and not the stereotype image of Africa.

1.2 Aims and objectives

The aim of this thesis is to explore art as a catalyst for change, and as a community of practice. It aims to contribute with knowledge in the field of African contemporary art, by highlighting the local art scene in the urban district Nima.

1.2.1 Research questions

- In what way is contemporary art used to bridge and simplify the structure and complexity of the Nima community?
- How is it possible for the mural paintings to function as a movement for rebranding of place in the Nima community?
- In what way can contemporary art serve as a catalyst for change, raising social issues?

1.2 Disposition

The study begins with an introductory chapter “Introduction”, providing a structure for the study through background and context as well as presenting aims and objectives, and research questions. The next chapter “Setting the Framework” presents for the study relevant theories and previous research. Different notions of community, legitimate peripheral participation, and postcolonial perspectives will be presented, and discussed in relation to the empirical material. The third introductory chapter “Method and Data” presents methods such as interviews, participant-observations, and visual ethnography and discuss ethics in the process of fieldwork.

⁴ <http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/history/> (2014-05-02)

Through the material three approaches have emerged based on the starting point that contemporary art may function as a catalyst for social change. The different approaches are transformed into three empirical chapters, where the Nima community in Accra/Ghana will serve as the common focus. Together the chapters constitute a narrative of place in a given context. The first empirical chapter: “The Artistic Climate of Nima” explores arts education in a community context, built from the initiative of a cultural apprenticeship. The chapter discuss how the non-governmental organisation *NMA* provides a network for artists, in order to empower youth and create opportunities for them to express themselves creatively. The artistic climate of Nima will be discussed and explored based on four different aspects: (1) Cultural apprenticeship, (2) Artistic network, (3) Empowerment of Youth, and (4) Community Development.

Different aspects of art in a community context will be further explored in the second empirical chapter “Mural Painting as Community Changing Practice”. The chapter discuss murals as methods for raising awareness, and in varied ways reach out to people in the community, and therefore also function as a catalyst for change. The chapter focus on the three aspects: (1) Artist as Contributors to Change, (2) Rebranding of Place, and (3) Creation of Venues.

The first two empirical chapters discuss art within the context of the Nima community. The third and last empirical chapter “The Importance of Art” provides a wider perspective of art, in order to communicate if, how, and why art is important. The chapter focus on three aspects: (1) Art as a Catalyst for Change, (2) Local and Global Perspectives, and (3) Postcolonial Context. Together the three empirical chapters constitute an ethnographical study that positions contemporary art in a community context. Various approaches, and examples of the role art play as a catalyst for change in the given context of Nima community are provided.

The first conclusive chapter “Summary and Conclusion” follows the empirical chapters, and the different findings are analysed and concluded, and the research questions answered. In the final conclusive chapter “Reflection” the conclusions are further discussed with consideration to future possibilities in the field of contemporary art in public spaces, in both local and global arenas.

2.0 Setting the Framework

The theoretical framework of this Master thesis is developed according to a qualitative research methodology. Theoretical ideas are elaborated from the empirical material created in field, in order to contextualise the practices. The theory will therefore bring the main material forward. Central for this study is the theory of community of practice developed by Lave and Wenger, which will be explained and contextualized through complementary theories and concepts.

2.1 Concepts of Community

The terminology and concept of ‘community’ can easily lead to confusion because it accommodates various meanings in different fields, and possess several dimensions, such as social, political and ethical.⁵ This study makes use of two notions of community. First it makes use of the concept community of practice. Secondly it discusses community in terms of placed-based senses of belonging, connected to issues of power. The two notions of community complement each other by approaching Nima, and the artists with an overlapping approach, creating a community of practice with mural painting as a tool for change. Therefore it is important to clarify the terminology of this specific study, where *Nima community* will be used to describe and identify the place in which a *community of practice* emerge as a movement, encompassing people, and art related activities.

2.1.1 Community of Practice

Central for this study is the concept of community of practice, described through legitimate peripheral participation, which provides a way to speak about the relation between newcomers and old-timers in a learning context. According to Lave and Wenger the legitimate peripheral participation concerns the process in which newcomers become part of a community of practice, stating that:

A person’s intentions to learn are engaged and the meaning of learning is configured through the process of becoming a full participant in a sociocultural practice.⁶

This quote, and the argument suggest that the process of learning is not only concentrated to what kind of knowledge that is mediated to others, instead rather on the participation, and involvement in social situations, where knowledge is passed

⁵ Hilde, T. C. (2005) *Encyclopaedia of Science, Technology, and Ethics*, p 383

⁶ Lave, J. and Wenger, E. (1991) *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*, p 29

along to others. In the Nima community a community of practice is created through the development of a cultural apprenticeship, expanding from within the community, and in various levels benefiting the inhabitants. People's intentions to learn are engaged through the process of becoming a participant in sociocultural practices, meaning that after being part of the cultural apprenticeship they become members of the artistic climate. The participation is thereby extended when members of the artistic climate are engaging further, and passing the knowledge along to others who are willing to learn.

When conceptualising legitimate peripheral participation as mentioned above, the context suggests that the theoretical significance derives from richness of interconnections that derives from history through time and across cultures, which Lave and Wenger describe as an analytical perspective.⁷ In the Nima community the concept of interconnections constitutes the community past, present and future, that historically provides the foundation for how the community was first established.

2.1.2 Community and Place

One aspect of community is that place is constantly claiming its uniqueness in relation to other districts, which suggests different notions of community to appear.

As a type of community, the city may be regarded as a relatively permanent concentration of population, together with its diverse habitations, social arrangements, and supporting activities, occupying a more or less discrete site and having a cultural importance that differentiates it from other types of human settlement and association.⁸

However as accentuated by Waterton and Smith, community is a frame of reference, or orientation that should not only be associated with place. Community should be understood as a social creation that emerges from experiences in continuous motion, and coalesces around shared interests, common causes, or collective experiences.⁹ According to Hilde community is a set of shared values, creating a sense of belonging in the community, and creating frameworks by which the world takes on meaning.¹⁰ The sense of belonging created in the community therefore includes a variety of understandings associated with common identification, at particular places.

⁷ Lave, J. and Wenger, E. (1991) *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*, p 39

⁸ Britanica, <http://www.britannica.com/lt.itag.bibl.liu.se/EBchecked/topic/118952/city?anchor=ref232177> (2014-04-29)

⁹ Waterton, E. and Smith, L. (2010) *The recognition and misrecognition of community heritage*, p. 9

¹⁰ Hilde, T. C. (2005) *Encyclopaedia of Science, Technology, and Ethics*, p 383

A qualitative sense of belonging therefore attends community, and a broader notion of community also includes common language, rituals, geographical territory, religion, historical memory, and ethnic identification.¹¹

This is applicable in the Nima community, where tradition, religion, language and history bring people together, and creates a notion of place as a community. Waterton and Smith explain the term community as rarely, or never used unfavourably, or in a negative sense. Therefore community is embraced in a social, and political context where certain practices seem like the right thing to do, and makes people feel good about the work performed in the community.¹² Therefore community can be apprehended as a construction, constituted and assigned meaning by the people interacting within the context.

Community exist in the minds of its members, and should not be confused with geographic or sociographic assertions of 'fact'. By extension, the distinctiveness of communities and thus, the reality of their boundaries, similarly lies in the mind, in the meanings which people attach to them, not in the structural forms.¹³

Waterton and Smith discuss community as a construction, based on social relations of power, where community tend to be explained as a solution, rather than something in need of explanation.¹⁴ Referring to Neal and Walter, Waterton and Smith further discuss the notion of community as an action, or process that is constituted in the present, and in a world of doing.¹⁵ This aspect of power is predicated in the conception of community, and is run through with divergent interests. The desire to speak on behalf of others, particularly those marginalized by traditional heritage narratives becomes distinguishable, and representation is thereby a fact. Community then becomes a (re)construction through on-going, power-saturated experiences, engagements, and relations.¹⁶ These aspects might increase the possibility of community-based projects to evolve around inquires from third parties, creating projects for the community, rather than with the community and its inhabitants, as first alluded.¹⁷ This brings the question of who is representing who in the Nima

¹¹ Hilde, T. C. (2005) *Encyclopaedia of Science, Technology, and Ethics*, p 383

¹² Morris and Kuma referred by Waterton, E. and Smith, L. (2010), *The recognition and misrecognition of community heritage*, p. 8

¹³ Cohen referred by Waterton, E. and Smith, L. (2010), *The recognition and misrecognition of community heritage*, p 8

¹⁴ Waterton, E. and Smith, L. (2010), *The recognition and misrecognition of community heritage*, p 5

¹⁵ Neal and Walters referred by Waterton, E. and Smith, L. (2010), *The recognition and misrecognition of community heritage*, p 7-8

¹⁶ Waterton, E. and Smith, L. (2010) *The recognition and misrecognition of community heritage*, p 8

¹⁷ *Ibid*, p 7

community, where the work of local organisations canalize perspectives from both the inside and the outside world, which will be further discussed below when discussing postcolonial perspectives.

2.2 Post Colonial Perspective

The post-colonial perspective reflects the present state of Ghana, an independent country, working to create, and develop its own structures, and traditions with regards to the history, and with a strive for the future. As highlighted by Marschall the issue of representation deriving from art created in the public space, raises questions of who is in the position to represent others, and how others are in fact represented.¹⁸ The issue of representation becomes visible when exploring the artistic climate of Nima, and central in the exploration of contemporary art as a catalyst for social change, including the work of *NMA*. Marschall discuss representation and power with particular reference to mural paintings.

It must be pointed out that most murals, while painted with a diverse, multi-cultural group of artists and sometimes even ordinary people from the local community, are still initiated by white project managers, who organise funding, negotiate with sponsors or clients, select artists, and co-ordinate the painting of the mural.¹⁹

As will be discussed in the study below, the involvement manifests, and reflects the position of dependence that is placing the community in a postcolonial era. Aspects of ordinary people's daily life can be conveyed, and reflected through the murals, and also enables public statements to be distributed to the mass. Marschall discuss this as a problematic question of authenticity, which also questions the impact of the people represented.²⁰ Murals nevertheless could constitute a public voice that speaks about people, and according to Marschall the creation of murals is a way to define the identity of local communities.²¹ The implication here is that the social norm of being from a white middle-class background effectively exempts those groups from discussion. Consequently the mural paintings can be seen as both an expression of the

¹⁸ Marschall, S. (2000), *A Postcolonial Reading of Mural Art in South Africa*, p 115

¹⁹ *Ibid*, p 115

²⁰ *Ibid*, p 114-115

²¹ *Ibid*, p 115

people, as well as other people's representation of them, and therefore creating a shift in the power of representation.²²

Lundahl describes the postcolonial field as a field in which a series of critical questions are asked, which describes how contemporary life is caught in, and influenced by legacy of colonialism and its aftermath.²³ This is essential for the fact of representation, and problematic involved in how others are represented in present, where Lundahl concludes that the assumption of "the other" creates the idea of differences between them and us. In fact as accentuated by Lundahl, differences between humans and continents has no connection with real differences between people, instead they are conceptualisations navigated through our thinking, and thereby constructions of our mind.²⁴

2.3 Community and Community of Practice

It is possible for community practice to incorporate our desires for the concept of 'community', characterized by its function as a universalizing power, and including the nostalgia for the idea of community.²⁵ However the nostalgia includes the implicit assumption that community is somehow a cure for all manner of social problems, which may contribute to reinforce, and explore how the artists and leaders perceive, and talk about a community, and thereby the influence of community of practice.

The problematisation of concepts, and terminology of community involves a process where various representations of reality can influence the construction of groups. Predetermined ideas of community may be imposed onto groups of people, who as a result suffer from lack of self-esteem, self-worth and self-identity.²⁶ The difference in terminology of community creates a tension between communions of people within the *community*, and fixed ideas of what a community is, formed by a *community of practice*.²⁷

Finally this study evolve around the idea that through the concept of *community* and *community of practice*, people engage in social relationships and takes account of

²² Alleyne and Brint referred by Waterton E. and Smith, L. (2010), *The recognition and misrecognition of community heritage*, p 7

²³ Lundahl, M. (2004) *Postkolonial kritik och konst*, p 19

²⁴ Ibid, p 20

²⁵ Waterton E. and Smith, L. (2010) *The recognition and misrecognition of community heritage*, p 6-7

²⁶ Howarth referred by Waterton, E. and Smith, L. (2010), *The recognition and misrecognition of community heritage*, p 9

²⁷ Burkett referred by Waterton, E. and Smith, L. (2010), *The recognition and misrecognition of community heritage*, p. 9

action, process, power, and change. And thereby through critical conceptualisation make use of the rhetoric involved in the process.²⁸

2.4 Previous Research

In this section, research of relevance for the study will be presented, focusing on local and global intersections of art and postcolonial communities. Areas that in various levels are central for the research in the field of contemporary, and community based art practices, and initiatives. Throughout the review of previous research I will present different approaches, connected to current practices.

Thierry de Duve describes the global art world through the phenomenon of biennales, situated all around the world. In the text *The Glocal and the Singuniversal: Reflections on Art and Culture in the Global World* he explains different approaches of impact of art in global contexts.²⁹ The author explicates that the phenomenon oscillates between optimistic, and pessimistic approaches. The optimistic demonstrates a successful integration of the local, into the global that embrace the redistribution of cultural power amongst different regions of the world. The pessimistic on the other hand suggests that the phenomenon of biennales implies a new form of cultural hegemony, of local by the global, conducted by the Western world.³⁰ De Duve therefore suggests that biennales are in fact cultural experiments in the global economy, reconciled with local interests that provide aspects of power.³¹ In different chapters of my study I discuss aspects of power, however from the perspective of representation-based power, focusing on local and global perspectives in a community context.

In the aggregation *The Global Art World Inc: On the globalization of contemporary art* Charlotte Bydler discuss and examines segments of the art world-system in which geographical distances seemed to vanish as a result of faster, and more intense interaction levels.³²

Art in a postcolonial context incorporates important aspects of the study, where representation constitutes the central part of the discussion. Who are in fact in the

²⁸ Waterton, E. and Smith, L. (2010), *The recognition and misrecognition of community heritage*, p 5

²⁹ de Duve, T. (2007) *The Glocal and the Singuniversal: Reflections on Art and Culture in the Global World*, p 681

³⁰ Ibid, p 683

³¹ Ibid, p 682-683

³² Bydler, C. *The Global Art World Inc: On the globalization of contemporary art*, <http://sh.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2%3A416346&dswid=8439>

position to represent others, and the stereotype image of African art? Mikela Lundahl accentuate that when entering the global art scene, the fact of representation is pushing artists from Africa into certain categories, not allowing them to engage in universal questions.³³ She further explains that there is an assumption that artists from Africa are supposed to represent the continent, countries and most importantly the cultural heritage of their origin.³⁴ They are expected to operate in an unbroken tradition, stretching back in generations. This violates the contemporary idea of art being a catalyst of the present, and evolving around modern societies. Not only creating tensions between local and global arenas, but also placing the art in a postcolonial community context. A context in which African artists are expected to produce art with an obvious implementation of cultural representation, based on ethnicity, and identity that is shared with others with the same origin.³⁵ Naturally as accentuated by Lundahl it creates a problematic. Many artists find inspiration from the place where they have their practice, and naturally portraying things that are close. However the problem dwells in the way it is always expected that artists from the African continent represents Africa in a certain way, and yet not allowing the artists to approach universal questions, since universal questions tend to centre around western countries. Lundahl provides my study with valuable insights in the postcolonial field, especially in the discussion of “African art”.

The postcolonial perspective on contemporary identities, and art is further discussed by Maria Eriksson Baaz, introducing the postcolonial through a quote by the Senegalese artist Iba N’Diaye, that describes the postcolonial aspects of art produced by artists in Africa.³⁶

I have no desire to be fashionable. Certain Europeans, seeking exotic thrills, expect me to serve them folklore. I refuse to do it—otherwise, I would exist only as a function of their segregationist ideas of the African artist.³⁷

In the introductory chapter of the book *Same and Other: Negotiating African Identity*, Eriksson Baaz argue, supported by theories of Stuart Hall, that identities change, and modify as a result of shifting social configurations, and power relations. One of the

³³ Lundahl, M. (2004) *Postkolonial kritik och konst*, p 17

³⁴ *Ibid*, p 16

³⁵ *Ibid*, p 17

³⁶ Eriksson Baaz, M. (2001) *Same and Other: Negotiating African Identity in Cultural Production*, p 5

³⁷ Quote of Iba N’Diaye, quoted by Eriksson Baaz, *Same and Other: Negotiating African Identity in Cultural Production*, p 5

aspects suggests that the colonial history is still shaping contemporary identities. Therefore past ideas, and images are still embedded in contemporary discourses, to which people position themselves.³⁸ According to Eriksson Baaz the concept “African art” must be situated in the context of this history, and the process in which different objects regardless of their meaning and function in the local context, are incorporated in a general Western notion of art. Even if the notion of “African art” is not the main focus of my study, Eriksson Baaz provides valuable insights about the stereotype image of Africa in global contexts, as well as local identities in art production.³⁹

Kwame Anthony Appiah provides other perspectives of the postcolonial, with comments on the cultural philosophy, and the image of Africa through theories of race. He concludes that varied usage of race as a basis for solidarity amongst people presupposes an idea of a common belonging, that does not correspond with reality, since people from Africa often have much less in common culturally than we generally assume.⁴⁰ Even if theories of race will not at all be noticed in this study, the history, and thereby the postcolonial state of Ghana will be presented whereby Appiah’s conclusions elucidate important aspects that historically shaped the continent.

In the article *Towards a ethnographic turn in contemporary art scholarship*, Fiona Siegenthaler argues that an ethnographical approach to the contemporary art practice, not only contributes to the understanding of socially, and processed based arts. According to her it also establish new perspectives on art genres that do not explicitly address social interaction and the exploration, and establishment of networks.⁴¹ Siegenthaler enunciate that amongst the artists the social interaction, and networks involved in the art practice produce new perspectives, questions, and insights that constitute the actual artwork, instead of the art object itself.⁴² The author describes the ethnographic turn as a step away from the traditional exhibition space, and suggests that scholars of contemporary art need new methods when approaching the arts.⁴³ This turn suggests that the art produced involves interconnections, and networks amongst artists, and provides perspectives for the field in which I place my study.

³⁸ Eriksson Baaz, M. (2001) *Same and Other: Negotiating African Identity in Cultural Production*, p 6

³⁹ Ibid, p 7-8

⁴⁰ Appiah, K.A. (1999) *I min faders hus: Kulturfilosofins bild av Afrika*, p 168

⁴¹ Siegenthaler, F. (2013) *Towards an ethnographic turn in contemporary art scholarship*, p 737

⁴² Ibid, p 738

⁴³ Ibid.

Young Imm Kang Song, and Jo Ann Gammel further discuss perspectives of mural painting, and community art in the article *Ecological Mural as Community Reconnection*. Based on a specific context, the authors finds patterns where the murals can serve as effective tools to create awareness of environmental issues in local communities.

Murals are particularly visually captivating forms of public art due to their size and accessibility. Mural images also capture public attention and provoke viewers to explore layers of meaning and find hidden stories. They are often in places that people come to visit, study, play, congregate and discuss matters that may relate to the content of the mural.⁴⁴

Therefore Kang Song and Gammel provide perspectives of mural painting, and it's importance, as well as its ability to create awareness, and change in local communities. The article provides valuable insights in mural painting practices in a local context, and presents similarities with my study in the way it investigates community-based art projects.⁴⁵ Like my study this article reflects how the local art scene, consisting of artists, students, community members and non-profit organisations collaborate to realise projects, and build for a better community.

In the text *The Community Mural and Democratic Art Processes*, Michael R. Mosher enunciate murals to be an art process in which community discussions, and issues can be highlighted. He highlights the process of community mural development, through a nine-step process for maximising professionalism, community participation, and decisions.⁴⁶ My study does not apply any methods for implementation of community-based mural painting; rather it serves as a pure observation of present structures. However Mosher provides valuable ideas for an extension of research, developed in this study. Like the studied context, the project described by Mosher has enabled youth to access higher education, and explore new parts of their city, and thereby created a greater sense of belonging in the community. Mosher considers community murals as one of the most democratic mediums, since it creates structures that involves different fields, and consist of a combination of professions, both artists, and community inhabitants.⁴⁷ The author's definition of community art has been valuable

⁴⁴ Kang Song, Y. I. and Gammel, J. A. (2011) *Ecological Mural as Community Reconnection*, p 266

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Mosher, M.R. (2004) *The Community Mural and Democratic Art Processes*, p 528

⁴⁷ Ibid, p 529

for the development of a framework for this study, where community has been the main approach.

Let us define “community arts” as art removed from the present commercial art world and market systems—not commodified objects but contextualized, specific, sited-group expression. If such art is by an individual, it is usually with the community’s input or cognizance of its issues. It heals the split between art and the general populace that deliberate investment strategies have brought about, bringing the arts back to something approaching their rich significance in previous societies.⁴⁸

Mosher further consider community art to be content driven stories of people, and particularities in society, including race, ethnicity, and class where realism is a matter of content rather than form.⁴⁹

The research and theories presented in this chapter constitute previews of the field in which my master study operates. The framework developed in this chapter thereby serve as a foundation for the material collected in field, and assists the process of producing discussions, analyses and reflections.

⁴⁸ Mosher, M.R. (2004) *The Community Mural and Democratic Art Processes*, p 530

⁴⁹ Ibid.

3.0 Method and Data

In this chapter, the methods of the study will be presented and problematized in order to provide an insight in the process of fieldwork. The study is based on an ethnographic fieldwork in the district of Nima, situated in Accra, the capital city of Ghana in West Africa. During a field period of ten weeks, I have through the non-governmental organisation *NMA*, been part of a context striving to use contemporary art as a catalyst for change, raising social issues. This is studied through observations of how the organisation, and member artists perceive, and talk about the role they themselves play in the community.

The field study derives from qualitative research, where an ethnographic research methodology has been incorporated. As explained by Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw, the ethnographic approach is about, as natural as possible, relate to the context and those encountered in field, and thereby striving to become a full participant.⁵⁰ By living in the field setting of the urban district Nima, data has emerged from the interactions with, and observation of, people in the context. The ethnographic approach has made it possible to relate to the context, and thus identified an artistic climate, and those active within.⁵¹

The methods are interviews with elements of participant observation, and visual ethnography that will be further discussed below. The study is based on the research role *participant - as - observer*, defined by Bryman as an approach where the researcher, in this case myself, is involved, and interacts with the social environment while the role as researcher is stated.⁵² The main material consists of interviews where the role of *participant-as-observer* can be questioned since interviews are by the researcher constructed, social situations. However since I also engaged in interactions with the organisation, and the members within, interviews have been conducted with a conversation-based structure, expanding from the interaction between two parties.⁵³ The main bulk of data has emerged from semi-structured interviews, exploiting its flexibility, and allowing new questions to emerge from the process, as result of the conversations.

⁵⁰ Robert M. Emerson, Rachel I. Fretz and Linda L. Shaw (Ed.). (2011) *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, p 21-22

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Bryman, A. (2011) *Samhällsvetenskapliga metoder*, p 389

⁵³ Ibid.

The primary activity during the field study implied being part of the studied context, the urban district of Nima, where I was resident during the field period. As a temporary resident I lived in a family compound consisting of several small houses placed together in a square, with a cemented courtyard joining the houses together. The lack of running water and proper electricity was a challenge at first, but manageable after a couple of weeks. My main family was located a couple of compounds away, from where I received food twice a day. Everyday life was enriched by the friendship with a four-year-old boy, Yussif who spent most of his time outside school with me. As a temporary resident, I was invited to participate in traditions, religious celebrations, school activities and arts education. Becoming part of the context was very important for the study, and therefore most of my time was spent socialising in the context, and exploring the small streets, and communities of the urban district. As part of understanding the context observations and interviews have been conducted in combination with visual ethnography, consisting of photography. Through the camera lens I have documented and gained an insight into the everyday life of people in the slum area Nima. The camera has functioned as a tool for understanding the context, and thus helped to create an identity and job title when entering the field. During the analysis the photographs have functioned as tools to remember details of the community, and the people encountered in field. The field study has served as a process, described by Kaijser as a social activity, subsumed by social rules. Consequently I participated in social situations as one amongst others, creating a problematic since people sometimes forgot the purpose of me being there.⁵⁴ The problematic was connected with ethics, whereas I was often forced to evaluate information, and analyse if the narrated information was confidential or not. As a result of the social activity, the amount of time given to digest and process experiences was limited, whereas the transcription of interviews and field notes was implemented when returned home after the study.

As explained in previous chapter the theoretical ideas are developed based on the collected empirical data, in a process of theory developing. The field study constitutes the foundation on which theories and concepts are adjusted in relation to the material, such as visual ethnography.

⁵⁴ Kaijser, L. (2011) *Etnologiskt fältarbete*, Kaijser, L. and Öhlander, M. (Ed.), p 54

3.1 Field Study and Ethics

In the study I adopt an open research role, especially with consideration to ethical perspectives and problematic. In the context of entering the urban district of Nima and the artistic climate within the community, it was important to build confidence amongst the people, and in particular the informants. The ethical aspects involve preventing stereotype narrations, and to retain an open approach to experiences in field, and thereby also constitute clarity in the aims of the research itself.

The open approach has enabled me to interact in the social context, establishing personal bonds to the informants, and the people in my surroundings. In the daily interaction with people, observations have taken place, making me aware of the ethical aspects involved, mainly with consideration to the people in my surrounding. However I have informed people of my study, and the purpose of me being there, as well as their part in the study. I have been working actively to preserve their integrity throughout this study, whereas the informants desire to exclude certain information from the voice recordings has been respected, and in some cases the recordings have been switched off for more confidential conversations. As part of the study I considered it important to give recognition to local artists, which was one reason for using the informants real names in the study. Secondly the artists themselves did not wish to be anonymous and instead they wished to participate in the study with their names.

Since the study was realised through a Minor Field Study grant, one of the conditions was to write in English, however writing in English also enable the artists to take part of, and evaluate my findings in order to implement it in their organisation if they so wish.

3.1.2 Selection of Context and Informants

Since becoming part of the context was the main goal, Nima community naturally became the primal focus since it was where I spent most of the time in field. In the context I created my own reality by observing surroundings, and socialising with people in the community.

When exploring possibilities for the Minor Field Study, I soon decided to place the study in West Africa since I have experiences of working with arts and culture in the area. However the goal was to enter a totally new context, a context in which I did not

want the language to be a barrier. The fact that Ghana was chosen had three reasons, first since English is the official language. English is a language that I am comfortable with, compared to French that is another common language in West African countries. Secondly Ghana's rising art scene caught my interest when doing research, awakening a curiosity for the country. Thirdly Ghana was the first African country to gain independence in 1957, placing the country as a role model for other African countries and creating an interesting context for the art itself. When exploring the Ghanaian art scene I found the organisation *Nima Muhinmanchi Art (NMA)* and was immediately drawn to the meaning of the name, "the importance of art in Nima". The approach of the organisation suited my study with the aim to explore art as a catalyst for social change. I found the organisation online and established contact through their Facebook page, and later continuing the contact through email and Skype.

From recordings posted on their Facebook page, and links to YouTube I became curious about their work with children, and their view on art as an important aspect of the community. Naturally Nima became the place for the study since the organisation is located in the community.

Through the cooperation with the organisation I was introduced to the community, and was provided a host family and contacts in the area. The selection of informants is based on members attached to the non-governmental organisation *NMA*, who is creating possibilities for artistic expressions in the urban district Nima, perceived by its inhabitants as a community. Through member meetings contacts were established with member artists, who I visited for interviews in their art studios. The interviews have been *semi-structured* and have taken the shape of conversations, preventing to govern the informant's answers in any specific direction. Represented amongst the informants are members of different ages, experiences and interests, but with many similarities. They are mainly men, trained through the same system, and all contributing to the artistic climate of Nima. The informants possess different roles in today's organisation, including the four Co-founders, and the senior artist, from who the artistic climate emerged. I actively chose to give all the members the opportunity to participate, and received all their names and contacts. However I did not receive answers from all of them, and also the time was a problem. Therefore I focused on the ones I had established a contacts with, trying to vary the ages and level of establishment equally. The choices I made created a diverse material but with many

similarities between the answers. As a coincident most of the interviewees had trained for the same master, a result that was just random at first, but later turned out to be of great significance for the study. The contacts provided by the organisation were crucial for my introduction in the field. The relations that developed as a result of interviews with the members became even more interesting when detecting a pattern. In fact most of the artist lacks formal training, but shares similar experiences of training in an organised system of apprenticeship.

The study provides an insight into the local art scene and prevailing structures of the on-going artistic climate, expanding from the urban district of Nima, where I have tracked down the grassroots of the artistic climate to Hussein (Mozzey) Hashim, one of the senior artists in Nima. When scanning the field of art in Nima this particular branch of the artistic climate was the most obvious, since the majority of the informants connected to the organisation had trained for him through a cultural apprenticeship. Note that there are several senior artists in Nima that in varied ways might have contributed to the artistic climate itself. This study discuss the local art scene as an artistic climate, where the people within contributes to build a lively art scene as a community function, providing venues for discussing community issues, and to rebrand the place.

To gain a wider understanding of the community, the study has evolved and expanded to include community-leaders, and social governance of Nima. Interviews with Chiefs, Assemblymen, Imams and Member of Parliament contribute with knowledge about the past, and present of the Nima community. In the process of material collection, the assistance of the three artists Rufai Zakari, Kamal Larry and Nicholas Wayo, have been particularly valuable. They have served as interpreters and translators, contacting and assisted to book meetings with community leaders, and providing me with valuable information, and knowledge about the structures and issues of the community.

3.2 Interviews

Interviews have been the primary source of data. The conducted interviews can be characterized as deriving from conversations, based on a few pre-set questions that have changed and evolved in the interaction with the informants. This constitutes an interview method that according to Fägerborg is characterized as versatile, and

moving in ranges of unstructured and structured.⁵⁵ According to Bryman interviews with this character are *semi-structured*, which presuppose a flexible interview process where the interviews are based on different themes, functioning as an interview guide, allowing the informants to formulate their answers, as they themselves desire.⁵⁶

Meetings was arranged with artists at their studios, in order to make them comfortable, as well as being able to observe them in their natural environment, and to view the produced artworks. The questions have gone through a process of change, and over time developed and reshaped during the process of interviewing, allowing the interviews to differ from each other. Therefore every interview is unique, set in social situations, where follow-up questions have been created in the process of connecting with what the informants says.⁵⁷

Semi-structured or not, interviews are social situations, that according to Fägerborg is partially constructed by the researcher. It is in the interaction between the interviewer and the informants that the material is created, depending on the social situation, and the trust built up during the social process in field.⁵⁸

The interviews were recorded and during the transcribing I re-listened, and documented the answers of the informants. The selection of transcribed interviews was printed, and compared to each other, in order to create a material for the analysis. Parts of the different interviews were placed together to detect similarities, and contrasts in the collected material, where a rich variety of viewpoints were combined and analysed, creating three different categories, that merged into three empirical chapters.

3.3 Informants

Because of the proportion of the collected material, a selection has been necessary to complete the study. In totality the material consist of thirty interviews, of which I have chosen to analyse fifteen. Thereof a purposive sampling has been applied, described by Bryman as being based on people, places and organisations relevance for the understanding of a social phenomenon.⁵⁹ The selected interviews therefore represents the interviews conducted in field, taking into account the age, knowledge,

⁵⁵ Fägerborg, E. (2011) *Etnologiskt fältarbete*, Kaijser, L. and Öhlander, M. (Ed.), p 99

⁵⁶ Bryman, A. (2011) *Samhällsvetenskapliga metoder*, p 415

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Fägerborg, E. (2011) *Etnologiskt fältarbete*, Kaijser, L. and Öhlander, M. (Ed.), p 95

⁵⁹ Bryman, A. (2011) *Samhällsvetenskapliga metoder*, p 392

and education of the informants, as well as building from the research questions. Since interviews are social situations, some of them have been more successful than others, depending on how talkative the informants been, and how much they wanted to narrate. Factors such as language, and whether I had access to an interpreter have been crucial, since some of the informants have very limited English skills. The chosen 15 interviews have all been conducted with informants of good English skills, or with an interpreter as support, and therefore these interviews have been richer, and more applicable for the study.

3.3.1 Artists

The informants of the study mainly consist of members connected to the non-governmental organisation *NMA*. Most of them trained for the senior artist Hussein (Mozzey) Hashim, and have continued to develop the cultural apprenticeship by taking students of their own. The fact that the informants are almost exclusively male is not a conscious choice, since the contacts I was provided with from the organisation *NMA* were mainly male artists. The few female artists I found during research were not interested, or were impossible to get hold of. However when observing the art scene itself, the deficiency in female artists reflects the present climate. The short presentations below are based on conversations with local artists.

Hussein (Mozzey) Hashim is the senior artist in Nima, from which the artistic climate emerged, through a cultural apprenticeship and is a member artist of *NMA*. He is a self-taught artist without any formal training or schooling. Mozzey himself, as well as other artist in the area estimates that he trained a big majority of all the young artists in the area.

Nicholas Wayo is artist and Co-founder of *NMA*, where he is the Educational Director and one of the executives. In his work he represents the member artist, as well as being in charge of educational work with children, and oversees the workshops. He has an art studio and combines creating inspirational works and taking assignments and orders from people as well as companies. He has no formal training but did apprenticeship, and has many years of experience in the arts, as well as teaching. He teaches workshops as well as train several students through cultural apprenticeship.

Amin Larry Yussif is artist and Co-founder of *NMA*, where he is the Artistic Director and one of the executives. He is a self-taught artist, but did training at Ankor Collage

of Art, where he studied visual art, graphics, textual design, painting, and picture making. As an artist he base his artistic practice on using his creative mind to think about and change the community rather than using paint on canvas. As an artistic director he is in charge of the business.

Robin Riskin is Co-founder of *NMA*, where she is the Project Director and one of the executives. She is from New York and came to Ghana in 2010 with a grant from Haverford Collage to intern at a local organisation. She came back the next year to run a community art project in Nima and linked up with Amin Larry Yussif and Musah Swallah. Four weeks of workshops in drawing and painting resulted in an exhibition and mural painting, which set the foundation for the organisation *NMA*.

Musah Swallah is artist and Co-founder of *NMA*, where he is the Artistic Director and one of the executives. He trained as an apprentice for Hussein (Mozzey) Hashim. As an Artistic Director he oversee the workshops, teaches workshops as well as training several students through cultural apprenticeship.

Rufai Zakari is a member artist of *NMA*, where he teaches workshops and train several students through cultural apprenticeship. He trained as an apprentice for Hussein (Mozzey) Hashim, and thereafter gained formal training at Ghanatta College of Art, and recieving a three-year diploma.

Yussif (Lab) Sangbe is a member artist of *NMA*, where he teaches workshops and train several students through cultural apprenticeship. He trained as an apprentice for Hussein (Mozzey) Hashim, and thereafter gained formal training at Ghanatta College of Art, and receiving a four-year diploma.

Yussif Hussein Ojaff is a member artist of *NMA*, where he teaches workshops and train several students through cultural apprenticeship. He trained as an apprentice for Hussein (Mozzey) Hashim and thereafter gained formal training at Ankor Collage of Art.

Mohammed (Moh) Awudu is a member artist of *NMA*, where he teaches workshops and train several students through cultural apprenticeship. He trained as an apprentice for Hussein (Mozzey) Hashim, and thereafter gained formal training at Amuse Academy of Art and Design where he also was teaching after his studies. He defines himself as a fine artist, poster painter, graffiti artist, function designer, digital artist, and street artist

Taufiq Musah is a member artist of *NMA*, where he teaches workshops and train several students through cultural apprenticeship. He has no formal training but did Visual arts in High school where he continued as a Visual Arts teacher before teaching art at several other schools. He trained for Hussein (Mozzey) Hashim.

Tei Huagie is member of *Foundation for Contemporary Art Ghana (FCA)*, and a contemporary and established artist. Working locally and internationally with mixed media materials, mainly recycled art.

3.3.2 Community-Leaders and Social Governance

The community-leaders and social governance of Nima is constituted by leaders of varied and differentiated levels of ranks, some of them inherited their positions, like the Chiefs, others volunteered for it as the Assemblymen and others, like the Member of Parliament and Chairman was elected and earn their living from it. Others, for example the Imams have been educated for their positions. The community-leaders and social governance of Nima has been valuable in providing information of the area and giving their viewpoints of how art is implemented in the community. The short presentations below are based on conversations and interviews with the community-leaders and social governance of Nima.

Honourable Nazer Mahama Toure is the MP of Nima, Ayawaso constituency, elected to run the development of Nima community in parliament for a period of four years. *Honourable Nazer Mahama Toure* has provided significant and valuable information about the present state of Nima, discussing challenges and possibilities for the community in the future.

Nii Futah is the Chief of Nima and the grandson of Malam Futah, the first Chief of Nima who led the establishment of the community in the 1930's. *Nii Futah* has provided significant and valuable information about the establishment of Nima, information essential for this study. *Nii Futah* considers the artist to have an important role in the community by influence, and involve others by using their knowledge in the philosophy of art.

Honourable Shaiu Tajudeen is Assemblyman of Nima 441, a district in the Nima community, volunteering for the position and not gaining any economical support from the assignment of being the voice of people of his district in parliament. During the interview he accentuates the importance of art for the community mainly through

providing opportunities for the youth. *Honourable Shaiu Tajudeen* has provided significant and valuable information about the present state of Nima, information essential for this study.

Mr Rasak Abdul Issah is the Chairman of town council *Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA)* and is in charge of community development through infrastructure and urban city planning. *Mr Rasak Abdul Issah* has provided significant and valuable information about the development of Nima, information essential for this study.

Malam Saeed is Imams in one of many Mosques in Nima, leading prayers, educating and advising community inhabitants in matters concerning religion as well as in every day life. *Malam Saeed* has provided information about the religion and its importance in Nima.

3.4 Analysis

In addition to interviews, participant observations have been conducted, allowing the research to explore new arenas by observing the urban district of Nima. The material has taken several turns, and as part of the process I have observed, and reconceptualised these turns, in order to analyse and follow the direction of the research. Questions have evolved from the material, based on the approach of contemporary art as a catalyst for social change, providing an open mind-set to the environment, and the context of which I have taken part.

Visual ethnography serves its purpose as important supplement in the methodology, recollecting place and the people within. The visual ethnography, consisting of photography has mainly functioned as memory aid to field notes and interviews. As suggested by Sarah Pink, the researcher, through the use of photography as visual ethnography, creates neutrality in the group, connected to the question of involvement in social situations. As a photographer I was assigned a role in the group, as the one taking pictures. Although the group was informed of my presence as a researcher, the camera made the social involvement more distinct.⁶⁰

The participant-observations have been conducted in the Nima community, in areas with people passing, creating a movement and creating an understanding for the context. Visits to the marketplace, workshops with the organisation *NMA*, religious celebrations, happenings around the neighbourhood, and mural paintings where I have

⁶⁰ Pink, S. (2007) *Doing Visual Ethnography: images, media and representation in research*, p 20

been observant to changes, and how people interact with each other in the environment.

3.5 Transcribing

The transcribing of the collected data appeared to be more extensive, and time consuming than expected, mainly due to the transformative nature of the process involved in collecting empirical data. The process has allowed some of the material to flourish, and some to serve more as stepping-stone to the empirical data displayed in this study.

Voice recordings of the interviews have implemented possibilities to duplicated times, go back and re-listen the interviews. The interviews used for this study are therefore transcribed from voice recordings, where I have used the correct quotes with references to the informants. I have limited the study to focus on what the informants actually say, and thereby excluded pauses, sounds and double words, since they are of less value and relevance for the interviews, and thus the study as a unit.

4.0 The Artistic Climate of Nima

The journey through Nima has begun, the sun is burning and the heat is unimaginable. I am on the back of a motorbike, traveling through the community, and exploring Nima in what seems like the most natural way. It is Wednesday and market day, many people are on the move, walking with babies tied to their hips and heavy burdens, loaded in buckets on their heads. Everywhere we pass, women are walking around selling bananas from piles on their heads, and in every corner people are standing with wagons selling fresh coconut. The road is bumpy, and not even the wind cools me. We are now traveling through the small areas of Nima, over speed bumps created by cracks in the cemented grounds, and big holes from the heavy traffic on this particular road. Since the roads are few, the traffic jam on this one is just crazy. Every now and then we put the speed down to say hi to one of my driver Nicholas friends, and occasionally we stop, and he introduces me to different people. Children are running along the roadside, screaming “Batouria, Batouria, Batouria” meaning stranger in the local language - I am the stranger. Shops where people sell cloths, fruits, bags and much more line the road and there are people everywhere. Nicholas is plunking the horn to make people move out of the way, we are now moving faster, and I hold on tightly. We are now moving to a bigger road, still in Nima, Nima is a big community I realize that now. We cross the traffic by zigzagging between the cars, and sometimes also enter the high pavement in the middle of the road, separating the right and left lane, to avoid the traffic jam. It seems there are no rules except staying alive, and the motorbike seems like the easiest way to transport in a big, and busy city like Accra. We meet taxis and tros-tros and people are plunking their horns at the smallest bit of non-movement from the cars in front of them – people plunk their horns a lot.⁶¹ We leave the road and enter the Kanda Highway, suddenly the speed of the motorbike turns up and we are driving very fast, finally I am not hot anymore and the wind cools me. We are leaving Nima behind us, and continue our journey through the city of Accra.

The field note provides focus from the inside and out and creates an understanding of the context, in which this study is conducted. This first empirical chapter focus on the Nima community and the art scene, defined in this study as an artistic climate.

⁶¹ Tros-tros: local transportation in shape of a mini van

4.1 Nima Community

Nima is an urban district in the centre of the capital city Accra in Ghana, with a population of almost 180 000 inhabitants, according to the last sensors in 2012.⁶² Nima emerged as a Muslim community in the early 1930's and served as a hub for trade, something that in present day still characterize, and pervade the community. The development of Nima is complex, and according to present day chief Nii Futah the community became a popular place to settle due to its central location, new development and the low price to purchase a piece of land. Malam Futah who at the time was the Imam of Accra, and grandfather of present day Chief Nii Futah, acquired the land and was the one leading the establishment of the community.⁶³ Nii Futah further explains that Muslim communities in other parts of the country were bursting, and since the first Chief of Nima was the Imam of Accra, he had a great following that provided Nima with its first inhabitants.

You see with the religion, Nima has been like a Muslim community for decades. I think, even though we have other Christian tribes and everything, but the majority of them are Muslim, which I can say prostate maybe like 85%, and 15% are non-Muslims.⁶⁴

The Assemblyman, Honourable Shaiu Tajuden, provides information about the community, and the establishment of Nima as a Muslim dominated area, in a country that is domineered by Christians. Different tribes came from all over Ghana, and West Africa to settle, and as a result the urban district became a cosmopolitan community, a place where almost anyone could fit in. The community is now housing most of the West African tribes, each of them with their own language and tradition. As the development of Nima proceeded the language Hausa became the lingua franca for the residents, a common language in Zongo communities, which has helped the process of uniting the community, and the different tribes.⁶⁵

Because of the nature of the development of Nima, with people of all backgrounds, it did not emerge as a monolithic community. There were some little conflicts.⁶⁶

Nii Futah further explains that the complexity of Nima's aggradation were due to slum problematic such as thievery, and violence combined with people from differing

⁶² Interview with Honourable Shaiu Tajudeen, Assemblyman of Nima 441, p 1

⁶³ Interview with Nii Futah, Chief of Nima, p 4

⁶⁴ Interview with Yussif Sangbe, NMA artist, p 6

⁶⁵ Interview with Nii Futah, Chief of Nima, p 4 and Interview with Hon. Shaiu Tajudeen, Assemblyman of Nima 441, p 1

⁶⁶ Interview with Nii Futah, Chief of Nima, p 5

cultures, and traditions roughly merged together. Due to the problems that emerged during its establishment, the community acquired a negative perception, as well as stigmatization.⁶⁷

During the establishment land was sold for residential purposes only, lacking a proper plan for the community development. Chairman Mr Rasak Abdul Issah of the town council *Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA)* confirms that there was no proper demarcation, and that the sale was improper, due to issues of ownership. Community leaders agree that the lack of demarcation and community plan has resulted in inadequate and deficient structures that are still impacting the present.⁶⁸

Nima is overcrowded and totally lacking amenities such as functioning roads, water access, electricity, public spaces, markets and schools. The lack of access roads imposes restrictions on people's access to assistance, and in case of emergency the houses are out of reach. In case of fire outbreak, there is no access road for the fire service to enter the community, and sick people must be carried out on people's backs before being sent to hospital.⁶⁹ The community lacks space, which implies sanitation and health issues since the volume of waste and litter is massive, and the open gutters in the middle of the small roads across the whole community are clogged. The whole community is covered in a layer of litter, and the odour attracts vermin, mostly rats. The community mainly consist of cement structures, worn down after many years without restoration, where people commonly live in family owned compounds. The compounds in Nima consist of many small houses placed together in squares around a courtyard. The Chief of Nima, Nii Futah, considers the issues of community development to be very complex, since the compounds and houses have been family-owned for generations.⁷⁰ Honourable Nazer Mahama Toure, who is representing areas of Nima in parliament, estimates that almost 90 percent of the people living within the community are poor, and that the social situation of people makes them fear change.⁷¹ This implies an issue of trust, because in order to change the structures of Nima, existing ones needs to be destroyed to make room for new, and in present people fear loosing what they have, without any compensation. In spite of the issues and

⁶⁷ Interview with Nii Futah, Chief of Nima, p 2

⁶⁸ Interview with Mr Rasak Abdul Issah, Chairman of town council *Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA)*, p 1-2

⁶⁹ Interview with Hon. Shaiu Tajudeen, Assemblyman of Nima 441, p 2

⁷⁰ Interview with Nii Futah, Chief of Nima, p 6

⁷¹ Interview with Hon. Nazer Mahama Toure, MP of East Ayawaso Constituency (2013-2015), p 1

challenges, there is a great sense of pride in belonging to the community, and Mr Rasak Abdul Issah experience that Nima is gradually changing.⁷²

Nima is like a cosmopolitan area, that you can find everybody. In terms of religion, in terms of tribes, you can find everybody here.⁷³

The Member of Parliament Hon. Nazer Mahama Toure explains that a major problem has been that in the past, politicians have been using people in Nima for violence during elections. The 2012 election went on successfully, and the informants claim that when looking at Nima today, people have proven that the community is different from its past.⁷⁴

4.2 Artistic Climate

This chapter discuss Nima and the artistic climate emerging from the community, where the material raises questions about the community, and the local art scene. The chapter also discuss the art scene, and examines in what way the contemporary art contributes to bridge and simplify the structures, and complexity of the Nima community. Within this context an artistic climate is emerging from within the community, and there are several aspects to take into consideration when analysing the existing, and still rising local art scene. Initially the *Cultural Apprenticeship* offers an alternative system for art education, followed by the *Artistic Network*, providing platforms and venues for established as well as up and coming artists, thirdly the *Empowerment of Youth*, enabling platforms for the youth to explore art, and finally *Community Development* that brings new possibilities for the community.

The Artistic climate of Nima can be apprehended as aspects of social practice, explained by Lave and Wenger as relations to social communities. Indicating that learning involves becoming a full participant, as a member involved in new activities and to master new understandings.⁷⁵ This suggests that as the artists in Nima are teaching each other, they perform new tasks, and functions connected to the social practice of the community.⁷⁶ The four aspects of the artistic climate in Nima constitute the first empirical chapter, and provide an understanding of the local context, in which the artistic climate is situated.

⁷² Interview with Mr Rasak Abdul Issah, Chairman of town council *Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA)*, p 3

⁷³ Interview with Hon. Shaiu Tajudeen, Assemblyman of Nima 441, p 1

⁷⁴ Interview with Hon. Nazer Mahama Toure, MP of East Ayawaso Constituency (2013-2015), p 8

⁷⁵ Lave, J. and Wenger, E. (1991) *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*, p 53

⁷⁶ Ibid.

4.2.1 Cultural Apprenticeship

The very foundation of the artistic climate is developed by the artists themselves, the masters, their students and the second and third generation of students following.

Most of the artists in the area are joined by the fact that they all schooled under the same system of apprenticeship, trained by the same man, Hussein (Mozzey) Hashim who is the senior artist in Nima.⁷⁷

I think we're training and nurturing, not training but nurturing the rising next generation to be the creative thinkers and at the same time promoting positive understanding and appreciation of art and culture in this community.⁷⁸

The senior artist Hussein (Mozzey) Hashim explains that the system for the cultural apprenticeship is based on already existing knowledge that is expanding from within the community. As highlighted by Lave and Wenger the fundamental form of learning is participating in social practices, explaining that:

... Succeeding generations of participants give rise to what in its simplest form is a triadic set of relations: The community of practice encompasses apprentices, young masters with apprentices, and masters some of whose apprentices have themselves become masters.⁷⁹

In present day, the cultural apprenticeship has developed into the third generation, where the first students trained by Hussein (Mozzey) Hashim now reached a level of establishment allowing them to train their own students, and pass the cultural apprenticeship along to the third generation. In present day, the cultural apprenticeship has developed into the third generation, where the first students trained by Hussein (Mozzey) Hashim now reached a level of establishment allowing them to train their own students, and pass the cultural apprenticeship along to the third generation. In turn, their students have developed adequate skills to explore their artistic talent, and some have even begun to train their own students. Lave and Wenger's theory of legitimate peripheral participation involves being located in the social world, that suggests multiple, and varied ways of being engaged when located in fields of participation defined by the community.⁸⁰ This suggests the cultural apprenticeship to be a creative cycle, passing down from masters to the younger generations. The artist Mohammed (Moh) Awudu is in his thirties, and explains that he already trained many children, several of them now working as professional

⁷⁷ Interview with Robin Riskin, Co- founder NMA, p 3, 8

⁷⁸ Ibid, p 3

⁷⁹ Lave, J. and Wenger, E. (1991) *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*, p 54

⁸⁰ Ibid, p 36

artists.⁸¹ Lave and Wenger thereby define apprenticeship as capturing interest of learning in situated ways, and providing transformative possibilities of being, and becoming a complex, full cultural – historical participant in the world.⁸²

The majority of the informants, who are connected to *NMA*, explain that they were first introduced to art on the streets of Nima, where they later started their training for Hussein (Mozzey) Hashim. Some of them proceeded with formal training, where they finished on top of their classes.⁸³ Yussif (Lab) Sangbe explains that the training with Hussein (Mozzey) Hashim provided him with much experience that gave him advantage, since he already learned most of it during apprenticeship in Nima.⁸⁴

The Nima artists' displays a belief in arts and culture as a way to send messages out to the public. In addition to the process of creating art, the artist Rufai Zakari amongst others has a clear vision of using art to promote social, and environmental development in the community. Branching from Hussein (Mozzey) Hashim the art seems to travel from generation to generation, and new artists are adapting, and continuing to expand the cultural apprenticeship further. Theories developed by Lave and Wenger suggest that the change of location, and perspectives is part of the learning, which forms a membership. In the context of Nima community the membership is the artistic climate, in which you become part, when passing through the cultural apprenticeship.⁸⁵ Taufiq Musah amongst other artists who learned from Hussein (Mozzey) Hashim now trains several students, and explains that the knowledge is not for the artists to keep for themselves, rather they are expected to bring the knowledge out, and pass it along to others willing to learn. And so the artistic climate continues to develop with its participants.⁸⁶

4.2.2 Artistic Network

There are several aspects taking into consideration when analysing the existing, and still rising structure of the art scene in Nima. For one, the creation of an artistic network, providing platforms and venues for established as well as up and coming artists. Through the organisation *NMA*, local artists finds new ways of collaborating, exchanging ideas and supervising each other, which makes the network grow, and

⁸¹ Interview with Mohammed (Moh) Awudu, *NMA* artist, p 3

⁸² Lave, J. and Wenger, E. (1991) *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*, p 32

⁸³ Interview with Yussif (Lab) Sangbe, *NMA* artist, p 1

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ Lave, J. and Wenger, E. (1991) *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*, p 36

⁸⁶ Interview with Taufiq Musah, *NMA* artist, p 7

expand from within the community. Co-founder Amin Larry Yussif explains that the initial vision was for the organisation to expose local artists, and promote their works to the public, mainly by initiating a platform for the artists to meet, something that did not exist in the community before.

.... I think when you want to give out anything you have to start in your own first. So I think NMA is a platform that is really helping us to achieve our goals, to give out and to share ideas with our follow artist, and to inspire them a lot.⁸⁷

The artists' experiences suggest a community focus, which can be retraced to the senior artist Hussein (Mozzey) Hashim, who introduced a cultural apprenticeship, based on ideas of learning through participation in social situations, rather than traditional arts education. This suggests that learning is an integral part of social practice in the lived- in world.⁸⁸ Explained by Lave and Wenger as a way to explicate the relations involved in varied forms of community membership.⁸⁹ The membership can also be identified as a sense of belonging, attached to shared goals and values that according to Hilde is perceived as good by the participants, constituting identification from within.⁹⁰ The artist Yussif (Lab) Sangbe explains that his training for Hussein (Mozzey) Hashim was based on experience, including observing the working process, and to learn by doing, and other artists agree.⁹¹

You see when I was with Mozzey I had everything, but with the school, you go... you follow rules but with Mozzey like you study and you do it.⁹²

Yussif Ojaff explains that the community has benefited much from the initiative of creating an artistic network, where the senior artist Hussein (Mozzey) Hashim in particular has influenced the people, and the art scene of Nima to expand. Suggesting that the sense of belonging connected to community exists in the minds of those interacting in the context. According to Waterton and Smith the practice involved in creating an artistic network, and the meaning members assign to the process can benefit the community.⁹³

⁸⁷ Interview with Mohammed (Moh) Awudu, NMA artist, p 5

⁸⁸ Lave, J. and Wenger, E. (1991) *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*, p 35

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, p 37

⁹⁰ Hilde, T. C. (2005) *Encyclopaedia of Science, Technology, and Ethics*, p 383

⁹¹ Interview with Yussif (Lab) Sangbe, NMA artist, p 1

⁹² *Ibid*, p 1

⁹³ Cohen referred by Waterton, E. and Smith, L. (2010), *The recognition and misrecognition of community heritage*, p 8

I'm a member of NMA because it started from our community. And then we think, so far as we are all artist we have to all come together to support the up and coming artists. Last time I checked, today we are artists and then we do whatever, if we're not able to support the up and coming ones and then one day we are no more, then the art is going to die.⁹⁴

As part of the artistic climate the members, who consists of artists trained through the cultural apprenticeship, regard it as their responsibility to bring art to the future generations. Thereby they claim the relevance of the assigned meaning of community, constituted by the members, and discussed by Waterton and Smith. Hussein (Mozzey) Hashim explains that initially the people of Nima did not understand what art is, because initially art was not very visible in the community. He further explains that many of the artists in the area are still facing difficulties with their families, when thriving for a profession in the arts.⁹⁵

... Especially my mother she had, they don't have much knowledge of art so they think one day, one day I will change my job or my carrier. So later on they became to realize ok, this is what I want to do in life, and since then they decided to leave me to do what I want to do, and when I was growing up they didn't like the idea.⁹⁶

Hussein (Mozzey) Hashim amongst other informants explains that people in the community are getting more aware of art, since the art is now more visible for the people to see.⁹⁷ The development of the network therefore seems to involve a legitimatisation of the profession. So in addition to providing venues and platforms, he network also contributes to raise awareness about art itself, where one of the aspects is to make art more visible for the people, by providing examples of community-based artists.

The artistic climate emerged through already existing links created between artists in the community, with the intention of supporting each other in the process of developing full potential in the arts. Robin Riskin, one of the Co-founders of the organisation, explains that *NMA* was created to affiliate, and build from already existing systems, in order to expand, and develop the artistic climate further. By creating a network for already active, and working artists in Nima, Co-founder Amin Larry Yussif intends the organisation to provide a platform for artists to meet, and exchange ideas, as well as creating venues for them to exhibit their artworks. The four

⁹⁴ Interview with Taufiq Musah, NMA artist, p 6

⁹⁵ Interview with, Hussein (Mozzey) Hashim, Senior artist of Nima (NMA artist), p 2

⁹⁶ Interview with Musah Swallah, co-founder and NMA artist, p 3

⁹⁷ Interview with, Hussein (Mozzey) Hashim, Senior artist of Nima (NMA artist), p 3

Co-founders Robin Riskin, Amin Larry Yussif, Nicholas Wayo and Musah Swallah stand united when discussing the organisation as contributor to the artistic climate, by operating to develop a functioning structure for educating children, and their parents through creative workshops on a regular basis.

4.2.3 Empowerment of Youth

The keystone to the artistic climate is the collaboration amongst the artist themselves, starting from individuals taking action for community development, by creating opportunities for the youth. Which brings us to the next aspect, the empowerment of youth. By providing a platform for the youth to meet, and to develop and express their talent, and passion co-founder Nicholas Wayo explicate the importance of the workshop program, developed by the organisation *NMA*. With the implicit vision to encourage youth to choose the right path in life, and keep them from rooming around the streets, co-founder Amin Larry Yussif points out that the program aims to nurture the youth to be the creative thinkers for their community in the future.⁹⁸

They get the opportunity to learn more about art but also of life, they meet artists and can find role models who are also living in the community.⁹⁹

So the empowerment of youth involves both the cultural apprenticeship developed by Hussein (Mozzey) Hashim, discussed earlier in this chapter, and the workshop program that is on-going, but still under construction by the organisation *NMA*. The empowerment of youth started from the community, with Hussein (Mozzey) Hashim as inspirer, and father of the artistic climate itself, with the apprenticeship as its keystone.

So for us to do, we have the opportunity we have also to train the young ones so that maybe the day we are not there, they will also pick it from there and then train the other young ones that are also coming, so that the art will keep on moving.¹⁰⁰

The co-founder Robin Riskin perceive it to be slightly unfortunate that the majority of the artists connected to the organisation *NMA* are coming from such similar approaches. She explains that the similar backgrounds might prevent them from contributing with diverse perspectives about learning, and education.¹⁰¹ She further explains, and co-founder Amin Larry Yussif agrees, that there are a lot of desires and

⁹⁸ Interview with Amin Larry Yussif, co-founder and *NMA* artist, p 3 and Yussif (Lab) Sangbe, *NMA* artist, p 3

⁹⁹ Interview with Nicholas Wayo, co-founder and *NMA* artists, p 3

¹⁰⁰ Interview with Taufiq Musah, *NMA* artist, p 6

¹⁰¹ Interview with Robin Riskin, co-founder *NMA*, p 8

motivation from artists to be a part of the workshop program. The artists are driven in their task to teach children, and youth about art, however most of them have not had the exposure, or recourses and therefore lack methods for teaching. Rather than building the education on questions, and creating possibilities for the students to understand on their own terms, the education builds more on transmitting answers of how, and why. According to Robin Riskin this displays methods of teaching that probably derives from the artist's own experiences of apprenticeship.¹⁰² The context suggests a way of teaching that suits the apprenticeship, with masters teaching apprentices, which might be less sufficient in larger groups of arts education. However as the artistic climate in Nima continues to develop, the organisation continues to expand and Robin Riskin explains that even though she feels they already accomplished much in making an impact on Nima, there is still much more to be done.¹⁰³

It is about creating a change, and to prepare the new generation. The workshops also prevent them to get into bad company.¹⁰⁴

So the empowerment of youth is therefore about both creating possibilities for the children and youth, as well as building for the future and making joined efforts for the arts, and for the community itself. This develops into an aspect that suggests a movement, and a change in the community, through artistic interventions.

So they shouldn't hide, everybody should try to bring out what is in him, maybe he will bring something different maybe more than what I have.¹⁰⁵

4.2.4 Community Development

The fourth and last aspect is community development, creating and bringing new possibilities to the community through a system of learning, based on artistic practice. Wenger and Smith argues for the understanding of community as a frame of reference, not only associated with place, but as social creations, and experiences in continuous motion of collective experiences.¹⁰⁶ This creates participation and a community of practice, and according to Lave and Wenger being a participant, even a

¹⁰² Interview with Robin Riskin, co-founder NMA, p 9

¹⁰³ Ibid, p 9

¹⁰⁴ Interview with Nicholas Wayo, co-founder and NMA artist, p 3

¹⁰⁵ Interview with, Hussein (Mozzey) Hashim, Senior artist of Nima (NMA artist), p 7

¹⁰⁶ Waterton, E. and Smith, L. (2010) *The recognition and misrecognition of community heritage*, p 9

newcomer suggests a way of gaining access to understanding through progressive involvement, providing a dynamic concept.¹⁰⁷

Despite the fact that the people of Nima are better educated than ever before, even to the higher level of university studies, Hon. Nazer Mahama Toure elucidate the fact that the majority of the inhabitants in Nima are still illiterate. The art therefore create multiple opportunities for people in the Nima community, and provides them access to a community practice.¹⁰⁸

I decided to teach art because of the community in which I live. Because this community that we are, the majority of the parents they don't advice, or they don't try to push their children to do the art... While we see the arts to be a media that you can just send you messages to the public.¹⁰⁹

The artistic climate and the art created in the area bring possibilities for people to understand, and communicate with others. Rufai Zakari, one of the artists connected to the organisation believes that by using the art, and his own creative ability to create messages for people, it is possible to bring out real effects, and emotions as well as elucidate problems facing human minds.¹¹⁰ Messages in the urban landscape placed there for everyone to see provide understanding through visual images, rather than written words. The messages conveyed also brings the question of representation that refer to works created by the organisation, since the community becomes a (re)construction through on-going experiences, canalized dually to the inside as well as the outside.¹¹¹

The context of the artistic climate also enables people to acquire education through learning, based on apprenticeship rather than earlier experience of education. The senior artist Hussein (Mozzey) Hashim provides an example of a self-taught artist succeeding as a working artist in a professional carrier, who is also creating opportunities for those unable to afford the school fees to receive education. He has voluntarily educated youth in the arts without collecting any compensation from it, and the reality is, as accentuated by Hon. Nazer Mahama Toure, most people are unable to pay for artistic training which brings the discussion to the economic aspects

¹⁰⁷ Lave, J. and Wenger, E. (1991) *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*, p 37

¹⁰⁸ Interview with Hon. Nazer Mahama Toure, MP of East Ayawaso Constituency (2013-2015), p 7

¹⁰⁹ Interview with Taufiq Musah, NMA artist, p 2

¹¹⁰ Interview with Rufai Zakari, NMA artist, p 2

¹¹¹ Waterton E. and Smith, L. (2010) *The recognition and misrecognition of community heritage*, p 8

of the identified climate.¹¹² Since the cultural apprenticeship builds from voluntarily forces, it creates opportunities for people to gain education without having to pay for it. When the artistic climate continues to develop, and the former apprentices' becomes masters teaching students of their own, they do not expect their students to pay. Something that Hon Shaiu Tajudeen believes derives from a tradition of apprenticeship, because they themselves did not pay anything to receive training, so why should their students.¹¹³ As established before the focus is not on economics, however the art has developed into a source of income for many of the artists in this study. Yussif Ojaff amongst others has experienced art as a possibility to provide for his family, and he further explains that the money earned was not much, but bringing works to markets and art centres in the very beginning of his career assisted the economic situation of his family.¹¹⁴

I used to come home and give my mother something in it, to give something which is going to put inside the pockets, to give her something which is going to cook food for I and the younger ones to eat.¹¹⁵

As discussed and described above, a big majority of people in Nima are poor, and the profession of being an artist and selling art pieces in fact generates an income. The artists Yussif Ojaff and Taufiq Musa separately discuss art as a source of income, stating that there is a lot of money in the arts, depending on the talent of the artist. However as accentuated by the artist Mohammed (Moh) Awudu, as an artist you have to work with your art, not because of what you are going to gain from it.¹¹⁶ Taufiq Musah explains money to be one reason for doing art, but by far not the only one since the art also motivates and builds pride.¹¹⁷ To sum up the discussions of this chapter, it can be stated that art is important in the urban district of Nima, explained by the Member of Parliament Hon. Nazer Mahama Toure as due to its ability to be both business, and part of education, and thereby contributing to community development on varied levels.¹¹⁸

¹¹² Interview with Hon. Nazer Mahama Toure, MP of East Ayawaso Constituency (2013-2015), p 8

¹¹³ Interview with Hon Shaiu Tajudeen, Assemblyman of Nima 441, p 7, Yussif Ojaff

¹¹⁴ Interview with Yussif Ojaff, NMA artist, p 8

¹¹⁵ Ibid, p 8

¹¹⁶ Interview with Mohammed (Moh) Awudu, NMA artist, p 3

¹¹⁷ Interview with Taufiq Musah, NMA artist, p 4

¹¹⁸ Interview with Hon. Nazer Mahama Toure, MP of East Ayawaso Constituency (2013-2015), p 6

4.3 Chapter Conclusion and Analysis

With the perspectives from those active within, this chapter has discussed the artistic climate of Nima, identifying four aspects of definition: *Cultural Apprenticeship*, *Artistic Network*, *Empowerment of Youth* and *Community Development*, four aspects that will be discussed and analysed in this conclusion.

Nima is characterized as a community of creativity and talent, where the interest in community development offers a consistency in the material that push the development further, through the next generation. The informants emphasise on the level of talent, especially in the arts, which also suggest art as a community function that impacts the every day lives of people.

... Do we have the opportunity we have also to train the young ones so that maybe the day we are not there, they will also pick it from there and then train the other young ones that are also coming, so that the art will keep on moving.¹¹⁹

This suggests a focus on art's survival for posterity, implying art as a catalyst providing structures for future generations. The senior artist Hussein (Mozzey) Hashim explicates that the artistic climate was initiated on the streets of the community, where the youth came to stand by his studio for hours, just to watch him create art. After realising the youths interest in art, he begun to educate them. The youth persisted to come, and he continued to educate them, which after a while constituted the foundation for the cultural apprenticeship, which created an artistic climate in the community setting.¹²⁰

Eventually the artistic climate expanded, and the cultural apprenticeship was adapted, and intercepted by the artists within. Another aspect of the cultural apprenticeship is an underlying agreement, that through the received training you are also expected to do the same for someone else, and so the climate continues to develop. This suggests participation in a social practice, with focus on the people involved, and particularly being member of a sociocultural community, explained and discussed by Lave and Wenger as perspectives of person-in-the-world. Since the artists can be regarded as contributors to the community, and the artistic climate itself they are also specific

¹¹⁹ Interview with Taufiq Musah, NMA artist, p 6

¹²⁰ Interview with, Hussein (Mozzey) Hashim, Senior artist of Nima (NMA artist), p 2

people, in specific circumstances, consequently connected to knowledge because the artists promote their community.¹²¹

The artistic climate of Nima can be characterized as a vibrant, on-going movement in the community, based on already existing structures of a cultural apprenticeship. It expands with its participants, as well as nurture from the artistic network provided by the non-governmental organisation *NMA*. The artistic climate can be distinguished by the thriving interest in the youth, where the belief of development through the rising next generation can be combined with ideas of learning by doing. These main points contribute to community development, and the empowerment of the youth.

The artist Yussif Ojaff describes Nima as place where it is possible to find any kind of talent, explaining that if you are looking for talent in Accra, Nima is the place to go.¹²² At the same time the community is lacking structures, and public spaces, which in fact implies problems with resources. One of the factors discussed in the chapter, is the fact that art is also a business, providing an income. The profession of being an artist has gained better status, and has inspired youth to chase a carrier in the arts. Since unemployment is a major social problem in the area, and the artists are able to take care of themselves by selling artworks, it has turned more attractive to pursue a carrier in the arts. However the economic possibilities of art in the community is not the main focus for the artistic climate, rather it is the activities involved in keeping practices connected to art moving.¹²³

Several of the informants explicate that they in fact learned more as apprentices for Hussein (Mozzey) Hashim, than in formal arts education. Which in a way indicates the strength of the knowledge passed down from generation to generation through the cultural apprenticeship, as well as the level of status the knowledge passed down from masters of experience actually have in the community. However the methods of teaching in the cultural apprenticeship, for example observing and learning what is “right” and ”wrong” sometimes prevents the young artists to explore their own ideas, and to be creative, and critical thinkers. Most of the artists in Nima have trained through the same system of apprenticeship, which implies similar experiences, and approaches to their environment. The meaning of learning is configured through the

¹²¹ Lave, J. and Wenger, E. (1991) *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*, p 52

¹²² Interview with Yussif Ojaff, NMA artist p 4-5

¹²³ Interview with Yussif Sangbe, NMA artist, p 3

process of becoming a full participant in the social practice, taking place when the young artists become masters of the next generation of apprentices.¹²⁴ The process of newcomers becoming part of a community of practice therefore includes varied levels of participation, discussed by Lave and Wenger, and suggests that when artists in Nima enters formal training at art school, they already have knowledge passed down from a master, they are already participants. However it implies that the knowledge passed down from the artists is static and not pushing the boundaries to its peek.

¹²⁴ Lave, J. and Wenger, E. (1991) *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*, p 29

5.0 Mural Painting as a Community Changing Practice

Centrally located along the Kanda Highway is the Imagine Accra Mural, strategically placed along the roadside on one of the most densely trafficked sites throughout Accra. The Nima community involves a constant noise with a never-ending stream of people on the move, it is never quiet and this day is not an exception. The sun is about to go down and the traffic is crammed. Dust and fumes from vehicles are rising to the sky, creating a layer of smog placing itself as a curtain over the whole community. Drivers plunk their horns, and people are trying to cross the street while drivers are screaming at them to move out of the way. It is almost prayer time and in the minarets the calling has begun. It is not yet dark and ladies pass me with heavy burdens on their heads, and babies strapped on their backs. From my spot across the street I view the whole spectacle, fascinated by everything that is going on. People are transporting tables and chairs on their heads, heading back home from a day at the market. The intense traffic does not prevent animals from running on the roadside and children chasing them. Even in this blur of people, animals, and vehicles my attention is drawn directly to the Imagine Accra Mural, created by the organisation Nima Muhinmanchi Art (NMA), and placed on two walls of a corner, where the Kanda Highway is crossed by a smaller road. Often the traffic jam makes the traffic stand completely still, making the cars pass the mural in low speed, allowing them to have an extra look. A group of children, still in their school uniforms, are passing the mural. Some of them are stopping to have a quick look, and others climb the small platform to get closer. You cannot avoid paying attention to how tidy, and clean the spot is, at least if you compare it to other places in the community. Another group of children are passing the mural, playing with each other, but when passing they no longer chase each other around, but are instead pointing at something in the painting. The small group crosses the street and leaves the scene, but are soon replaced by another viewer, a young boy who is playing with a broken bike-tire, pushing it in front of him using a stick. The boy enters the small platform, spinning the tire faster and faster alongside the wall, touching it with his hand and following the story to the corner, and then continues to the other side of the wall. He disappears from my view, and I cannot see him anymore. Two girls enter the space and reach out their hands to touch the wall at the place where you see a grown up walking two children across a road. The children interact with the painted scenario, the future of Accra, and are

*reaching after the children in the painting. Many men, and women pass the site by car and I can see them gaze at the artwork and I wonder, what do they imagine for Accra?*¹²⁵

The practice of mural painting executed in the public space within the community provides a function, and a movement with focus on art. This chapter will discuss murals as mediums for raising awareness, and as catalysts for change, mainly by exploring the possibility of rebranding a place through art. More specifically rebranding the Nima community through the movement of artistic practice, which is accentuated, and discussed through three aspects: *Artists as Contributors to Change*, *Rebranding of Place*, and *Creation of Venues*.

5.1 Community Changing Practices

The mural paintings created in the urban landscape of Nima, by the organisation *NMA*, have in some way influenced the community, by creating an interaction in the public space, and amongst the people within. Whereby the interaction is creating a discussion of mural paintings as community changing practice. Art seems to be an important part of the community, which is often described by the people as a place of creativity and talent. The lack of structures and platforms connected to art has created alternative venues in the public space, mainly through the artistic climate described in the previous chapter, where people make use of the public spaces available to create, and exhibit ideas, and send messages to the public. Thereby this chapter will discuss art produced in the public space, and examining its ability to change community structures, and function as a movement. Robin Riskin explains that art in the public space force an engagement that is based on the environment, and the participation of people within.

... If you come into their space and meet them on their terms, then it creates a kind of dialogue or conversation that you maybe wouldn't have had before, and that's why I really like the murals that we do.¹²⁶

The community of Nima struggles with social stigmas, and perceptions related to place that in present impacts people, and create struggles based on identity. As a problematisation of concepts connected to community, Waterton and Smith highlights

¹²⁵ Observation of the Imagine Accra mural

¹²⁶ Interview with Robin Riskin, co-founder NMA, p 8

the process where pre-set ideas concerning representation of reality implicates the construction of groups in certain places, and thus constitutes pre-determined ideas of community, and the people within.¹²⁷ The Chief of Nima, Nii Futah explains that the complex nature of the community development spawned slum problems such as thievery, fighting, and violence and entrusted Nima with a bad reputation.¹²⁸ He further explains that in the past the community with its small streets and many corners, attracted people who came to drift during the days since it was easy to hide from outsiders and police. The stereotype image of the community, and the people living within therefore restrained people from outside to visit the community, and in present it still does.

So most people don't even want to come to the community because they are scared that Nima people are violent and this and that...¹²⁹

The artists witness of a social imprisoning, where Nima is considered as end of the road, a place from where you will never make it in life ever again. Amin Larry Yussif one of the co-founder of *NMA* explains that as a result the stigmatisation kills the spirit of many talents, preventing them to develop, and move forward, personally as well as creatively. Co-founder Robin Riskin explains that the community art projects intend to recognise Nima beyond the perception of being a place of litter, poor sanitation, and crime. Instead the organisation is working to recognise Nima as place of culture, and talent and as a lively community with history and future.¹³⁰

We've been trying to transform perceptions of Nima through art from the in and the outside, so both encouraging positive attitude and appreciation towards art from within Nima, and at the same time a positive understanding of Nima through art.¹³¹

By taking advantage of the unique position as centre point of Accra, as well as the traffic situation of being a highly trafficked spot, several initiatives are on the emergence in Nima, creating art in the public space, and influencing the urban landscape as well as the perception of it.¹³² In the community of Nima there are strong beliefs that art can contribute to change the community, especially art provided in the public space. Honourable Shaiu Tajudeen, the Assemblyman of Nima 441 describes

¹²⁷ Howarth referred by Waterton, E. and Smith, L. (2010) *The recognition and misrecognition of community heritage*, p 9

¹²⁸ Interview with Nii Futah, Chief of Nima, p 2

¹²⁹ Interview with Musah Swallah, co-founder and NMA artist, p 6

¹³⁰ Interview with Robin Riskin, co-founder NMA, p 3

¹³¹ *Ibid*, p 3

¹³² *Ibid*, p 6

the function of public art to be a way of sending messages directly to the people, and explicates that art can achieve a lot.¹³³

... I think art is the way that you can envision a better future. Ghana and Accra especially is in a moment of major transition and very very fast development and we need the artists to produce visions for like how we can have a better society and urban environment.¹³⁴

This is reinforced by Marschall who discuss aspects of mural paintings, emphasising on the capability of defining the identity of local communities, and the constitution of a public voice.¹³⁵ She further explains that the mural paintings enables the distribution of public statements, thus creating a questioning of what kind of impact the people represented actually have on the messages conveyed. This displays a position of dependence that will be further discussed in the conclusion.¹³⁶

5.1.1 Artists as Contributors to Change

The discussion thereby lead to one of the important aspects of mural painting practices, which is the artists as contributors to change, by bringing new ideas and visions for the community. The *Imagine Accra Mural* created by NMA in 2011, narrated in the field note above, brought the idea of questioning society, and present structures in Accra and in the Nima community in particular. Amin Larry Yussif who is one of the co-founders of the organisation, explains the vision of bringing questions, and messages to the public, as well as passing the message to politicians, celebrities, and rich by placing the statements on the roadside of the highway passing through the area.¹³⁷

So you should imagine Accra, this our crises and they should look at it at the future. We are trying to engage their mind to think, that's the philosophy, that's the idea. We are trying to engage their minds either you are young or old or adult to think. You see this is another work of art. It's powerful.¹³⁸

He further explains that the *Imagine Accra Mural* has created awareness, and encouraged people of Nima to think about the community. Further it has inspired them to come together and make use of the public space, and thus question existing structures and imagine the future for the community. Amin Larry Yussif believes the

¹³³ Interview with Hon Shaiu Tajudeen, Assemblyman of Nima 441, p 6

¹³⁴ Interview with Robin Riskin, co-founder NMA, p 3

¹³⁵ Marschall, S. (2000) *A Postcolonial Reading of Mural Art in South Africa*, p 115

¹³⁶ *Ibid*, p 114-115

¹³⁷ Interview with Amin Larry Yussif, co-founder and NMA artist, p 5

¹³⁸ *Ibid*, p 5

young artist to be the visionaries for the community, and thereby also the main factor contributing with change, which reflects the climate itself.¹³⁹

I think it's the role of the artist to be the visionaries and the storytellers and to engage with many different audiences, and to push boundaries.¹⁴⁰

Robin Riskin envision the artists to be storytellers for the community, with the responsibility of being visionaries and inventors of new ideas, by pushing the boundaries further through projects, artworks, and collaborations. When looking at the artistic climate, it seems like the artists are reinventing materials, and reimagine things, not only create what they always see in their surroundings, and repeat it.¹⁴¹ As described in the previous chapter, the artistic climate develops, and expands from the community, where many of the artists begin to teach others very early in their career. *NMA* artist Mohammed (Moh) Awudu explains that street art is a way to put down ideas, and concepts for the future, with messages for the people to see, and experience, messages that will last forever. Mohammed (Moh) Awudu further explains that the teaching gives a sense of achievement that enables him to give out his talent, so that others will benefit from it. Others artists agrees and attest to the fact that teaching the youth, and the young artists is a way to give back to the community.¹⁴²

I think it's a great medium that we always use to give out message. When I have something in my head right now I want to like let people know, I just go to the streets and do it, when I put it there when everybody is passing it will attract them first and then they get the message from it.¹⁴³

In the Nima community people explore the possibilities of using the public space in order to exhibit their creativity. The Chief of Nima, Nii Futah, considers the role of artists to be important because when the artists use their knowledge in the philosophy of art, they have the opportunity to influence others.¹⁴⁴ By using his creative abilities artist Rufai Zakari believes that his role as an artist is to promote, and create awareness of art in the community, where the idea of creating murals, and exhibitions in the public space creates a visibility.¹⁴⁵ Street art, and mural painting projects in

¹³⁹ Interview with Amin Larry Yussif, co-founder and *NMA* artist, p 5

¹⁴⁰ Interview with Robin Riskin, co-founder *NMA*, p 8

¹⁴¹ *Ibid*, p 8

¹⁴² Interview with Mohammed Awudu, *NMA* artist, p 3

¹⁴³ *Ibid*, p 4

¹⁴⁴ Interview with Nii Futah, Chief of Nima, p 3

¹⁴⁵ Interview with Rufai Zakari, *NMA* artist, p 2

Nima engages people and are created with and for the public, and in fact the mural paintings created by artists in the community are very visible in the public space. However works created in this specific context projects upon the perceptions of the place, implying that the art is created for the outside world rather than the people within.

5.1.2 Rebranding of Place

The second aspect: rebranding of place, focus on both the outside world with its perceptions, as well as impacting the people within. The idea of murals as a community function, and as a movement in order to change the structures of the community is a central perspective, as well as providing a legitimation that contributes to change existing perceptions of the community itself. The rebranding of the community is a dual matter, since the incitements can be questioned. This questions what is most important: to change the perceptions of the outside world, or building a pride within the people of the community? The question of representation is thereby, as alluded by Waterton and Smith a fact. The conception of Nima community is pursued on the basis of different interests, and with varied desires of how to speak on the behalf of others. Therefore the community itself becomes constructed and (re)constructed in a process of on-going experiences, engagements, and relations, canalised through the perspectives of the inside and the outside world.¹⁴⁶ Even though it is questionable for who, and why the community transformation, and rebranding is for, the endeavour to change the outside perception of Nima also implicates a change in the community itself, and not only ta notion of it.

In a theory of practice, cognition and communication in, and with, the social world are situated in the historical development of on-going activity.¹⁴⁷

Artists believe that through the use of art it is possible to change the image of Nima, whereby Malam Saeed, one of many Imams in the area, explicates that art can be found in Nima, but simply not inside the community itself, which suggest that art is only found where people from the outside world can contemplate it, as in a social world of interaction.¹⁴⁸ Robin Riskin explains that the strategy for mural painting projects is to find places that are available, and at the same time highly visible spots,

¹⁴⁶ Waterton, E. and Smith, L. (2010), *The recognition and misrecognition of community heritage*, p 8

¹⁴⁷ Lave, J. and Wenger, E. (1991) *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*, p 51

¹⁴⁸ Interview with Malam Saeed, Imam Nima, p 2

which enables the community inhabitants as well as the outside world to benefit from it. She further argues for the benefits of art production, mainly by focusing on the local perspective.

... It fosters pride and also memory and preservation of traditions and culture and heritage, because there's so much rich knowledge and history here that can be preserved and transformed and recreated and reimagined through art and culture.¹⁴⁹

When entering different fields and contexts outside the community, artist Yussif Ojaff explains that he and his fellow artists feel the urge to represent Nima. The mural paintings also creates projects discussing, and raising awareness about the community, with the possibility for artists to expose the talent that can be found in the Nima community of today.¹⁵⁰ Artist Mohammed (Moh) Awudu explains that the artists are trying to generate a positive mind perception to the people outside, providing examples of what people from the community are able to achieve with their creativity.¹⁵¹

Visibility is recurrent amongst the informants, where the idea of reaching a large audience by placing murals by the roadside where many people pass, is of great importance. The strategy includes outsiders and allows them to experience, and observe the murals from distance, without even have to leave their cars when passing Nima on their daily commute through Accra.¹⁵² It also includes visibility for the insiders, since the murals are often placed on strategically spots within the community, allowing people to pass on their daily movement through the community, walking to the market, school, work or fetching water. So even if the murals are not inside the community where people actually live, the murals are placed where most people will see them every day. Prosperity for the future lies in the engagement of the artists, where some of them for example the co-founder Amin Larry Yussif, faced the social stigmas, and transformed them into positive energy. He further explains that this has encouraged him to work harder in order to succeed.¹⁵³

They thought nothing good will come of the community, nothing good will ever come out of this community, so I want to change that perception and I now change it.¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁹ Interview with Robin Riskin, co-founder NMA, p 4

¹⁵⁰ Interview with Yussif Ojaff, NMA artist, p 3

¹⁵¹ Interview with Mohammed Awudu, NMA artist, p 6

¹⁵² Interview with Robin Riskin, co-founder NMA, p 6

¹⁵³ Interview with Amin Larry Yussif, co-founder and NMA artist, p 12

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, p 13

The organisation *NMA* works within the community with the intention of rebranding Nima through arts and culture.¹⁵⁵ In present Nima has been known as one of the most creative places in Accra, and according to Musah Swallah, co-founder and artist, the art has become a big part of the community.¹⁵⁶ Hon. Shaiu Tajudeen the Assemblyman of Nima 441 explains that youth in Nima has now come to realize what art is. He further explains that the community is now full of people interested in engaging themselves in art, a combination of people who explores their own possibilities as well as creating opportunities for others.¹⁵⁷

I want Nima to be a very good and better place one day in the future, where Nima can be like a centre when it comes to arts In Accra, I also wish that.¹⁵⁸

The rebranding of place includes the visions of Nima as a creative centre of Accra, a place where talent can grow with the support from creative guidance. Community-leaders and the social governance of Nima express their support in the movement, and believe that art can play a role in the development of the community.¹⁵⁹ The artist Mohammed (Moh) Awudu believes that art can change the community, raising the example of the peace mural and exhibition, taking place in Nima during election time in 2012. Local artists in collaboration with the organisation *NMA* initiated a mural painting project inspired by other African countries, where elections were violent, in order to provoke discussions, and encourage people to influence change in non-violent ways. The initiative was created with the intention of sending messages out to the public, and to politicians in particular, contributing in the process of rebranding Nima as a peaceful community.¹⁶⁰

There's a lot of countries that like end up in war when there is election, and sometimes you can use your art like to paint about the other country. This is what happens when you guys fight...¹⁶¹

So the artists take advantage of the art in order to raise awareness and to change social stigmas and perceptions of Nima, and thereby building for the future.

¹⁵⁵ Interview with Robin Riskin, co-founder NMA, p 2

¹⁵⁶ Interview with Musah Swallah, co-founder and NMA artist, p 6

¹⁵⁷ Interview with Hon. Shaiu Tajudeen, Assemblyman of Nima 441, p 5

¹⁵⁸ Interview with Musah Swallah, co-founder and NMA artist, p 7

¹⁵⁹ Interview with Mr Rasak Abdul Issah, Chairman of town council *Accra Metropolitan Assembly (AMA)*, p 3

¹⁶⁰ Interview with Mohammed (Moh) Awudu, NMA artist, p 4

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

5.1.3 Creation of Venues

The third and last aspect discussed in this chapter is the creation of venues, discussing art and its ability to provide platforms for discussion and understanding, as well as venues for people in the community to meet. Surely public art engages people in their everyday environment, but the problem is their lacking knowledge of art itself, that sometimes prevents them from acquiring a full understanding of what they perceive. On the other hand the contemporary art presents the viewer with the potential of various interpretations, that enables an opportunity to observe based on current conditions, for example: education, age and interests. Despite the varied interpretations and understandings of art the artists are given an increased visibility, which contributes to enhance the role of art peoples lives. The visibility exposes contemporary ideas of participation, and societal discussion that is reshaped through the contemporary art that is produced. Hon. Shaiu Tajudeen who is one of the Assemblymen of the community, proclaims that some years back people rarely discussed art, but now things are changing and people begin to understand what art is.¹⁶² According to the artist Taufiq Musah the street art has initiated awareness of art amongst the people, making them view art as part of their everyday life. Co-founder and artist Nicholas Wayo explains that since the murals are very visible people actually see them, and when they do, they also see the message they convey.

A better community can be built through art, by beautify the community, and we can build a better community by meeting with the children and teach them for life. When you learn about art you will also know of life.¹⁶³

The quote suggests a belief in art as a tool to initiate, and build better structures, as well as the creation of a more involving community. Many of the informants express a wish for a changed mind-set of people, believing that the creation of new ways for people to understand, will simplify the process. Hon. Nazer Mahama Toure, the Member of Parliament of East Ayawaso Constituency explicates the problematic situation of the number illiterate in the community, because if people cannot read how can they properly understand happenings, and context connected to the community? The raised awareness of art, in combination with the development suggests that the art can change the way people perceive understanding, by involvement based on the environment, and the participation in the public space.

¹⁶² Interview with Hon Shaiu Tajudeen, Assemblyman of Nima 441, p 5

¹⁶³ Interview with Nicholas Wayo, co-founder and NMA artist, p 2

We have been seeing that what we are doing, places, the murals we've been doing is changing a lot of peoples lives, because it's all about education. We've been doing about education, about how we want Ghana, Nima to be in the future, how we want our future to be in life...¹⁶⁴

The artist Amin Larry Yussif proclaims art to be an important platform in the process of creating an impact, and changing the mind-set of people, as well as initiatives evolving from the community to be important venues for art to derive, and expand.¹⁶⁵ Artists agree that it is hard for people to value something they know so little about, thereof the focus and efforts on visibility and the creation of education, based on artistic practice.

So since they don't value art and our responsibility as an artist now is to start educating them, both children and their parents the value of art, what art can do to individual lives and even what art can do to the society.¹⁶⁶

Mural paintings, and events executed in the public space of the community engage people within, as well as attract people from the outside. Robin Riskin one of the co-founder of the organisation explains that the first project had so much success that *NMA* turned from a one-time project to an operating organisation.¹⁶⁷ Whereby artist and co-founder Nicholas Wayo emphasise that the task for artists in the Nima community is to challenge the perceptions of the bad, bring out the good and encourage people to come and see for themselves what the community offers.¹⁶⁸

Like we say in the local language "Tumbingiwa" that means "Elephant tummy", you will find everything in there! You will find the good and the bad and also the ugly.¹⁶⁹

Many are those asserting that the perception about artists has reduced, since people begun to acquire knowledge from the work *NMA* do in the community, one of them is co-founder Musah Swallah.¹⁷⁰ Only a few years back it was problematic for people walking freely inside the community, and Amin Larry Yussif explains that now artists in Nima use the art as a medium to bring people into the community, and according to him the development is very much connected to the creation of the murals itself, giving the possibility to change parts of the Nima community.¹⁷¹ Lave and Wenger explains this as aspects of community of practice that concerns the whole person,

¹⁶⁴ Interview with Yussif Ojaff, NMA artist, p 8

¹⁶⁵ Interview with Amin Larry Yussif, co-founder and NMA artist, p 5

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p 4

¹⁶⁷ Interview with Robin Riskin, co-founder NMA, p 1

¹⁶⁸ Interview with Nicholas Wayo, co-founder and NMA artist, p 2

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid*.

¹⁷⁰ Interview with Musah Swallah, NMA artist, p 5

¹⁷¹ Interview with Amin Larry Yussif, co-founder and NMA artist, p 4

interacting and participating in the world. The participation, in this case in the Nima community, is thereby connected with ways of participation that is created, and renewed in the interactions of the social practice amongst people.¹⁷²

5.2 Chapter Conclusion and Analysis

In the chapter *Mural Painting as Community Changing Practice*, I have brought forward the discussions and viewpoints of the mural painting practice, discussed through three aspects: *Artist as Contributors to Change*, *Rebranding of Place* and *Creation of Venues*.

The contemporary art and more specifically, art created in the public space of the community are creating venues for people to explore art in public spaces. It also provokes perceptions in the attempt to explore the possibilities for contemporary art to be a catalyst for social change. Mural paintings executed in the community, or more correctly, along the main road passing through the community, have in some way influenced the community. People interact around the murals, and people outside know the paintings and using them as landmarks.

The artists define, and describe the process of creating art in the public space to involve creativity, and beauty that offers productivity, and a community function. This suggests that the mural paintings influence the community, a practice that in the social interaction has turned into a movement with the organisation *NMA* as an example. The organisation displays fast development from being a temporary art-project to an operating organisation, with a project so well received by the community that the project has been on-going since 2011. This provides an example where the community of practice function as a movement, as well as proving influence and integration in the community itself, interacting in the community setting. However expanding from a project to an operating organisation implies a change of structure that due to the new arenas of exploration involves a risk of losing initial goals and purposes, crossing the inquiries of the community.

Some of the artists connected to the organisation emphasized the urge to represent Nima as a way of change the perceptions connected to the community. This indicates that the community is trying to change the perceptions of Nima through a community of practice, in which as discussed through theories by Lave and Wenger, the

¹⁷² Lave, J. and Wenger, E. (1991) *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*, s 49-50

participation is created, and renewed in interactions with people.¹⁷³ This suggests the interactive process of mural painting as a practice for changing a community, and a rebranding of place.

Looking at where we started in Nima, Nima Muhinmanchi Art yes we really made some impact, and I mean we were able to beautify some walls in the community... I mean people take good care of the place and they don't like anything to happen to the painting that we did so I think it has changed the people around it and also the people who passes by, so I think art can change the community and the society.¹⁷⁴

The quote suggests a belief in the art as a tool to initiate, and build better structures, as well as the creation of a more involving community. Many of the informants express a wish for a changed mind-set of people, believing that the creation of new ways for people to understand, will simplify the process. However the urge to rebrand the community also raise questions of whom the rebranding is for. As discussed above the focus seems to be placed on the outside world and their perceptions, mainly due to social stigmas that influence people's lives. Therefore, the fact that art can enter fields different from its origin, and find solutions through representation contributes with new possibilities for the art to function as a catalyst, and changing social issues of the community. Therefore building a positive aura that encourages people to see the benefits of mural painting, and workshop programs executed in the community.

The almost obvious participation and thrive of the artists can be seen throughout the chapter, where they can be regarded as contributors in the process of changing, and rebranding the Nima community. In a way artists serve as mirrors of the community, and providing as explained by the artist Mohammed (Moh) Awudu, possibilities to send messages to the masses. This engages the community in different causes, and consequently it also brings a certain power to the artists, making it possible for them to speak on the behalf of others. However if misused it can be more problematic than actually benefitting, and the artist have to be observant in the process.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷³ Lave, J. and Wenger, E. (1991) *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*, p 49-50

¹⁷⁴ Interview with Musah Swallah, co-founder and NMA artist, p 5

¹⁷⁵ Interview with Mohammed Awudu, NMA artist, p 4

6.0. The Importance of Art

I walk through the red steel gate that marks the compound where I live, I turn right and then left, trying to remember all the turns. It is my first exploration of Nima by myself and the thought of not finding my way back again, has struck me several times. The narrow streets are lined with houses, and the cemented structures are worn down after many years activity without reconstruction. The open gutters take up most of the space on the small, and narrow streets, leaving only a small path for me to walk on. Most of the houses are concrete coloured, some have been built with red clay, and others are painted in bright colours, often bleached by the sun. There is a lot of movement on the streets, with children on their way to fetch water before going to school, animals eating from piles of litter, and ladies cooking to prepare for breakfast. The community is crammed with people, and everywhere I look is piles of litter. The gutters are choked, and the community is covered in a veil of dirt and people in my surrounding often discuss the sanitation as a problem. I leave the small area of Nima 441 and enter the Kanda highway. This is a highly trafficked road with a lot of movement, dust and fumes from the cars are mixed with the litter thrown on the street. Then I pass the public toilet, expected to be the dirtiest place around, but it's not and I am very surprised. Instead the walls are painted in bright colours that send the message of peace. The interaction of this space is obvious, because people cue here a lot...

The third empirical chapter will discuss the importance of art by examining the way in which the contemporary art can serve as a catalyst for raising issues, and thereby contribute to social change. Three different aspects will be raised, and discussed based on the empirical findings, starting with *Art as a Catalyst for Change* followed by *Local and Global Perspectives*, and finally the *Postcolonial Context*.

6.1 Importance of Artistic Practice

The chapter will provide wider perspectives of art in order to communicate it, and how art is important. The Nima community is the main example, from which art will be examined on a local level, providing an open approach, and defining the importance of art in a very specific and given context. The study will also expand to include the global perspective, and provide insights to the contemporary art itself. The context of Nima depends on the colonial past, and the post colonial present whereas

the community move between different aspects of local, and global representation. These representations are based on the segregated, and multicultural state of the community that consists of desires to change perceptions about the community, and prove itself as part of the capital city Accra.

... Art is everything and art is very, very important ... when art is well noticed, this country will change for good.¹⁷⁶

People and organisations in Nima ascribe art importance due to the context in which it is produced, and this chapter will further describe and discuss the local art scene with different approaches.

6.1.1 Art as a Catalyst for Change

The first aspect of this chapter is art as a catalyst for change, that provides a community function, and place its focus on social issues connected to existing structures of the Nima community. The organisation *NMA* works to empower youth by building a network for creativity and art, as well as creating venues for insiders, and outsiders to explore art. The name *Nima Muhinmanchi Art* translates from the local language Hausa to English “the importance of art in Nima”, and suggests that art has an important function in the present community. Art as a catalyst for change can be seen mainly by the artists targeting current community issues, and the way in which the community art projects introduces role models for the youth. Co-founder Musah Swallah explains that the organisation aims to build for the future by organising events, and introducing new projects to the community. The role of *NMA* is to teach, and guide people and thus build a positive understanding of art in the community.¹⁷⁷ Mohammed (Moh) Awudu amongst other artists in Nima explains that the reality of Nima being a slum makes the lives of people difficult.¹⁷⁸ The artist Yussif Ojaff explicates that art has become a tool for fighting against issues, and perceptions. He further identify the importance of art to lie in the concepts, and messages conveyed, where artists in Nima use their talents to share their ideas of a better community with the public.¹⁷⁹ What actually makes a better community can be diffuse, and sometimes problematic to define with different perspectives based on varied experiences. The artists experiences of working with the community are

¹⁷⁶ Interview with Yussif (Lab) Sangbe, NMA artist, p 4

¹⁷⁷ Interview with Musah Swallah, co-founder and NMA artist, p 7

¹⁷⁸ Interview with Mohammed (Moh) Awudu, NMA artist, p 6

¹⁷⁹ Interview with Yussif Ojaff, NMA artist, p 6

valuable factors when tracing the importance of art, which contributes to discuss in what way the contemporary art can serve as a catalyst for raising social issues, such as sanitation and waist.

When discussing different experiences of art production it becomes obvious that the focus is not on the artists, or the style of the produced artworks, rather the nature of the messages conveyed, and how they are narrated. According to co-founder Amin Larry Yussif art is not about using traditional materials; it is about being innovative and bringing new ideas into already existing structures, and concepts. He further explains that he place his creative mind as a centre point of his artistic practice, in order to create visions, and bring new things into the arts.¹⁸⁰ The artists are joined creatively by their source of inspiration, as well as their involvement in the community, which clarifies that art is about creating a voice, and bringing different messages out, rather than focusing on materials, and specific creations.¹⁸¹

Community-leaders and the social governance of Nima consider the art to be a medium for assisting community development, primary by influencing people mentally.¹⁸² Nii Futah the Chief of Nima explains that since art is sociology meant and the artists know the philosophy of art; art can be used to influence people. Whereby the artist Yussif Ojaff further explains that he personally use art to in various ways touch upon peoples lives.¹⁸³

I see art tampering on human behaviour. While you appreciate it, you are at peace with yourself. The more you do that, the more it affects your general being. I think art can make people more peaceful.¹⁸⁴

This creates a context for the way in which people interact with the community art, and how they benefit from the art, as well as the interaction involved in the process. As mentioned above the understanding of art is sometimes lacking, where artists consider it their responsibility to start educating both children, and their parents about the value of art.

So since they don't value art and our responsibility as an artist now is to start educating them, both children and their parents the value of art, what art can do to individual lives and even what

¹⁸⁰ Interview with Amin Larry Yussif, Co-funder and NMA artist, p 2&4

¹⁸¹ Interview with Yussif Ojaff, NMA artist, p 9

¹⁸² Interview with Nii Futah, Chief of Nima, p 3

¹⁸³ Interview with Yussif Ojaff, NMA artist, p 6

¹⁸⁴ Interview with Nii Futah, Chief of Nima, p 6

art can do to the society. Now we are able to use art as a medium to bring people into the community, then art is powerful. We are able to change some part of Nima.¹⁸⁵

Honourable Shaiu Tajudeen the Assemblyman of Nima 441, elucidate the youth problems by distinguish them as lack of engagement. He believes that if the youth can engage themselves creatively instead of just sitting around doing nothing, the art can create opportunities for them and make them go far.¹⁸⁶

I say that the art now, is the only solution to our youth problem. If they can engage themselves in it, I see art can drive them out of, even poverty.¹⁸⁷

The change provided by art is dual, therefore it is important to address the fact that art is a business like any other, creating opportunities to earn money and provide for a family. In contrast to the more social aspects of art, it also creates venues and provides valuable activities for people in the community. The artists explain that some of the people in Nima fight for today and not for tomorrow, which sometimes make the direct discussion of art difficult.¹⁸⁸

The function of art as a catalyst for change in Nima can be viewed mainly through environmental, and health perspectives, based on experiences of different mural paintings executed in the urban, and public landscape of the community. Many are those who believe sanitation to be a major problem, contributing and connecting itself to a number of other issues, such as education, health, and unemployment. Hon. Nazer Mahama Toure the Member of Parliament of East Ayawaso Constituency, explicates that education provides tools for people to understand how to handle sanitation, and since the educational level is low so is the consciousness of sanitation itself.¹⁸⁹ The action plan for the East Ayawaso constituency 2012-2015 highlights sanitation as a focus point, where the lack of amenities such as adequate toilet facilities and dumping grounds combined with a lack of community structures, and poor attitudes of people are emphasized.¹⁹⁰ Even if the study will touch upon these issues, the focus will essentially be on the sanitation itself.

However the artists believe that the murals possess a community function by providing community development, and according to artist Rufai Zakari the murals

¹⁸⁵ Interview with Amin Larry Yussif, Co-funder and NMA artist, p 5

¹⁸⁶ Interview with Honourable Shaiu Tajudeen, Assemblyman of Nima 441, p 5

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Interview with Yussif Ojaff, NMA artist, p 5

¹⁸⁹ Interview with Honourable Nazer Mahama Toure, MP of East Ayawaso Constituency, p 2

¹⁹⁰ Action plan 4East Ayawaso Constituency 2013-2015 (Mac Nasser), p 13-14

contributes in the process of urban development, and social cycles connected to sanitation.¹⁹¹ The public toilet mural painting provides an example of an initiative from within the community that transforms the environment of the public toilet, which also encourage the community to keep the area clean. Many of the households in Nima lack toilet facilities, which makes the majority of people in Nima to heavily depend on the public toilets, which often are in bad condition and with long queues.¹⁹²

... Making something that is seen as the most ugly space, like the public toilet, something of beauty and culture, and something that can brighten your day a little bit when you go by there.¹⁹³

Thereby it is about beautify and create messages, and according to co-founder Robin Riskin the mural itself has encouraged people to continue the process of keeping the place of the public toilet clean. Since the establishment of the organisation in 2011, projects with connection to the community have been realized on regular basis. The projects have contributed to transform sites in the urban landscape, creating an impact and changing ways of realisation in the community.¹⁹⁴ The senior artist Hussein (Mozzey) Hashim explicates that by creating murals in the community, the place is beautified, which prevents people from litter as much as they use to since they want to preserve the place in its newfound condition.¹⁹⁵

An increased respect for the environment has created awareness, and participation connected to art in the public space that inspires people to maintain, and continue the development further. Even though there is a lot more to be done, Robin Riskin believes that the murals have inspired people to keep the community cleaner. She further explains that since there is now more beauty around, the art has contributed to change the layout of the community.¹⁹⁶ The discussions of sanitation and environment suggests that the profession of being an artist involves more than the occupation itself, and is explained by several of the informants to entail a responsibility of providing visions through their creativity.

¹⁹¹ Interview with Rufai Zakari, NMA artist, p 4

¹⁹² Action plan 4East Ayawaso Constituency 2013-2015 (Mac Nasser), p 17

¹⁹³ Interview with Robin Riskin, co-founder NMA, p 2

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Interview with, Hussein (Mozzey) Hashim, Senior artist of Nima (NMA artist), p 8

¹⁹⁶ Interview with Robin Riskin, co-founder NMA, p 4

Art is very, very, very important! Because art, apart from the money maybe that you make out of it, you feel proud because to become an artist is not easy oh yeah it is not easy.¹⁹⁷

Hussein (Mozzey) Hashim further explains that as an artist you have multiple functions working together simultaneously, where one of them is being a scientist, and inventor that solves problems, and brings new ideas forward.¹⁹⁸ When discussing art nothing is left out and Nicholas Wayo, co-founder and artist explicated that art is life and life is art, something that is characteristic when observing the artistic climate of Nima. He further explains that he never chose to be an artist; rather he felt it was something he was born to do, a process similar to when a sculpture takes form.¹⁹⁹ This suggests artists to be middle for change of life and structures, which also helps to define the local art scene and making the community stand out from other similar communities. So the question is if the art is important, and for who, and why?

Like other artists Musah Swallah focus his creativity on communicating with present time and life, placing his artistry in a contemporary context, and conveying messages for the present and future.²⁰⁰ Artists in Nima come up with different mediums, and continuously challenge themselves to invent new ideas, and find inspiration in the environment, as well as in contemporary movements and issues.²⁰¹ The curiosity and urge to explore new arenas, materials and to invent something new thrives most of them. Probably this is why art has become such a big part of the community, and made Nima known as one of the most creative places in Accra. According to Lave and Wenger communities of practice are engaged in the generative process of producing their own future, suggesting that learning, transformation, and change are implicated in one another.²⁰² The sanitation and waste issues partially depends on the lack of structures and community layouts, because how can the cars move inside the community to collect the garbage if there is no roads, or no space to build a road?

6.1.2 Local and Global Perspectives

The importance of art accommodates different and varied levels, in which the local context works to expand globally, and affiliate to the international art scene. This brings us to the second aspect of this chapter, discussing local and global

¹⁹⁷ Interview with, Hussein (Mozzey) Hashim, Senior artist of Nima (NMA artist), p 3

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Interview with Nicholas Wayo, co-founder and NMA artist, p 2

²⁰⁰ Interview with Musah Swallah, co-founder and NMA artist, p 4

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Lave, J. and Wenger, E. (1991) *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*, p 57-58

perspectives. The aspect provides knowledge and understanding about the duality of tradition and culture, in contrast to new development of global arenas.

... Art can change a lot of people, a lot of lives in this world, and it has been doing that, art has been doing that, changing a lot of lives in the world and I think it's like a tradition that goes on.²⁰³

The reliance in arts ability to change the world is placing the art in a global context, enhancing new perspectives, and suggesting that what is happening in this local context is similar to other local contexts in the global world. According to the artist Tei Huagie art changes people, and places around the world with creative, and artistic ideas.²⁰⁴ However the question is how the individual can contribute in the process of change making, and how the art influence individual lives.

I always ask myself – what have you done for you country, you know, everybody, everywhere in the world everybody's asking what has the government done for me, but ask yourself what have you done for your country.²⁰⁵

Mohammed (Moh) Awudu explicates that the main question, and the real importance lies in what you can do for others, and how you can change someone's life.²⁰⁶

According to co-founder Musah Swallah the art has a major role to play in the development of building a nation, explicating that the art itself has to be taken seriously.²⁰⁷ According to Yussif Ojaff and several other artists and leaders in Nima, this can be applied and implemented in other communities around the world.²⁰⁸

And if I'm able to change the community, how can I extend this change to the other communities? I mean how can I replicate it to the other communities to change.²⁰⁹

The quote suggests that change-making can be replicated to other places than its origin, and extend the movement of creating art in the local context. Thus the implemented change in the Nima community can be transmitted to global arenas, and contribute with local perspectives. This master study has mainly focused on the importance of art in a community context, applying Nima community as the main example. In fact, art not only change perceptions, it has the power to transform a place into a destination, which shifts the perspective from the local to the global and

²⁰³ Interview with Yussif Ojaff, NMA artist, p 7

²⁰⁴ Interview with Tei Huagie, p 3

²⁰⁵ Interview with Mohammed (Moh) Awudu, NMA artist, p 3

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Interview with Musah Swallah, co-founder and NMA artist, p 7

²⁰⁸ Interview with Yussif Ojaff, NMA artist, p 7

²⁰⁹ Interview with Amin Larry Yussif, co-founder and NMA artist, p 2

creates a glocal context for the art.²¹⁰ In present Nima is known for its mural paintings created in different parts of the community, but with focus on the highly trafficked Kanda Highway that makes art visible, and accessible for outsiders to reach, and creates a motivation for them to re-visit the community.

... In terms of tourism, business, economy, more people are motivated to come here, or even know about the place because of the mural paintings or arts events and exhibitions that we do. So in fact that can bring business into the place when you have arts and culture, it can make the place a destination.²¹¹

Nima is characterized as a place for arts and culture, and Robin Riskin explains that the mural paintings incorporate knowledge, and history about tradition, culture, and heritage. This makes it possible to transmit messages about the community and communicate local perspectives to the world.²¹² The local perspective of preserving cultural traditions can be viewed in parallel with the urgency to explore new arenas and relate to the global art scene. In present Nima is set in a global context, where the boundaries are becoming increasingly blurred, and cross-country collaborations over national boundaries increases. Hussein (Mozzey) Hashim the senior artist in Nima, who trained most of the young artists in the community, experience a major change in the artistic climate due to technical progresses. He further explains that the computer world has encouraged people to go to school and receive education and new ideas, in order to little by little change the limitations, pre-set for them in the past.²¹³

You see it is like global village, so people are forcing themselves to do the right thing, so now Nima is a good place. Nima is a good place, really.²¹⁴

Being a part of the glocal context implicates an intensified competition, where the artists who are willing to compete in the global arenas are rising. However the focus when going global is not the urge to compete, rather create substantial collaborations for the future. Robin Riskin believes the future of Accra and Ghana involves creating innovative, and creative collaborations, and links throughout West Africa, as well as internationally. International collaborations increase the possibilities to realise ideas, and visions on a local level, and to expand into new arenas, and create new contexts

²¹⁰ Global + Local= Glocal

²¹¹ Interview with Robin Riskin, co-founder NMA, p 5

²¹² Ibid, p 4

²¹³ Interview with, Hussein (Mozzey) Hashim, Senior artist of Nima (NMA artist), p 4

²¹⁴ Ibid.

for the locally produced art.²¹⁵ However the problem is losing control over the representation, and as accentuated by Waterton and Smith, to increase the possibility for community-based projects to evolve around inquiries from third parties. Which admittedly implicates the risk of projects being realised for the community, rather than with the community.²¹⁶

In every country there are places with certain problems, and when looking globally it is possible to find several examples of communities like Nima, that use art to acquire positive results. An example of this is *The Heidelberg Project (HP)* in Detroit, a community based organisation, designed to improve the lives of people, and neighbourhoods through art. Like *NMA*, *The Heidelberg Project (HP)* aims to inspire people to enrich, and improve their lives and the social, and economic health of the community through artistic expression.²¹⁷

The HP believes that a community can redevelop and sustain itself, from the inside out, by embracing its diverse cultures and artistic attributes as the essential building blocks for a fulfilling and economically viable way of life.²¹⁸

Incorporated in 1988, The Heidelberg Project (HP) provides the example of an established project, working with art in the public space and functioning as a catalyst for change in a local context. Furthermore the art provides tourism business for the community, and gives the place status as a destination that enables the community to expand into global arenas. When change is extended from the local to the global, a global context is established, and the artist Yussif (Lab) Sangbe explains that it is when people are given ideas of experiencing new things that new things actually evolve.²¹⁹ An important aspect of development is that it often displays a duality that sometimes creates frictions between development and tradition. This local context in particular contains a great level of cultural tradition, and firmly established religious structures. The majority of people in Nima are Muslims, but since Nima emerged as a multicultural and multi-ethnic community, the religious structures even if they are different, creates a bond and understanding of the community itself. The community is bound together by the fact that the people are religious, and when entering the global context things can change. Therefore sometimes frictions occur between

²¹⁵ Interview with Robin Riskin, co-founder NMA, p 9

²¹⁶ Waterton, E. and Smith, L. (2010), *The recognition and misrecognition of community heritage*, p 7

²¹⁷ *The Heidelberg Project (HP)*, http://www.heidelberg.org/who_we_are/mission.html (2014-04-14, 09.58)

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Interview with, Yussif Sangbe, NMA artist, p 4

tradition, religion and the artistic creation, where the local perspective contains the importance of religion and tradition, and the global represents modernity and development. However as accentuated by Lundahl, the global world expect artists from the African continent to operate in an unbroken tradition, producing art with a distinct representation of culture, based on ethnicity and identity. Consequently tensions are created between local and global perspectives in the society.²²⁰ Amin Larry Yussif, co-founder and artist of the organisation NMA explains that he use the creative mind to change society at all costs, explaining creativity to be a gift given by god. Thereby the friction between development and tradition levels out, since the purpose of the creative ability is to actually change people's lives.²²¹

In all terms, Art makes people civilised, it is a source of enlightenment. For every law there should be a reason. In the Muslim tradition, the depiction of humans was not done. There was a fear that people would start to worship things instead of god. Now most people do not see it in this way.²²²

Nii Futah the Chief of Nima believes art to be very important, since it provides the community with a variety of dimensions. He further explains that art is vital and essential for the empowerment and growth of a country, where art can strengthen the local and national identity. According to Nii Futah art has the power to simplify societal structures, and thereby function as a force of power that brings different cultures and religions together.²²³

It's very nice when the different ethnicities and tribes meet, learning about culture. Learning from each other and also exchanging ideas, traditions and so on.²²⁴

Although the majority of informants believe that the understanding of art in the local context are lacking, others claim that the people in the community are accustomed to art from the many different, and varied cultures. The emergence of Nima as a multicultural community with many different ethnicities and tribes, all of them with their own language and culture, provides the community with a tradition of different experiences that are reunited through the joined language Hausa.

Robin Riskin explains the richness of the community to derive from diversity, and the confluence of cultures. The way in which people have come from many different

²²⁰ Lundahl, M. (2004) *Postkolonial kritik och konst*, p 17

²²¹ Interview with Amin Larry Yussif, co-funder and NMA artist, p 2

²²² Interview with Nii Futah, Chief of Nima 441, p 3

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Interview with Malam Saeed, Imam Nima, p 2

places to settle in the community, and the warmth and friendliness of people are according to her contributing factors of peace and unity in the community.²²⁵ Thereby the vision is to make Nima a better place in the future, a place characterized by arts and culture that function as a centre point in Accra to experience art in various forms.²²⁶

6.1.3 Postcolonial Context

The third and last aspect of this chapter is the postcolonial context, providing an insight in perspectives and positioning art in local and global arenas of the community. The concept of legitimate peripheral participation, developed by Lave and Wenger provides a way of arguing for the richness of theoretical significance, connected to the interconnections of history through time, and across cultures.²²⁷ In 1957 Ghana declared independence, and since developed as a nation and building structures, and community functions. As accentuated by Lave and Wenger the construction of meaning in present circumstances is based on knowledge, and lies in the power to renegotiate the meaning of the past and future.²²⁸ Therefore when acquiring change, it is important to look at the context itself and locating the needs and structures. Ghana like many other African countries can be placed in a postcolonial context, indicating that creating change is also a way to break free from present structures, and proving something to the world. The informants explain it to be about independence, and changing perceptions, first in the local context and thereafter replicating the change to the rest of the country.

Hon Shaiu Tajudeen the Assemblyman of Nima 441, emphasize the importance of art in terms of educating people about the country's historical past. He further explains that through art there is the possibility to learn more and build for the future.²²⁹

Sometimes in the arts you can easily identify the problem, if you look at the art itself, and you know the typical, what happen some time ago and what is happening now through the arts.²³⁰

Hon Shaiu Tajudeen elucidates that art provides ways and means to educate about what people do not know, and what they want to know in the future. In present Nima things have changed, and according to him people are nowadays advised to choose

²²⁵ Interview with Robin Riskin, co-founder NMA, p 3

²²⁶ Interview with Musah Swallah, co-founder and NMA artist, p 7

²²⁷ Lave, J. and Wenger, E. (1991) *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*, p 39

²²⁸ *Ibid*, p 34

²²⁹ Interview with Hon Shaiu Tajudeen, Assemblyman of Nima 441, p 4

²³⁰ *Ibid*.

visual arts as a course in school.²³¹ This suggests that art provides a merged unity for the past, present and future that is valuable in different levels. Malam Saeed one of the Imams of the area explicate that art is important because it teaches people about their background.²³² According to the artist Taufiq Musah as well as other artists, art have the power to send messages faster than anything else, which implies that art empowers change, mainly through discussing and criticizing existing images of Africa. An urge and thrive away from the postcolonial is created, producing possibilities for the country, and for the art to develop into a new era.²³³

One of the present problems is the patronising of art, because even if people begin to see the importance of art, many of the informants argue that Ghanaians do not buy art. Which implies that the art produced is patronized by outsiders, and not by locals. Artist and co-founder Musah Swallah explains that as an artist in Ghana he faces many challenges, explaining that the majority of people he know who made it through the art have sold their works outside.²³⁴ A continued dependence is distinguished essentially when it comes to the process of marketing, and selling artworks that implies the importance of raising awareness of arts and culture. Co-founder Amin Larry Yussif characterise the problem as an existing barrier, where people tend to view art as paint on canvas, sold at the art centre.²³⁵

If you know the importance of you talent, you are a visionary. You can change any situation ... with your creativity ... it's important!²³⁶

Postcolonial perspectives includes the discussion of defining art from the African continent as “African art”, and many are those who oppose the fact that art can be defined by who, and where it is produced. Lave and Wenger on the other hand explains participation as a situated negotiation, and renegotiation of meaning, which implies that understanding and experiences in the world are a constant interaction as well as constitutive.²³⁷ This suggests that it is not really about defining the art as produced in a certain context, but the negotiation and re-negotiation of the art produced, as well as the understanding of it. The contemporary artist Tei Huagie works both locally, and internationally and disaffiliates to define himself as an

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Interview with Malam Saeed, Imam Nima, p 2

²³³ Interview with Taufiq Musah, NMA artist, p 3

²³⁴ Interview with Musah Swallah, co-founder and NMA artist, p 5

²³⁵ Interview with Amin Larry Yussif, co-founder and NMA artist, p 4

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Lave, J. and Wenger, E. (1991) *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*, p 52

African artist. He defines himself as a child of the world, and explains that for him the art is about capturing true things, and sending out universal messages to the world.²³⁸

... the message I would like to send across should not be African it should be a universal message. Because the problems I am facing here I shouldn't think I am the only person who is facing that it in Africa. Somebody is facing it In Asia, in Europe elsewhere there are similarities... there are similarities in culture too.²³⁹

Although the message concerns the environment on a local level, it is universal since people around the world face similar issues and problems. Therefore when it is conveyed to the public, art has the power to send messages around the world.²⁴⁰

However as accentuated by Lundahl there is the assumption that artists from Africa are supposed to represent their continent, and the cultural heritage of their origin. This assumption inevitably positions the produced art in a postcolonial community context.²⁴¹

The senior artist Hussein (Mozzey) Hashim explains that the idea of empowering youth in Nima through art emerged many years ago. The cultural apprenticeship for example grew stronger, but the majority of the ideas were never realised, not until support from the outside world appeared, and why is that? The explanation might be the lack of recourses and knowledge, or a disbelief in the own abilities. Probably it is a combination of these two, and the fact that the country is deeply rooted in its history, and the remaining postcolonial perspective.

In the Nima community the profession of being an artist has become a symbol of status, and Mohammed (Moh) Awudu explains that being an artist is a way of talking about Africa to the outside world. The artists thereby represent the community, as well as the country itself, sending out messages about history and positive future development.²⁴² The problematized questioning of prevailing structures in Africa has according to Nii Futah the Chief of Nima contributed to the love for America, and the culture has attracted many Ghanaians to go overseas. In the past it was easier to travel, and people left Ghana not for the jobs, but for the aspiration of another life.

²³⁸ Interview with Tei Huagie, Contemporary artists, p 4-5

²³⁹ *Ibid*, p 4

²⁴⁰ *Ibid*.

²⁴¹ Lundahl, M. (2004) *Postkolonial kritik och konst*, p 16

²⁴² Interview with Mohammed (Moh) Awudu, NMA artist, p 2

Thinking that America offered the “real life” in comparison to the life they already had in Ghana.²⁴³

You know art, in Africa or in Ghana or in Nima here, we know art is money. When you are an artist, automatically you become somebody, you see, so it means when you become somebody then you have to change yourself, you see you have to change.²⁴⁴

According to Amin Larry Yussif, change can be pursued through arts education, and he further explains that if people in the community are well informed about art, they begin to respect it, which offers legitimization of arts in the community.²⁴⁵ The importance of art lies in its abilities to not only rebrand, but also rebuild a nation, and raise awareness in order to change social stigmas and the perceptions of place. Nima today is characterized as one of the most social, and creative places in Accra and Ghana, and Hon Shaiu Tajudeen the Assemblyman of Nima 441 explains that even if there is a lot of work to be done in the community, Nima has changed to the better, because of the arts.²⁴⁶

6.2 Chapter Conclusion and Analysis

In the last empirical chapter *The Importance of Art* the discussion has explored art, and examined the way in which the contemporary art serve as catalyst for raising issues, and thus contribute to social change. In the Nima community there are strong beliefs that art can contribute to change the community, especially through art provided in public spaces. Involvement is the key term, created through the establishment of street art, and mural painting projects produced with and for the public.

The chapter has discussed the importance of art based on different aspects connected to artistic practice. Initially *Art as a Catalyst for Change*, secondly *Local and Global Perspectives*, and finally the *Postcolonial Context*. People perceive art to provide certain answers, and to be ascribed with meaning. However exactly how, moves in a spectrum of questions that concerns both present issues of day-to-day life, and the big questions of life and death.

²⁴³ Interview with Nii Futah, Chief of Nima, p 6

²⁴⁴ Interview with, Hussein (Mozzey) Hashim, Senior artist of Nima (NMA artist), p 5

²⁴⁵ Interview with Amin Larry Yussif, co-founder and NMA artist, p 4

²⁴⁶ Interview with Hon Shaiu Tajudeen, Assemblyman of Nima 441, p 5

The current art practices and different initiatives in Nima connect itself with social issues, connected with already existing community structures. This makes the initiative powerful due to the local support. When building a network for creativity and art, new opportunities are created for the people of the community to explore venues, with art as a convening factor. *Nima Muhinmanchi Art* "the importance of art in Nima" positions the organisation and its projects as a community function, mainly through artists targeting current community issues, and the way in which the community art projects introduces role models for the youth.

There is nothing in the world that can sustain mind than art, yeah very very important. And I enjoy it and I love it! I haven't regretted one day being an artist I always enjoying myself.²⁴⁷

People perceive art to have a community function, even if they know little about it and local artists and community leaders believe that art has a social function, that can change the community to the better, by bringing people together. However most people believe that artists must be more visible for people to see. This indicates a global focus where the outside world and its perceptions are given more space, and as a result artists becomes less visible for people within the community.

The postcolonial perspective suggests a dependent state that becomes distinguishable when observing the specific example of *NMA*. The organisation was created from different perspectives of locally based initiatives, expanding from the Nima community and eventually realized with the support from outsiders. Locally active artists in Nima identified a need, and later developed an idea that was first realized with the involvement of the global world. Although the organisation expanded from within the Nima community, the reality is that they are still depending on project managers to provide ideas, and initiatives from outside the country. The influence of the global world has marked the dependent state of the community, and reflects its position in a postcolonial era. Thereby undeniable tensions between local, and global arenas occur, which becomes visible when the artists enter new arenas. Stereotype images of art produced in Africa still prevent artists to approach universal questions defined by the western world, where artists are expected to represent Africa in a certain way.

²⁴⁷ Interview with Taufiq Musah, NMA artist, p 8

The chapter has provided wider perspectives of art, in order to communicate if, and how art is important, where the informants believe that the future of the community is to engage people in community development through art.

I say that the art now, is the only solution to our youth problem. If they can engage themselves in it, I see art can drive them out of, even poverty.²⁴⁸

The quote set the mood of the artistic climate in Nima, and emphasise the power and importance of art in a community level. People in the community are provided opportunities in the local context that are in direct relation to art itself. When something creates opportunities for the masses, and when the masses find it important, the power shifts, and naturally the art is thereby assigned with importance by the society.

²⁴⁸ Interview with Hon. Shaiu Tajudeen, Assemblyman of Nima 441, p 5

7.0 Summary and Conclusions

This Master thesis has contextualised, and discussed the contemporary art as a catalyst for change by raising social issues through art production. Most distinguishable is the artistic climate, identified as emerging from the Nima community in Ghana's capital Accra, and initiated by the senior artist Hussein (Mozzey) Hashim. The identified artistic climate is thereby a fact, further constructed and redefined in the interaction of people, and integrated in the social practice. Different levels of participation have been discussed based on Lave and Wenger's theories of legitimate peripheral participation, suggesting that artists become full participants, and thereby members, when entering the artistic climate and passing the received knowledge along to others.

Furthermore the artistic climate of Nima can be apprehended as aspects of social practice, explained by Lave and Wenger as relations to social communities. This indicates that learning involves the process of becoming a full participant, involved in new activities, and mastering new understandings.²⁴⁹ This suggests that as the artists in Nima are teaching each other, they perform new tasks, and functions connected to the social practice of the community. This pervades the spirit of the art produced in the local context, as well as the contemporary ideas it centres around. In the spirit of changing the community, there is an urge to represent the community to the world, which consequently places the representation above the people represented, and allows the representation of others. So the contemporary art, or more specifically art produced in the public space with contemporary ideas, indicates its connection to community structures, by connecting itself to societal issues such as education, economics, and sanitation.

In Nima people are given possibilities through art, foremost associated and connected through different levels of education. The cultural apprenticeship has brought new opportunities for those without education, enabling them to receive training, and gaining knowledge, and support through a network affiliated with the occupation of being an artist. Then again this naturally implicates limitations, which derives from talent. Being an artist cannot always be generally compared to other professions, where it is possible to perform certain tasks through training. Being an artist involves creativity, which is explained by the artists as a creative mind that involves creating

²⁴⁹ Lave, J. and Wenger, E. (1991) *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*, p 53

visions and bringing messages out to the public. The reality is that being an artist is not a profession for everyone, and not all people can make it through the arts. Not even the structures of the cultural apprenticeship will change that fact. However it provides elements of change to the issues of education, and unemployment, as well as providing a locally based activity connected to art, and community development.

The artists can be considered as contributors to change, mainly by their interest in community development. Mural paintings executed in the public space of the urban landscape Nima, can consequently be apprehended as a movement in its thrive to rebrand the community through arts and culture. However the function of murals as a movement for change needs to be problematized, because the production of future visions for the community implicates risks of creating discontent connected to coeval structures in present time. The constant pursuit of envisioning the future may therefore be problematic, because people constantly await change, instead of contributing to change, and embracing the present. The role of artists being the storytellers and visionaries for the community, to narrate aspects of Nima to local communities as well as the global world therefore creates problems associated with different perspectives. Art is a matter of subjective interpretations from both artists, and their audience, based on experience, knowledge and environment.

As described in the second empirical chapter *Mural Painting as Community Changing Practice*, murals created in the local context, and in the public space of the community are produced in large scale, and in highly visible spaces. According to the informants murals make powerful public statements about the community, and the people within. However as acknowledged by Marschall, murals tend to make powerful statements about people who have little impact to speak for themselves, which raises issues of representation.²⁵⁰ Issues of representation concerns who is in the position to represent others, and how others are in fact represented which make claims to whether murals are the authentic voice of the other, or not. In the community context murals are often characterized as art of the people, which makes claims to the fact that art is produced with the people, for the people. The informants of this study, and the organisation support this approach, however it is important to discuss, and explore the fact that murals, as well as many other cultural expressions

²⁵⁰ Marschall, S. (2000) *A Postcolonial Reading of Mural Art in South Africa*, p 114-115

are created as representations of others, which is discussed and contextualized by Marshall.

The terminology of community can easily be confusable with what I have chosen to describe as community of practice, explained in the introductory chapter as constituted to describe, and identify the movement as well as the activity of people, and art in the Nima community. Nima is a community, characterized by *Oxford dictionaries*, as a place where a group of people are living, or having a particular characteristic in common. In the Nima community, a community of practice is taking place, building from ideas of change through social interventions. However the murals, and the idea of community of practice constitute a public voice that define a local identity for the community, through the acknowledgement of people's present.

Affiliating from discussions provided by Waterton and Smith, the universalising power of peoples desires connected to concepts of community through community of practice, should not be understated. People tend to live on the assumption that change is created through art, rather than proved facts of the same. The assumption builds a rhetoric connected to interaction, that highlights positive aspects of the community. However this does not undermine the role art plays in the community, simply that the change is achieved through the construction of social interactions, creating a difference for the people living within. However the local and global contexts often differ from each other, and thus provide a variety of arenas to explore. This sometimes involves tensions between tradition, and development that displays the postcolonial state of present Ghana. Nima provides an example of a community with thrive for development, but with the desire to retain its own uniqueness, and not only become part of fixed structures of Western values. The urge is thereby to become part, bring something new and thus contribute to the development of the global art scene.

The belief in art, and the ideas of its ability to change the community is creating the notion of community of practice, which takes place in the social interaction of people. Thereby the function of art as a catalyst for change, raising social issues dwells in its ability to create interactions with people, and practices connected to place. The importance or not rests with the viewer, and the process involved where the community of practice is taking place.

8.0 Reflection

To enter a context as a researcher, and especially in the field of humanities and ethnography inadequately raise the question of representation, whereby an ethical approach becomes necessary. During the process, two questions evolved and have followed every step of the work from material collection, and transcribing to the production of this text. *Who is in the position to represent others?* and *how do I collect material in an ethical way, not taking advantage of the people involved?*

I have perceived, and analysed a context to which I have been a newcomer, and the truth to be told is that the acceptance and support I received was beyond my expectations. From the start I was aware that it could be difficult to enter the context, and thus it was difficult to beforehand premeditate what kind of material I would access. Therefore it has been a process in which I have constantly evaluated my results, in order to complete my study.

During the process I have experienced various ways of participating in the context, often a constant participant, which has required time and energy. It has been time consuming, and at moments confusing as a result of the various, and very different turns of the research. Therefore the problematic of the questions has been even more complex throughout the process, due to the mixed participation.

With curiosity and interest I entered a context far from earlier experiences, and as a result I came out with new perspectives and apprehension. The Nima community arouse my curiosity, and my fears, and I was early told not to wander around alone in the area, because of danger. As the first couple of weeks passed the frustration grew stronger with the feeling of constantly depending on others. As a result it was difficult to figure out in what direction the material collection would take, especially with consideration to the entered context.

Early in the process it became obvious that it was crucial for the study to gain the trust of people, and to be invited to the communion, and the every day lives of people. I assisted with the cooking, and the slaughter of animals, joined ladies fetching water, engaged in pressing issues of the community, and served as the local babysitter. Often left with toddlers, not knowing where they belonged. By allowing people to get to know me, I gained trust, which was crucial for my study, as well as for me personally.

However gaining peoples trust also implies obligations, and that is to represent these people in an ethical and humane way.

The study, and the results derive from conversations and patterns, where an artistic climate has been identified in the urban district of Nima. Within the artistic climate patterns were found, creating a joined image of the local importance of art, and the fact that art can change the perceptions of a socially stigmatized community. The time in field has influenced me, and provided new and critical perspectives of the world. However I cannot deny that it has been mentally exhausting, and challenging throughout the process, mainly due to ethics and my own preferences of what is work and not. The material has proven itself to be powerful, and yet complex since its transformative nature, where the social interactions, and relationships evolving during the process have been crucial for the results.

Mosher describes how aspects of artist's involvement in the process of creating content, and develop new ideas for the community is realised through different strategies.²⁵¹ This can easily be applied to the Nima community, and the idea of an artistic climate. However the strategies applicable are developed in the community through a social interaction between artists, and the community inhabitants and that is what makes the artistic practice, and the change making successful.

Art as a catalyst for social change has given me new perspectives, and enlarged the curiosity of artistic creation, as well as practices taking place in urban districts and communities, essentially in multicultural societies. The assigned value of art and artistic practices that is not measurable, but equally important interests me in particular, and constitutes a field in which I see possibilities for future research.

²⁵¹ Mosher, M.R. (2004) *The Community Mural and Democratic Art Processes*, p 530

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