

Dak' Art Biennale – Analysis of the Critiques 1993–2016



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<p>Pro gradu -tutkielmassani analysoin Dak'Art Biennaalista kirjoitettuja arvosteluja ja kritiikkejä. Dak'Art Biennale on Senegalissa, Dakarissa järjestettävä suuri ja kansainvälinen afrikkalaisen nykyaiteen näyttely. Biennaali on vuodesta 1966 esittänyt erilaista afrikkalaista taidetta aina kirjallisuudesta visuaaliseen taiteeseen. Vuodesta 1996 Dak'Art Biennaali on keskittynyt afrikkalaisen nykyaiteen esittämiseen. 2000-luvun puolella Biennaali saavutti kansainvälisen lehdistön huomion ja on sitä myötä herättänyt paljon keskustelua taidemaailmassa. Biennaali julistaa pan-afrikkalaista ideologiaa ja pyrkii luomaan yhteisöllisyyttä ja yhteisöä kaikkein afrikkalaisten välillä asuinpaikasta riippumatta. Biennaalin tärkeä tehtävä on myös herättää keskustelua afrikkalaisuudesta, kolonialismin historian vaikutuksista, ideologioista ja nykyisen Afrikan mahdollisuuksista.</p> <p>Tutkimukseni keskittyy siihen, millaista keskustelua Dak'Art Biennaalista käydään taidemaailmassa ja akatemiassa. Tutkimusaineistoni koostuu vuosina 1993–2016 julkaistuista akateemisista artikkeleista, taidelehtien kritiikeistä ja muutamasta kulttuurisivuston julkaisemasta arvostelusta. Biennaaleja on tutkittu paljon taiteentutkimuksen piirissä. Olen tutkielmassani kiinnostunut erityisesti siitä, mitä kritiikit ja arvostelut kertovat itse Biennaalista ja millaisen kuvan ne muodostavat siitä sekä, miten ne osaltaan vaikuttavat Biennaalin representaatioon. Tutkielmassani olen kiinnostunut Biennaalista erityisesti postkolonialistisena tuotteena ja siitä, miten tämän ymmärtäminen näkyy kritiikeissä. Dak'Art Biennaali kantaa erityistä historiaa ja merkityksiä, jonka vuoksi postkolonialistinen ote on tärkeää tutkielmani kannalta. Lisäksi hyödynnän tutkielmassani Guy Debord'n teoriaa: Speaktaakkelin yhteiskunta. Debord'n teoria on kritiikki nyky kapitalismille ja esittää, miten yhteiskunnasta on tullut osa representaatiota. Toisin sanoen, miten kaikki, minkä elämme ja koemme, on tullut representaatioksi. Kyseistä teoriaa on sovellettu Biennaali keskusteluissa siinä, miten Biennaalit edustavat speaktaakkelia.</p> <p>Tutkielmassani pyrin soveltamaan teoriaa siinä, miten kritiikit käyttävät erilaisia strategioita, jotka osoittavat niiden edustavan Debord'n speaktaakkelia. Tutkielmassani osoitan, miten kritiikit tuottavat speaktaakkelin eri keinoin. Näitä keinoja tarkastelen kriittisen diskurssianalyysin avulla. Ensimmäiseksi pohdin kuinka kritiikit tuottavat speaktaakkelia yleisesti ja edustavat eletyn representaatiota. Tämän jälkeen esitän, miten kritiikeistä näkyy markkinakapitalismin logiikka, ja, miten se liittyy Debord'n speaktaakkeliin. Lisäksi analysoin, miten pan-afrikanistinen ja postkolonialistinen lähestymistapa näkyy kritiikeissä dominoivana ja ainoana lähestymisenä. Lopuksi tarkastelen, miten sosiopoliittiset valtasuhteet näkyvät kritiikeissä ja, miten speaktaakkelin teoria voi auttaa ymmärtämään myös niiden ilmentymistä kritiikeissä.</p> <p>Debord'n Speaktaakkelin yhteiskunta auttaa ymmärtämään Dak'Art kritiikkejä syvällisemmin ja laajemmassa kontekstissa. Tutkielmassani keskityn siis strategioihin, joita kritiikit käyttävät luodakseen Biennaalista tietynlaisen kuvan.</p>			
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1. Introduction

1.1 Dak'Art Biennale

Dak'Art is a major African Contemporary art exhibition, taking place once every two years in Dakar, the capital of Senegal. The Biennale is important historically and socially, being the longest-running Biennale of African contemporary art. It is also the longest running African art event on the continent. The goal of the Biennale is to present contemporary African art productions produced by Africans both from the continent and from the diaspora, including North Africa and all other regions along with the historical diasporas.

The Biennale follows the concept of the 1966 Premier Festival Mondial des Arts Nègres (First World Festival of Black Arts) which was organised under the rule of the first president of independent Senegal, Léopold Sédar Senghor. Senghor was a Senegalese artist and poet. During Senghor's presidential tenure, he established numerous national art institutions and hosted significant international art events in Dakar. The aim of the First World Festival of Black Arts was to create an international forum in which Africans could reinforce and undertake new national identities. Dak'Art proclaims a similar international, continental and national orientation. The first Dakar Biennale was held in 1990 and was dedicated to African literature. The second Biennale took place in 1992, and its focus was on African visual arts. In 1996 the structure of the Biennale was renewed, and Dak'Art was devoted to Contemporary African Art. In 2000, The President of Senegal, Abdoulaye Wade, promised to give the government's support to the exhibition, and since then Dak'Art Biennale has taken place bi-annually. (Biennalefoundation.org)

The mission statement of Dak'Art identifies the domains in which Dak'Art positions itself as a leader, and its leading role in the spaces of international, Pan-African, local and national discussions. However, Pan-Africanism is Biennale's leading ideology. President Diouf declared at the first opening of Dak'Art that it is a new expressive framework for Africans in Africa and diaspora to meet and exchange ideas. The president highlighted the importance of cultural exchange, self-identification and creative practice. The title for the opening of Dak'Art 2006 was from a poem 'Guélowâr où Prince' written by President Senghor, indicating a strong pan-African ideology:

Your voice tells us about the Republic that we shall erect the City
in the
Blue Daylight
In the equality of sister nations. And we, we answer: Presents,
Ô Guélowâra! (Léopold Senghor)

Dak'Art has faced challenges in being able to satisfy expectations of all the invested parties and participants. (Katchka 2013) Due to this, many institutions, contributors, artists, and the art world are criticising the Biennale and engaging Dak'Art on the discursive platform of art, Africa, Biennales and history. During the last 15–20 years many scholars, art critics, and artists have engaged The Dak'Art Biennale to a broader discussion of criticism. During the years of its existence critics have drawn their attention to the deficiencies of Dak'Art Biennales. The critiques of the Biennale are many, and challenging discourses and ideas are being raised in a discursive platform. These discussions indicate the Biennale's reception, problematisation, and representation. The multiplicity of voices criticising the Dak'Art Biennale consist of members of the art world who are presenting their opinions of the Biennale. These critiques require a critical understanding; they are not a concrete perception of The Biennale's cultural activities. As Thomas Fillitz (2016) states: 'Dak'Art is not only the exhibition of artworks but all various voices that are at stake.' The critiques contribute to these voices, and for this reason, it is both critical and relevant to analyse them in order to understand how they contribute to the Dak'Art Biennale.

This research highlights the **discursive practices** and **strategies** that contributors apply in their critiques in order to discuss the Biennale critically. This research focuses on thirteen critiques, published in academic journals, art journals, and media platforms. The reason for this choice is that they provide an in-depth and analytical approach to the Biennale. News media do not provide other than information about the event taking place. In addition, I consider these critiques to offer a more fruitful study as they contribute actively in representing, challenging and analysing the Biennale. The time scale for the critiques is between 1993–2015, but most of the critiques are from the 21st century. The critiques are written by scholars, artists, critics, and journalists. The authors of the critiques consist of both Africans and Europeans; however, I find this categorisation slightly problematic, and I would therefore rather categorise them according to Agawu (2003) approach: 'European thought' and 'African thinking'. Agawu argues that African thinking was produced in European discourse and some Africans accepted it. I will follow Agawu's

categorisation, arguing that all the contributors belong to the same elitist group whose roots are in Western university institutions.

The theory that will help understand these critiques more critically and profoundly is Guy Debord's *A society of the spectacle* (1983). Debord's theory has been widely applied in art studies, media studies and political studies. Art curators and critics (i.e., Hanru and Choy) have used Debord's theory as a tool in order to understand better the nature of the Biennales and exhibitions. However, I would say that the theory of the spectacle has not been used much in critique analysis. Yet, I believe that the theory fits perfectly into this field of study. The Spectacle in its most straightforward explanation is seen as a representation of the real life that we experience. In Debord's (1983:18) words: 'Where the real world changes into simple images, the simple images become real beings and effective motivations of hypnotic behaviour.' This research argues that critiques can be seen as these simple images.

The first section demonstrates the research's motives, objects, and background. I aim to conceptualise the research by referring to other studies of Biennale criticism and of Dak'Art Biennale criticism. In addition, I will refer to previous and more general discussions of African arts, which serves a base for this research. I shall begin the analysis of the critiques from the headlines, and then move on to the analysis of the content of the critiques. The analysis of the content includes three sections: How the critiques appear to recreate Debord's spectacle, how postcolonial and Pan-African frameworks manifest in the critiques and lastly, the analysis of the underlying power relations and hegemony in the critiques.

1.2 Research motives and objects

Some analyses about the critiques of the Dak'Art Biennale have surfaced over the years, yet profound research about the critiques of the Biennale is lacking. However, research about Biennale critiques is not novel. Choy (2008) has provided a thorough analysis of the critiques of Asian Biennales. This research aims to provide a critical overview of the Dak'Art Biennale's critiques and their intentions. According to Fillitz (2016:58), critical voices should be understood as a concrete perception of Biennale's cultural activities. Critiques have a significant impact on the image and representation of The Dak'Art Biennale creating a notable representation and idea of the Biennale.

One scholar admitted: 'In a way I am doing an injustice to Dak'Art 2014 by reading the exhibition through its theoretical framework.' (Stielau 2015) The quote above is relevant and interesting, describing well the nuance of the critiques. I aim to research the critiques, not taking a stand whether Dak'Art is a success or not.

Previous research about The Dak'Art Biennale provides cursory analysis of what the critiques discuss, yet these analyses are often side points in the research. (Grabski 2017, Fillitz 2016, Katchka 2013) My thesis considers the critiques as a discursive platform, which needs to be analysed thoroughly in order to get an understanding of postcolonial African realities, art world, and institutions. In addition, the analysis of the critiques provides an understanding of underlying sociopolitical and geopolitical power liaisons, hegemonies and hidden ideologies. By analysing Dak'Art Biennale critiques, the research aims to analyse the Biennale through postcolonial understanding, analysing the discourse as a strategy and practice. The aim is to discover how scholars, specialists, and artists discuss the Biennale and how they create a particular meaning and image of the Biennale. It is essential to read and understand the critiques written of The Dak'Art Biennale critically. The aim of this study is to provide a critical overview of the Dak'Art Biennale's critiques and their intentions.

1. Research Background

2.1 Biennale World

In the last few decades, more Biennales and art festivals have gained more popularity globally and become more prominent. There are 100 to 200 Biennales today with different objectives and functions varying from strengthening cities' tourist industry to consolidating cultural infrastructures in business cities aiming to make them more attractive. Some smaller towns organise Biennale to gain more attention on a global scale. (Marchart 2013) Sheikh (2006) states how Biennales have to create a certain format in order to brand themselves; it is not just enough to be 'an art festival' but there is also a necessity to be specifically 'this Biennale, not that one', as Sheikh (2006:4) puts it. The specificity can come from the place, city, region or country. Sheikh argues the biennale branding to be twofold: first, the city giving attraction and allure giving

context and value to the Biennale and second, the glamour and prestige of the biennale branding and its aims to create a positive image of a city or place that would otherwise have a negative image. Sheiks calls this when 'the lure of the local meets the glamour of the global'. (Sheikh 2006) Art world has given it a term 'biennialization' which refers to the proliferation and standardization of biennale exhibitions under a certain common format. Whenever an art show or exhibition calls itself a biennale, it enters the global discourse of Biennales, also extending the typology of Biennales. (Sassatelli 2016)

In most African countries, cultural institutions were settled either by the colonial state or later during the time of independence, when the postcolonial nation-building was the objective of African leaders. African contemporary art started to gain the interest of scholars in the 1990s, and it was engaged in the academic discussion (Grabski 2017). This was the decade when Dak'Art Biennale was organised for the first time. However, it was only in the early 21st century when Dak'Art received more comprehensive international press coverage.

2.2 Biennale critiques

Wee Ling Choy (2008) argues that critiques help us to better understand art and its ideas. Choy presents four kinds of demands concerning the biennales, analysing Asian biennales through these demands. The first one is the demand for more biennales, and this demand comes from the governments, institutions who want them and therefore organise them. The second one is the demands put upon biennales by local populations. The third one is the demands made for biennales by the art world, including the participating artists and visiting curators, critics, etc. These are the people who analyse and criticise the biennales, articulating their demands also. Lastly, Choy presents the demand that biennales make upon their audiences, consumers, participants, patrons, stakeholders, students, and critics; the question raised is what do biennales want from them? (Choy 2008:213) In this research, the focus is on the third demand made by the art world, which includes the critiques of the Dak'Art Biennale.

Choy argues that the discussions about biennales have been framed for a long time by one central question: 'What do we want from them', which seems to be the case in the critiques of the

Dak'Art Biennale – the critics discuss the Biennale's challenges and deficiencies presenting their [critic's] disappointment for the Biennale. According to Choy, two kinds of discourses dominate the biennale discussions: one that explains the artworks and curatorial concepts and the other that dismissively criticises the Biennale. The first one generally merges with marketing and publicity which does not need to be taken too seriously, this being the reason why the researchers do not focus on these critics. The second discourse is demoralising for the art world and represents the critic being superior and more of an expert than the Biennale curator. Curators, in this case, are seen failing in their accomplishments and ambitions. In this discussion, Choy argues that the collapse is between knowledge and despair. Nevertheless, even though the critics are able to criticise all the deficiency, they still become 'strangely impotent, being a discourse of the symptoms of hopeless situations.' (Choy 2008: 217) Choy's classification is quite extreme, but it helps us to understand the biennale critiques and analyse them from a more profound standpoint. The following discussion about the Biennale is relevant in this research because the data constitutes of these discussions. Choy claims that these discourses speak at each other rather than speaking to each other. He demonstrates how biennale criticism can be repetitive, processed and incorporated. (Choy 2008:219) Anthony Gardner and Charles Green (2015) offer a similar distinction with Choy; they emphasise how the critiques representing Biennales being bad are perceived as a product of globalised neoliberalism. However, they argue that the second line of discussion reflects hope in which biennales are perceived as spaces for discussion, dialogue, and cross-disciplinary exchange. (Gardner &Green 2015:443)

There is no specific approach or theory that scholars generally apply in Biennale studies. Choy (2011) reminds how critics have only a couple of days to view the exhibition. The art review business is rushing; newspapers and magazine articles can be formulaic – for this reason, many journals provide longer critical essays about biennales, with more thoughtful consideration. Choy argues that yet the critiques, both longer and shorter ones 'rush to judge and judge harshly' (Choy 2011:2). Appropriate Biennale critics are sophisticated, tending to share an unchallenged presumption that biennales fail in their objects. Choy encourages scepticism of contemporary art rhetoric as a whole – it is too often that the critics concentrate on criticising a city, country, institution, artist, curator, theory, etc. However, the negative reviews do not tell a reasonable, convincing story about the contemporary art culture; as Choy argues it only lists the shortcomings of one exhibition after another.

2.2 Background of The Dak'Art Critiques

Johanna Grabski (2017) discuss The Dak'Art Biennale critiques in her article's second chapter. Grabski demonstrates that the critiques focus on the shortcomings that the biennales have faced over the years, such as the lack of curatorial vision framing Dak'Art as a proposition, the unevenness of the exhibited works and organisational problems. (Grabski 2017:91) In 2003, a notable analysis of Dak'Art's history written by an artist and critic, Rasheed Araeen, offered new perspectives and criticism that had an impact on the other critiques and many of them continued Araeen's discussion. The analysis was published in the *Third Text* journal, and the following year the journal continued the discussion by featuring responses by two artists and critics, Olué Oguibe and Christian Hannussek. The issue in these three analyses emphasised by Grabski is that instead of focusing on *what* Dak'Art exhibits, they focus on *how* Dak'Art exhibits. (Grabski 2017: 91) Throughout history, the Biennale has aimed to construct a discursive space for Pan-Africanism which as a result has reduced local artists' voices in interpreting their own works. However, they all raise a critical voice toward Dak'Art's objects – to present contemporary African production in Africa by Africans. Grabski compares Dak'Art Biennale to the Whitney Biennale in New York, which was also framed by identity politics. She claims that the themes of identity politics were not dominating in Whitney Biennale's discursive space in a similar way as they are in Dak'Art Biennale's discursive space; In Whitney Biennale the most attention was given to artists and their production and little attention to identity. (Grabski 2007: 93)

In the article, *Creative Diffusion African Intersections in the Biennale Network*, Katchka (2013) discuss the Dak'Art Biennale's 'networking'. She points out how Dak'Art has intracontinental objectives as well: to contribute to the development of art critics in Africa, publications on art and contemporary African artists. Katchka points out that both African and Western critics question whether African artists who live elsewhere can be considered as African, or are they too estranged from the everyday realities of the African experience. The critics argue that too often African diaspora artists represent 'Africa' in visible exhibition forums. (Katchka 2013)

Grabski's research indicates that there is a difference in how Western critics approach the Dak'Art Biennale in their analysis. Grabski demonstrates that Western critics tend to analyse the Biennale through their experiences of Western Biennales and the growing number of exhibitions of African

art in Europe. In the public spheres, critics usually discuss Dak'Art in terms of conceptual, formal and technological differences. The critics discuss the challenges of African contemporary art in finding an 'original and new form' (Grabski 2007:92). Yet, they tend to analyse the Biennale through the theoretical framework of Pan-Africanism and pay little attention to exhibited works by individual artists. Both in a discursive space of Dak'Art Biennale and African contemporary art, the question of authenticity and tradition have been dominating the discussion for decades. (Grabski 2017) These questions dominate the studies of African Art as well. The concept of Africa is a contradiction, a paradox and is shaped by colonial history. All 'African' artists assert and claim multiple identities and reasonably Katchka questions: to what degree this reflects 'Africa,' 'Africans,' or individual artists or countries, lies in the eye of the viewer, critic, and participants themselves. (Katchka 2013: 500) The critiques of Dak'Art Biennale focus on what constitutes African contemporary Art.

2.3 Background of African Art discussion

Many scholars and artists have drawn attention to how African cultural productions are related to the question 'How truly African are modern African arts?' (Baaz & Palmberg 2001:5) The critiques of Dak'Art Biennale either criticise the Biennale in failing to exhibit African contemporary Art or raise the question of what is African contemporary art. Baaz and Palmberg (2001) present how the concern for diminishing traditional African practices and its effects on African arts has been leading the discourse of African art for a long time. However, others have challenged some discourses that lead to further discussion on what constitutes 'African' in philosophy, culture, and arts. (Baaz & Palmberg 2001) Further, in order to understand what constitutes 'African' in arts, one must understand the history of western colonialism – 'a specifically African identity began as the product of a European gaze.' (Appiah 1992:81) Rather than explaining what constitutes African art, critiques question the whole concept of African art and acknowledge the idea that African art is tied to history and western colonialism. In order to analyse and understand how this idea occurs in the critiques one must understand how through centuries the concept of African culture has been understood as something 'other'. (Mudimbe 1988) This other is a social construction created

by the West which stems from the colonial discourse that presents non-West as 'the other'. (Said 1978:14.)

Dak'Art Biennale is a postcolonial cultural product, and it manifests as 'a space of different prejudice-free visions on approaches and inspirations to analyse in relation to a plurality of influences from both immediate and farther sources.' (DakArtBiennale.org) The discourse of authenticity plays an important part in African arts, claiming that particular criteria and standards are adopted in relation to cultural productions in Africa. One meaning of these criteria is that African cultural production is consumed, judged and analysed in terms of its 'Africanness'. The standards of the cultural production of the 'West' do not apply to cultural production in Africa. Baaz (2001:11) states how in the West the white man is not 'sealed in his whiteness' in the same way that the black man is in his blackness. However, the political and intellectual elite in Africa and the diaspora mainly produce the discourse of authenticity as Baaz (2001:12) states it: 'In Africa it is above all this well-educated elite who have made themselves guardians of authenticity'. In the case of Dak'Art critiques, the question of authenticity occasionally emerges – especially in the critiques of African artists and critics.

Some critiques are repetitively negotiating the meaning of African art, what constitutes African art or whether such a thing even exists. The same question arises here: How truly African are African modern arts? The critiques do not aim to answer these questions, but they do problematise the understanding of African art and how the Dak'Art can present such a thing. As one of the critiques states it clearly "whether one can speak of 'popular art' or 'international art' lie the individual concerns of painters and sculptors in Africa whose histories are firmly rooted in European as well as African art" (Deliss 1993).

2. Methods, theory, and terminology

3.1 Critical discourse analysis

Dak'Art Biennale is a postcolonial production and carries the colonial history, emancipation attempts and identity building of Africans. Moreover, the critiques have a postcolonial approach. For this reason, I applied critical discourse analysis as a method. In order to analyse the critiques successfully, I arranged the data by utilising a coding method. I applied the coding method in order to find the repetitive meanings and strategies from the critiques. I found the coding method to be a very useful tool. I aim to analyse the text critically by considering the power impacts, ideology and politics on the interactions. I look to analyse these power relations and ideologies through a postcolonial theoretical framework.

In order to gain a better understanding of the critiques, I will apply Fairclough's (1989, 1995) model of critical discourse analysis, which understands the use of language as a form of social practise. These social practises are strongly tied to specific historical contexts and in addition are reproducing and contesting social relations as well as serving different interests. The discourses relate to power relations. Questions to ask are: How is the text positioned or positioning, what are the consequences? Whose interests are being served by this positioning? Whose interests are negated? Critical discourse analysis seeks to understand how discourse is implicated in power relations. (Janks, 1997:329) Fairclough understands texts as perceptions of socially regulated practises, also claiming that the processes of production and reception are socially constrained. In addition, according to Stuart Hall (1997) discourse is a cluster of ideas, images, and practices that provide ways of telling about something. I aim to find these ideas, images, and practices, which I believe are hidden in the critiques. The relevant questions are: Who is speaking? What is constructing the meaning? What and whose perspectives do not get represented? It is important to remember that discourses are *ways* of representing a part of the world from a particular perspective. The questions above are essential for my research and provide an excellent analytical tool for further analysis of underlying power relations and hidden ideologies.

Fairclough's work on discourse and power gives some useful tools to do meaningful and profound discourse analysis. Fairclough highlights the importance of grammatical features when analysing

the discourse: What types of processes and participants predominate? Is the agency clear? Are nominalizations used? Are sentences positive or negative? In addition, Fairclough draws attention to the use of three primary modes: declarative, grammatical, and imperative.

Histories and power relations come into the analysis by providing a more profound understanding of the meanings and ideas of the texts. Texts and the discourses within them have histories, and they belong to a historical context. This means that power is always present in the text or discourse; it occurs in the way one decides what can be taken as a common ground for participants – what is *presupposed*. (Fairclough 1989:155) Discourse participants may have similar interpretations or different ones. However, the interpretation of the more powerful participant may determine the nuance of the discourse. The one having power can determine the common ground. Fairclough explains presuppositions as an aspect of text producers' interpretations of the intertextual context. Presuppositions can be either sincere or manipulative as well as have ideological functions when they assume something as common sense from the point of view of the one in power. In this way presuppositions make a general appeal to 'background knowledge'. (Fairclough 1989:154) Text producers can also contest or challenge the ideas of intertextual context that can be done by negation.

3.2 Guy Debord – The society of Spectacle

Guy Debord's work *The Society of Spectacle* (1983) serves as a basic theoretical background for this thesis and I aim to engage it with Fairclough's critical discourse analysis and postcolonial understanding of African art representation and writing. Debord argues that *representation* has replaced social life in modern society, stating: 'All that once was directly lived has become mere representation' (Debord 1983:1). The theory draws attention also to the concern of authenticity and inauthenticity; Debord claims that modern society forces culture to re-appropriate or re-invent itself. In addition, he states that ideas improve, and meanings of words participate in this movement. Authors can erase the false ideas and replace them with new ones. In the case of Dak'Art, the concern of authenticity is relevant as well as the fact that the critiques are creating a representation of the Biennale which is replacing the actual Biennale. People build their thoughts, opinions, and arguments based on these representations. As one critic states it: 'In a way I am

doing an injustice to Dak'Art 2014 by reading the exhibition through its theoretical framework.' (Stielau 2015) Fillitz (2016) argues "Dak'Art is not only the exhibition of artworks but all various voices that are at stake." Debord's term spectacle has turned into a productive platform of fiction for the discourses of contemporary arts and its formats (Schneider 2009). Debord's theory argues culture to be a representation of the reality – of the lived. History is understood to create 'the relative autonomy of culture' and the autonomy illusions express itself as a history of culture. (Debord 1983:180).

'The spectacle presents itself simultaneously as all of society, as part of society, and as instrument of unification' (Debord 1983:3). Debord explains how the spectacle is not something that can be defined in simple terms, but rather it must be examined and analysed from different angles. He sees the spectacle as a complex process that emerges in present-day society. To make it clear, the spectacle is not something related to shows or performance but a social relationship between people. Moreover, the relationships, he argues, are mediated by images.

Debord's theory of the spectacle facilitates the analysis and the understanding of the critiques. In this research critiques are perceived to be 'the spectacle'. This thesis seeks to analyse the critiques as a spectacle through different angles and how these contribute to the making of the spectacle. The theory of the spectacle is extensive which makes it impossible to apply all the aspects that Debord presents. However, this research benefits from the central notions of the theory and clarifies the strategies and implicit meaning that occurs from the critiques.

3.3 Terminology: Pan-Africanism and Postcolonialism

As mentioned earlier in this thesis, the critiques often analyse the Biennale through the theoretical framework of Pan-Africanism (Grabski 2017). Pan-Africanism is a philosophy, and socio-political movement aiming to achieve equal rights, self-governance, independence, and unity for all African peoples and descendants. The Pan-African movement emerged from the struggle of the slave trade and colonisation. Marcus Garvey, a Jamaican political leader and a Pan-Africanist, developed Pan-Africanism in the 20th century by encouraging African peoples to study their history and culture. In 1945 other African nationalist figures such as Kwame Nkrumah and Jomo Kenyatta stressed the importance of African autonomy and independence (Oxford dictionary of Politics and international relations 2018). The curator of Dak'Art 2014, Ugochukwu-Smooth Nwezi (2011), states Pan-Africanism to function as 'an ideological rubric' which enables Dak'Art to meditate and promote African contemporary cultural productions. Nwezi adds that Pan-Africanism also serves as a political and intellectual reinforcement.

Edward Said's work *Orientalism* (1978) raised the questions that later became a groundwork for postcolonial theory (Burney 2012). Orientalism questions and challenges how the West represent and discuss the 'Orient' which Said has named 'the other'. The theory lies in the understanding that Western image on the view of the Orient is not generated from facts nor realities. Orientalism examines the underlying structure of power, knowledge, hegemony, culture, and imperialism and creates a colonial discourse. Postcolonialism as a field of study and theory is an ideological approach and response to colonial thought and discourse, seeking a better understanding of both the colonial and postcolonial world from the point of view of the colonised. Postcolonialism in a discursive analysis aims to recognise the ideological domination. It focuses on hegemony, which is seen to occur not only by physical force but also through consensual submission of the dominant. (Omar 2012) Postcolonialism as an approach examines the social, political and cultural power relations. The postcolonial approach criticises the Eurocentric view.

Said argues the orient to be a Western invention. V.Y Mudimbe (1998) shares a similar understanding with Said, arguing that 'Africa' is a Western invention. Mudimbe draws attention to the foundation of discourse about Africa. He claims that discourses on African societies, cultures,

and peoples as something else. (Mudimbe 1998:9) Achille Mbembe (2001) states that a rational discussion about Africa has never been natural. Mbembe highlights the importance of understanding the experience of 'the other' arguing that the western philosophical and political traditions have not been able to perceive the experience of the non-Westerners.

4. Discussions

In this section, I will analyse 13 critiques of the Dak'Art Biennale thoroughly. The analysis considers both institutions providing the critiques and strategies applied in the critiques. I begin from the headlines by demonstrating some of the strategies that are used in them, followed by the analysis of the content of the critiques which is analysed by applying Debord's theory of the spectacle as a research tool. Debord's theory serves as a good tool to facilitate the understanding of critiques social role as well as how it expresses ideologies, ideas, and geopolitical and socio-political power relations.

4.1 Introduction to the critiques – starting from the headlines

The critiques I have chosen to analyse bring forth a critical voice toward Biennale's objects and its actualization. I chose critics who have a more analytical and theoretical approach in their critique. The headlines offer some idea of the nuance of the critique – whether it be strongly accusatory, questioning and/or challenging the Biennale. The headlines of the critiques would indicate that the discussion is about Dak'Art rather than African contemporary art. When understanding discourses as a cluster of ideas, images and practises that provide ways of telling something (Hall 1997), we can better analyse more profoundly the meaning of headlines and what they represent as well as how they represent a specific idea.

Headlines give a particular perspective that a reader should have when reading the article (Fayolle & F. Vanoye et al. 1980). Headlines can offer much information about the culture that a text belongs to. It requires the reader to know the cultural field and the topic of the discourse. Titles rarely provide an explanation or definition, and thus they rely on cultural knowledge. Fairclough (1989) demonstrates that the selection between different grammatical processes and participant

types can be ideologically significant – it is a rational choice rather than a coincidence. This is the case especially when representing an event, state affair relationship or an action. (Fairclough 1989.) Fairclough's argument is valid in this case study because critiques represent an event – Dak'Art Biennale. The way Dak'Art is grammatically used in the headlines indicates contributors' understanding of the event both on a conceptual and ideological level. The critiques of Dak'Art can be understood as a dialogue between the text producers and the other texts which are part of the intertextual context of Dak'Art. As Fairclough (1989) states, texts are always dialogic, existing in intertextual relations with other texts.

The majority of the articles use the form Dak'Art Biennale in the titles. Few use the form La Biennale de Dakar or in English The Dakar Biennale. However, the official form of writing is DAK'ART. In all headlines, Dak'Art is presented as an object rather than a subject, which creates an idea that Dak'Art is a product; a product that has been shaped for some goals. This is a common understanding of Dak'Art – being a product of Dakar's histories, possibilities, and connections (Grabski 2008:57). It supports Sassatelli's (2016) argument that all art shows calling themselves Biennales also enter into a global discourse that carries specific typologies. This can be perceived as the first step of a particular typology: Dak'Art being a product of colonial states or a product of the postcolonial nation-building endeavours. (Gardener & Green 2015).

4.1.1 Negative headlines – Dak'Art has failed

Many of the headlines present an opinion that Dak'Art has not accomplished its objects. The headlines indicate strongly that Dak'Art has failed, offering already an overview of the nuances of the critiques:

- *The Failure of Dak'Art*
- *Le grand défi de Dak'Art, c'est l'élargissement de son public*
- *The Dakar Biennale 92: Where internationalism falls apart*
- *Chaotique mais unique, la biennale de Dakar cherche encore son modèle*
- *Dak'Art 2016 : du chaos surgit une très belle exposition internationale.*

From the headlines above, we can see how Dak'Art is not being explained at all. Dak'Art is understood perhaps as an idea, ideology, project or an abstract product – not anything concrete. When understanding discourses as a form of social practise one can see, how the headlines are reproducing and contesting social relations and serving someone's interests. The question one can ask here is whose interests do the headlines above serve? Choy's argument that critiques often tend to 'rush to judge, and judge harshly' and share an unchallenged presumption that biennales fail in their objects. This seems to be the case in the headlines above: contributors judge the Biennale already in their headlines and it happens quite 'harshly'. The use of words like 'failure', 'défi' (challenge), 'chaotique' (chaotic) strongly indicates the attitude of the contributors. The contributors are using negation as a way of presenting an idea of the Biennale. They could have brought the same points positively but rather decided to use negatives. The use of negative claims in the headlines may be linked to presuppositions. The contributors assume that negation of the context is in the reader's experience – being part of their intertextual context. Contributors use negatives in order to establish a common ground. Negation can be sincere, manipulative, or ideological. (Fairclough 1989:155)

The contributors are positioned to be experts having a right to present their concerns and disappointment for the Biennale. One argues how Dakar is still looking for its model, another how internationalism falls apart, and the third one presents his knowledge on how the challenge of the Biennale is the expansion of its public. Someone who would know better – someone who is an expert, presents these arguments as a fact. The sentences in the headlines are mostly negative. According to Fairclough negation has experimental value being the basic way of distinguishing what is not the case from what is the case. Applying this idea in the research of headlines indicates that the Biennale has failed in its objects and has major challenges and deficiencies: The Biennale is chaotic where internationalism falls apart with a threat of expansion of its public. It also shows how Dak'Art critics exist in an intertextual context with other texts. The idea of Dak'Art's failure determines and dominates the dialogue, which according to Fairclough is a rational choice by the one who has more power in the discourse. (Fairclough 1989) It supports Choy's argument on how appropriate Biennale critics are sophisticated, tending to share an unchallenged presumption that biennales fail in their objects.

4.1.2 Informative – Are headlines neutrals?

So far, we have examined how headlines use negation and negatives as a way of representing the Biennale in a certain way. However, not all the headlines use negatives as a strategy; some of the headlines seem to represent themselves as an informative critique or review – maybe even neutral. As Choy highlights, there exist two kinds of discourse about the Biennales: one that explains the artworks and curatorial concepts and another that criticises the Biennale in a dismissive manner. These 'informative' headlines seem to fall into the first category. Discourses are understood to be *ways* of representing a part of the world from a particular perspective; this means that no neutral discourse exists. Discourses are always shaped by ideas and thoughts; they carry the power that reflects the interests of the one who speaks. (McGregor 2004) The headlines indicate that the critiques are general overviews of the Biennale. The critiques are headlined as follows:

- *Dak'Art 2006 : Positions and perspectives*
- *Art Routes Negotiating Dak'Art*
- *Dak'Art 2006: A View from the Inside*
- *La Biennale de Dakar*
- *Dak'Art, the Biennial Exhibition of Contemporary African Art in Dakar*

The headlines themselves do not provide much information about the nuance of the critiques. Yet, they represent the writer to be above, having the ability to discuss the Biennale perspectives from an expert point of view. Fairclough draws attention to the process of producing text and the position of the producer. According to Fairclough, each discourse type establishes subject positions: readers' subject position and text producers' subject position. The text producer creates the reader's positions, and the reader establishes the relations by interpreting the text. In terms of these positions, texts are never neutral. Subject positions are specific to discourse types, and they can vary according to ideology. Presuppositions are relevant also in subject positions. As mentioned earlier presupposition is an assumption that is made by the reader (Fairclough 1969).

In the headlines above the text producer being presented as an expert, having inside knowledge and ideas worth spreading and the reader is assumed to possess less knowledge. The headlines

create two kinds of subject positions: someone specialised in the field of Dak'Art and the other ones who do not have access to understand the Biennale as profoundly as the text producer. The headline, 'Dak'Art 2006: A view from the Inside' indicates well how the text producer has 'inside' information of the Biennale which gives him an understanding that others may not have. 'Negotiating Dak'Art' indicates that the text producer may have some solution and ideas that the reader is assumed to need in order to gain a deeper understanding of the Biennale.

4.2 The Making of 'the spectacle'

In this section, I analyse the Biennale critiques profoundly by utilising Debord's theory of the spectacle. The analysis begins with the strategies that contributors use in order to challenge the Biennale's positive image and how they create their own idea of the Biennale. This is the first aspect of the spectacle. The second aspect focuses on the ways critiques present the Biennale as a failure. All these elements, strategies and aspects are being discussed with the help of Debord's theory.

4.2.1 Questioning and challenging The Dak'Art Biennale

What is the context of the Dakar Biennale? If Africa is the context, what does it mean? If it means its achievements in art, how do we recognise them? In some way, the critiques aim to introduce an alternative way to look at the Dak'Art Biennale and its objective in representing African Art. (Araeen 2003)

The quote above is from Rasheed Araeen, an art critic and artist. Araeen (2003) acknowledges the aims of the critiques in introducing new thoughts and ideas. Many of the critiques tend to question the concept of African art without offering any further analysis. Fairclough (1989) identifies the importance of finding presuppositions from the texts. The presupposition about African art in many critiques is that the Biennale is not able to represent African art, nor can the Biennale define what constitutes African art. This can be further analysed by applying Debord's theory of Society and the Spectacle. According to Debord, authors can erase false ideas and replace them with new ones. In the case of Dak'Art, authors of the critiques erase the idea of

Dak'Art being able to represent African Art: 'The continent wasn't there. How could a mere thirteen countries (mostly Francophone), out of more than forty African nations, justifiably represent 'the heart of the continent?' (Araeen 2003) Araeen's statement indicates well how the whole idea of representing African art is impossible. He questions how a mere thirteen countries could justifiably represent the whole African continent. Araeen's claim falls into Debord's argument on how authors erase false ideas and replace them with new ideas – their own ideas. Araeen (2003) claims that 'the continent wasn't there', that being the replaced idea. Even though the Biennale proclaims being an African art exhibition representing Africa, the critiques do not share the same view. They rather raise the complexity of the whole concept of African art turning attention toward the opposite of the Biennale's objects: '... It introduces a specific aesthetic and cultural complexity into the discursive yet ultimately superficial crisis surrounding the classification of stylistic diversity in Africa today.' (Deliss 1993) The critiques replace the idea of African art with a suggestion that African Art cannot even be represented.

The Dak'Art Biennale manifests to be an art exhibition not only for African art but African contemporary art. The critiques aim to analyse and understand – the meaning of contemporary in the African context. As one writes, 'But let's go back to the title, Contemporary Art and Society. At an event that takes place in Africa, the word 'society' can take on an unmanageable number of multi-faceted meanings.' (Pensa 2012) These aspects express the spectacle in a way critiques challenge the existing meanings and ideas and create new ones. They also in a way force culture to re-invent and re-appropriate itself, as Debord states it. The critiques are not content with the actual understanding and perception of African art and the way Dak'Art presents it.

Another critical aspect of the critiques is that the Biennale is just a failure. Rather than offering any solutions, the critiques end up claiming that the Biennale has just failed in everything that it aims. 'The Biennale doesn't seem to have an overall philosophy other than including as many different types of contemporary visual culture as possible.' (Hecht 2000) The quote indicates a contradiction between the Biennale's manifested aim and the reality that the author experienced. The Biennale aims clearly to have a Pan-African philosophy. Simon Njami, an artistic director of Dak'Art Biennale, states that Dak'Art's philosophy falls into a pragmatism rather than idealism. (Artsy–

¹2018) Dak'Art represents according to Njami's (2018) words call for 'emancipation, action and freedom'. However, even though critiques do not offer many solutions, they do offer alternative ways of seeing the Biennale. This alternative way of seeing the Biennale is as strongly negative, yet 'another way' of seeing the Biennale. As Fairclough (1989:155) demonstrates, the use of negation can be sincere, manipulative, or ideological. The ideas that contributors spread are somewhat rational choices.

Critiques of Dak'Art indicate how this rational choice is dominated by the idea that Biennale has many issues and problems. They criticise everything ranging from bad weather, artworks, organisation and pan-African aims to Senegalese politics. It describes Choy's (2008) claim on how the critiques concentrate on criticising a city, country, institution, artist, curator, theory, etc. quite well. Critics describe the lived experience of the ones who visited the Biennale. Debord (1983:1) calls the representation of the lived experience 'a spectacle' and analysis of the critiques indicate how the critiques describe Biennale through the experience of the one writing the critique: 'South African Kay Hassan had to improvise when his work did not arrive in time for the opening.' (Silva 2000) The quote supports Choy's argument on how the biennale critiques are often just 'a discourse of the symptoms of hopeless situations...' (Choy 2008: 217). The fact that Hassan's work did not arrive on time does not tell much about the Biennale itself nor is it an important point to mention, yet the contributor chose to include this information to the critique of Dak'Art Biennale. Choy argues how the critics end up merely presenting their disappointment for the Biennale by listing all the failures, deficiencies and challenges that the Biennale faces. In the critiques, the lists of failures, deficiencies, and challenges are never-ending. The critiques draw attention to a disorder of the Biennale, aiming to represent Biennale as an event of disorder: 'It is precisely its malfunctioning that makes the biennial a unique platform for encounters... because disorder creates social encounter' (Pensa 2012).

An art critic and scholar, Cléméntine Deliss (1993), commences her critiques by listing the deficiencies: 'Firstly, the misguided faith in the so-called international art circuit which had deterred the organisers from developing a pan-African approach'. She continues by complaining about the bad weather, poor organisation, poor quality of artwork, and Senegalese political

¹ Artsy.net

problems: 'Air Afrique planes carrying the guests landed at Yoff Airport, an unexpected rainstorm, apparently caused by a fluke cold frontal system, raged over the city with little effect'. Bad weather, however, has nothing to do with the Biennale; how could the organisers have control over the weather? It supports Debord's (1983:1) claim on how the representation of modern life has replaced social life in modern society. Deliss continues 'representing' her reality: 'No one, it seemed, was prepared to listen to the artists and give them a specific visionary authority'. (Deliss 1993) The criticism is wide and draws attention to many aspects. Deliss' (1993) critique continues: 'In an exhibition dedicated to the rights of man, the presupposition that art could transcend cultural differences was laid bare.' It creates an idea that the Biennale failed in art's assumption. A critique from Araeen emphasises the tone of the critiques well: 'it is more important that we pay attention to these [material, organisational, artistic and ideological nature] problems rather than just looking at the Biennale as a unique event of African art' (Araeen 2003). This is what the critiques seem to practise – draw attention to all the problems and deficiencies that the organisers cannot always control, such as: 'Along with projectors and computers, someone stole something extremely valuable' (Pensa 2012).

Fairclough argues presuppositions to be either sincere or manipulative. In this research, the assumption is that the critiques have ideological functions when they offer presuppositions; in other words, what they perceive 'as common sense'. This 'common' and collective understanding of the Biennale that critiques create is understood to be a common sense from the point of view from the one dominating the discourse. The critiques represent the lived reality, just as Debord's theory argues. The critiques become Debord's spectacle in representing the reality. They replace Dak'Art Biennale's idea with their own ones – the idea of disappointment: 'Minor organisational and administrative lacunas, one or two disappointments for artists in the late or nonarrival of work and political incertitude do not justify the disappointment.' (Silva 2000) Choy (2008) points out how contributors to the critiques have only two to four days to visit the Biennale exhibitions. He claims that biennale criticisms are often repetitively processed and incorporated. Critiques end up criticising all the shortcomings and failures of the Biennale. This is clearly the case in the critiques of Dak'Art Biennale.

4.2.2 Experiencing Dak'Art through the critiques – the spectacle

I can only recount the experience of Dak'Art through anecdotal impressions
(Janse Van Rensburg 2006)

The author of the quote admits that part of the image they carry and produce of Dak'Art is based on what they have read and heard about the Biennale. One even says that it is an injustice to read the exhibition through its theoretical framework, yet the author does not mention what the theoretical framework is. However, another critique identifies the need of a particular framework, 'But there is also distinct need to step back and formulate broader intellectual frameworks within which to consider the many positions and perspectives Dak'Art produces.' (Diba 2006) The author is suggesting that Dak'Art needs to be analysed by reading the Biennale in a certain context, not only by living and experiencing the Biennale. This same thought is provided in other critiques as well: 'It is impossible to filter the powerful impact of the city of Dakar, the bumbling bureaucracy of Biennale organisers, and the technical incompetence of its installation, from a critical reading and analysis of the event.' (Janse Van Rensburg 2006)

Dak'Art is not just something that can be experienced in real life, but it has become something that we can recount 'through anecdotal impressions' (Janse Van Rensburg 2006) or 'through its theoretical framework'(Stielau 2015). In Fillitz's (2016) words Dak'Art is all the 'various voices that are on stake'. Choy (2008) argues that Biennale critiques tend to speak at each other rather than speak to each other. Perhaps Choy means that the critiques do not discuss with each other but raise the same issues repetitively. The critiques analysed in this research fall into Choy's claim. Though the critiques are many, very few of them discuss the other critiques, rather they raise the issues repeatedly not making many references to other critiques. They contribute to the making of the spectacle by reading and analysing the Biennale through a certain framework and then create another repetitive critique of the Biennale. Biennale thus becomes a representation of the Biennale that some experience – a representation of the lived reality. The Biennale becomes a spectacle when we base our understanding and image of the Biennale on the critiques we read.

Debord (1983:4) facilitates this thought by stating that 'The spectacle is not a collection of images; it is a social relation between people that is mediated by images.' The critiques here are 'the image' and when the authors and audience discuss the Biennale and read the other Biennale critiques in order to have a better understanding of it, this is the 'social relation that is mediated by images. This is what Debord theory of the Spectacle criticises.

Art curator, Hou Hanru (2009) emphasises how we live in a continuously changing world. Dak'Art also exists in this movement of changing world. However, there is always a desire to change the world. Debord problematises the efforts of 'changing the world' being limited in a certain system of thinking. Further, he claims that there is always a tendency to turn things into a spectacle. Hanru (2009) applies Debord's theory of the spectacle in art analysis and points out how humans, in general, tend to understand 'the movement of changing world' through a certain framework that is often 'limited and frozen'. The Biennale critiques aim to have a change – perhaps to have an influence for the Biennale but through a certain framework. This framework will be analysed more thoroughly later in this research. The aims to change the Biennale occur from the critiques directly and implicitly. The critiques tend to present their critiques to know what needs to be changed:

The fifth Biennale should be going further than congratulating itself for having taken place and consolidating its position as one of the longest-serving Biennales after Cairo. Maybe it needs to find a happy ground between the Johannesburg Biennale and other Biennales. But it cannot be all things to all people; it needs to concentrate on certain selected areas. (Silva 2000)

Silva's argument looks to have a change for the Biennale; it states how biennale would need to find 'a happy ground' and take note of the other Biennales. It straightforwardly challenges the biennales ambitious objectives and suggests that Dak'Art should rather find a clear focus. In a short quote, Silva already gets to engage to the 'movement' of changing.

Another problem is that the Dakar Biennale has not had the benefit of a thorough, honest, constructive, formal critique that could bring it to question itself and seek ways to correct what is wrong while building on its strengths and unique historic significance. (Olu 2004)

Olu's critique follows Silva's (2000) tone: that the Biennale should somehow be corrected. The quote from Olu (2004) also indicates that the Biennale should participate into this movement of change by building on its 'strengths and unique history'. Olu's statement indicates that critiques can make a change. He states how one problem of the Dak'Art Biennale is that there is no thorough, constructive formal critique of the Biennale. It addresses how critiques do contribute to the 'movement of changing the world,' and thus Hanru's (2009) argument becomes relevant: that this movement is often understood through a certain limited and frozen theoretical framework. The critiques apply a certain, strongly academic framework but the question is: What is then 'the certain system of thinking' when discussing Dak'Art Biennale?

4.2.3 'The logic of market capitalism' in the Dak'Art critiques

Hanru (2009) develops Debord's spectacle, arguing that we perceive the world and communicate with each other through the spectacle. According to Hanru market capitalism's logic dominates this spectacle which he sees as a system of image, production, and representation. He further argues that the logic of market capitalism tends to develop our perception, imagination, and reflection toward a 'one-dimensional model'. This enables to turn the image into an object of commercial exchange and therefore consumption. (Hanru 2009.) This is the case in Dak'Art critiques. They represent Dak'Art as an object or product. The 'one-dimensional mode' occurs in many ways from the critiques. Hanru points out how there is always a tendency to turn things into a spectacle with a certain aim in mind: '...so we can grasp it, so we can freeze the image, so we can turn in into an object of commercial exchange and therefore consumption.' Biennales no doubt has commercial objects which are dominated by the market capitalism logic. As H el ene Tissi eres' (2016) critique puts it: 'Capitalism determines the success of any Biennale, as it determines the art that is promoted in our current era.' Deliss (1993) states that in the Dak'Art Biennale 'Art was clearly the issue but, conceived as a powerful cultural commodity. Control and bitter argument was at stake between French and African art brokers'. The notion of art and biennale being a cultural commodity can be understood as the critiques' aim to represent the Biennale through the logic of market capitalism. Dak'Art Biennale exists in a capitalist society, and it is a product of capitalist industry. Hanru (2009) states that Biennales are becoming increasingly an industry of creativity but also an industry of entertainment. The critiques need to be analysed

from many standpoints in order to get an understanding of how the logic of market capitalism dominates them.

There occur three relevant aspects: 1) The authors writing the critiques are 'experts' doing it for work 2) The critics are published in chargeable journals 3) The Dak'Art Biennale itself is an event existing in the capitalistic society. However, this research concentrates on implicit ideologies and capitalistic logic that occur in the critiques. Debord (1983) states, the spectacle corresponds to the historical moment at which the commodity completes its colonization of social life. Eugena Arva (2003) facilitates this by explaining that Debord's spectacle argues that commodity becomes the representation itself. The commodity is the representation offered to us by the whole system or industry of advertisement. The commodity is thus a driving attitude of today's society. (Arva 2003:7) Debord sees the system of commodity as an 'enemy' and emphasises how in reality things that are represented as trivial and obvious are far more complex:

In the essential movement of the spectacle, which consists of taking up all that existed in human activity in a fluid state so as to possess it in a congealed state as things which have become the exclusive value by their formulation in negative of lived value, we recognise our old enemy, the commodity, who knows so well how to seem at first glance something trivial and obvious, while on the contrary it is so complex and so full of metaphysical subtleties. (Debord 1983:36)

From the critiques the logic of market capitalism as a dominant logic is recognizable. Debord's theory facilitates the analysis and understanding of these implicit indications of the logic. The critiques participate into the world of the commodity by representing and promoting the commodity practises: Robert's (2006) critique states the Biennale's positive outcome in strengthening the tourist industry, introducing how visitors send money and often return to Senegal. The Biennale is being reviewed through these 'positive' impacts. It represents Dak'Art Biennale as a commodity that contributes to the making of the capitalistic society. Debord's society of the spectacle sees everything that 'there is to see' as a commodity: the world we see is the world of commodity. (Debord 1999:29) The critiques are part of the system of mediation by offering a representation – the spectacle. Hanru (2009) claims that the logic of market capitalism is the one dominating the spectacle. Robert's (2006) critique serves as a perfect example of how market capitalism dominates: 'Many artists have found their way onto the international market as

a result of the Biennale, and artists have sold work during the course of Dak'Art.' The critique offers a representation, which is the spectacle and this spectacle is dominated by the logic of market capitalism.

Other critiques participate in this system of market capitalism by emphasising those elements that are tied with capitalistic society. In this way, the commodity becomes the representation of itself just as Arva (2003) explains it. In other words, critiques are representing themselves when they retell all the experiences of the Dak'Art Biennale. They are part of the industry, and the authors of the critiques partake to this commodity. One critic reflects his personal experience and then tells how the logic of market capitalism is dominating the Biennale when visitors are mainly consuming tourists:

The Biennale could be nothing but complicity with official structure. In the five-star hotel, the guests complained the Biennale's disorganisations, the insufficient hotel rooms, poor selection criteria and the shoddy and cramped presentation of generally bad quality work. (Deliss 1993)

By listing the complains and deficiencies, Deliss represents the nature of the Biennale, which in his view is an industry of entertainment. Deliss (1993) claims the Biennale to be a partner of the capitalist society, which is represented here in a negative tone. Deliss argument indicates how commodity becomes the representation itself. Deliss is representing the Dak'Art Biennale to be a commodity and discuss the Biennale through this understanding. A critique from Diba (2000) offers a similar representation:

Recently, during an exhibition of my work at the Casa Encendida in Madrid, I was harangued by a great African artist who said that the Biennale of Dakar has become an African event that has escaped from the hands of Africans to become a sort of machine, serving vacationers who know little about Africa and spend a few days of cultural tourism in Dakar, or by those who have built their careers on the backs of African artists. (Diba 2000)

Diba points out the aspect of market capitalism as a dominating force for the Biennale. Diba (2000) represents Dak'Art being a commodity that strengthens Dakar's cultural tourism industry. In addition, he brings out the aspect that the Biennale is part of a capitalistic society by creating works and careers to others. Araeen's (2003) critique points out the same thought by emphasising

how the Biennale gives work for locals in Senegal. These kinds of notions indicate how the logic of market capitalism cannot be separated from the critiques and how it is an important portion of the critiques. Some critiques indicate the logic of market capitalism in the way they analyse the Biennale- The following critique brings out all the reasons why Dak'Art could be a successful event: 'a welcoming city, adequate infrastructure, a dynamic local art scene and the kind of governmental support lacking in most African and even some European countries.' (Silva 2008) A welcoming city and adequate infrastructure, however, do not have much to do with the artworks. The city and infrastructure represent commodity, which is tied to the success of the Biennale. Another critique indicates a similar ideology: 'The heart of the Biennale has shifted back to the IFAN Museum on Soweto Square and the middle of the city, permitting easier circulation among the official exhibitions' (Diba 2006) To represent the city of Dak'Art as same than Dak'Art Biennale indicates profoundly the logic of market capitalism. Dak'Art does not aim to be Dakar but an African contemporary art exhibition.

Debord states that the world we see is the world of commodity and this is what the critiques also see: instead of focusing on the artwork they would rather focus on the system that produces these artworks, on the positive impact that the Biennale has for a capitalistic society or representing the whole Biennale as a commodity. This is what Debord's theory in its essence argues: that the spectacle sees the world as commodity.

4.3 'Changing the world' through a postcolonial and pan-African framework

This section focuses on the framework through which the critiques are discussing the Biennale. Debord's theory argues that spectacle aims to produce a change through a specific system of thinking – a certain framework. This section argues the framework of Dak'Art critiques to be strongly postcolonial and Pan-African. Here, the research discusses how the critiques indicate a postcolonial and pan-African framework and in which ways do the critics apply these understandings in their critiques.

4.3.1 A general postcolonial approach

Rather than polarise these discourses and risk rendering them mutually exclusive, I hope to examine their points of intersection (and cross-pollination) in order to ask after Rasheed Araeen, "Can Africa assert its independence or develop its own direction and vision...without critically confronting the dominant structures of art around the world today?" (Stielau 2015)

The quote above indicates the nuance of the critiques. Araeen's (2003) question summarises the approach that most of the critics have – a postcolonial approach. 'Confronting the dominant structures' is what postcolonialism a field of study aims to do. The African autonomy, independence, and neo-colonial realities serve as the 'main' themes, and the critiques discuss the Biennale through these realities. This can be identified as a postcolonial approach as it seeks to get a better understanding of the colonial and postcolonial life from the point of view of the coloniser and examine the social, political and cultural power relations. Even though the critiques are seen as overviews/reviews of the Dak'Art Biennale, it is not as simple as that. Often, the question is not about Dak'Art Biennale but Africa and its independence and autonomy from the West. Araeen draws attention to the same profound question that postcolonialism focuses on – to challenge the dominant power structures. The author explains the reality in terms of philosophical theories.

What did African artists really do when they found themselves in the West? Did they just follow the already beaten track of Western art, or did they find their own way within modernist developments? The institutions in the West are silent about this important question. They would rather prefer this question never to be raised, because they cannot answer it within the context of prevailing colonial structures while they still protect them. (Araeen 2003)

Araeen's critique challenges the existing colonial structures and Western hegemony in Arts directly. Araeen's critique is an interesting one; it is the most quoted one in other critiques and other critics have further developed his approach. (Olu 2004, Stielau 2015) Araeen's critique aims to discuss from the perspective of the subaltern, an African artist. However, Oguibe Olu (2004) expresses his disappointment that Araeen 'did not see any artwork in the Biennale worth of his consideration.' Araeen (2003) challenges the dominant structures – Western institutions – and points out how these structures have been shaped by colonial histories and how these structures still exist. Olu on the contrary claims that Araeen has failed in this attempt and has not recognised the Biennale's off program which according to Olu (2004) is 'African art within a social and political context.' Deliss (1993) also points out these problematics of colonial reality. She demonstrated clearly how the existing power relations and Western hegemony affect African artists and art: 'African artists are still under the European dictatorship of painting.' Deliss (1993) calls this 'a Western dictatorship' indicating a postcolonial understanding which sees the power relations as oppressive. These quotes indicate the framework of postcolonialism: they aim to discuss and understand the Biennale through postcolonial understanding and raise a critical voice toward Biennale's objectives and success.

The question of authenticity is tied to the discussion. Art is generally perceived as a Western phenomenon, and for this reason, African art and artists tend to be analysed in a Western context where Africans are the subordinates of Western arts. (Eriksson, Baaz, et al. 2001) The critiques indicate a different approach, aiming to acknowledge these problems by applying a vision that aims to understand the colonial histories and its influence on our understanding of African art: 'And what role do international gatherings like this [mostly from Europe and North America] have in the developing framework of contemporary cultural discourse on the African continent itself?' (Araeen 2003) The author understands that African contemporary art is discussed and framed by the West and problematises it. Another criticises: 'In framing the exhibition in a particular lexicon

– the language of the academic, the university, the elite – it is worth asking for whom the triumvirate of curators aim to produce this “common” (Stielau 2015). The Eurocentric critique is explicit, and critiques aim to have a different approach by analysing the event through postcolonial understanding.

The critiques repetitively discuss the role of African artists, analysing the question from a point of view of African artists themselves. As the following quote from a critique indicates, many of the critics use a similar way of discussing African art by acknowledging the reality of African artists in a world that is shaped by colonial history and Western power. Critiques are shaped by the idea that African art is tied with histories and one can only analyse African art by means of historical understanding.

...a transformation, one which begins to aggravate entrenched aesthetic and social concepts of visual history. Perhaps El Sy's work is about returning the curve back to Africa and negotiating the role the artist can play today against the backdrop of Africa's artistic heritage, both traditional and Modernist (Deliss 1993)

Deliss' quote indicates a postcolonial understanding in the analysis of the El Sy's artwork. She uses this artwork to discuss the meaning of African art and its role in society. Statements like 'returning the curve back to Africa' indicates how the world's history have an impact on African artworks. Debord argues spectacle to present itself as 'all of society, as part of society' which aims at unification. The quote from Deliss (1993) indicates how the argument is presented as truth for society. Deliss argument represent this idea as a common and presupposed; the idea that Africa's artistic heritage is just a 'backdrop' and African artists are fighting against this attitude.

Another common criticism is that the Biennale is being discussed in an academic language or that the Biennale itself represents the academia: 'The idea of 'common goods' was connected to the experience and vision of a group of intellectuals and activists.' (Pensa 2012) Pensa continues to argue how the Senegalese elite discussion offers at Dak'Art Biennale 'a lens' through which to analyse and discuss art, culture, politics and society. Some critics go further by criticising the Eurocentric and postcolonial approach and whether it manages to have a critical look toward the West. Critiques include the question of hegemony and power structure into the criticism tactfully,

leading to the point where the actual discussion is around power, hegemony and politics rather than around Dak'Art Biennale or African art. Olu's(2004) critique discuss the dominant structures and draws attention to these themes which he discuss through the experience of Dak'Art Biennale:'...it is not enough to simply accuse the African or Western art scene as a whole of not being interested in confronting the dominant system. Instead, concrete practices have to be investigated critically'(Olu 2004).

Debord's (1983) theory draws attention to how the spectacle often tries to have a change through a certain though and framework that is often limited. In Dak'Art critiques, this framework can be seen to be limited to the postcolonial framework. The critiques tend to discuss the Biennale only through this framework, often referring to the same aspects and raising the same questions as their counterparts. Grabski (2017) argues that the critiques tend to pay little attention to the exhibition of the works. In the critiques that have been analysed in this section, Grabski's notion seems to be true here as well. The critique focuses on discussing the Biennale by acknowledging the colonial impact and current socio-political and geopolitical powers.

4.3.2 The Pan-African Biennale and Pan-African critique

Pan-Africanism as a philosophy has framed the Biennale since its beginning, and many of the Critiques discuss the Biennale through a Pan-African lens. Yacouba Konaté, Artistic director of Dak'Art in 2006 supports the significance of Pan-Africanism as a strategy for Dak'Art in order to negotiate 'cultural adjustments' in a global world. (Konaté 2013) Konaté's viewpoint serves as one of the presuppositions in the discourse of Dak'Art Biennale; that Biennale should be negotiated by means of Pan-Africanism; This is what Debord claims the spectacle does.

The spectacle inherits the weakness of the Western philosophical project, which attempted to understand activity by means of the categories of vision, and it is based on the relentless development of the particular technical rationality that grew out of that form of thought. The spectacle does not realise philosophy; it philosophises reality (Debord 1983:19)

Debord demonstrates this tendency of understanding reality through a particular philosophy or vision as a weakness and argues that yet this is what the spectacle does. Dak'Art Biennale is in this case 'the reality' that authors of the critiques philosophise by negotiating the Biennale through a certain vision – a Pan-African and postcolonial vision. Many of the critiques discuss the Biennale's success in being a pan-African event. Konaté's thorough analysis of the Biennale offers a deep understanding of the colonial realities, '... it has been known that it is not enough to destroy the Other in order to escape the power of gaze.' (Konaté 2013:520) He quotes Ery Camara's words (Konaté 2013:520):

While it is true that African Art has been created by our communities, it has been divulged throughout the world via an essentially Western vision that is not devoid of extra artistic interests. These interpretations based at times on theories far removed from the reality of life in any village in Africa give us the urgent task of undertaking a clear-headed study of Africa art in the twentieth century in order to facilitate a better appreciation of it within our communities. To the extent that the history and criticism of artistic manifestations rely on better-informed interlocutors, the debate will become richer and create the possibility of exchanges of ideas about the fact of art and the cultural values it symbolises. (Camara 2002)

The quote emphasised how Western vision or ideology has long been shaping the understanding of African art and the problem of analysing Africa through western theories. It criticises how the unequal power relations are ever present in the discourse and representation indicates a strong Eurocentric critique and the nature of the postcolonial approach. Camara (2002) criticises the existing Western hegemony and offers an alternative way of understanding African art and realities. He suggests that the 'voice' should be given to Africans and those living in the African communities. Postcolonialism attempts to understand the world from a point of view of the colonised. Konaté (2013) criticises the Western ideology in several ways also questioning the whole concept of Africa: 'Dak'Art should itself question the ways in which Africa is presented and admit that without the other continents, there is no Africa.' A critique from Okeke-Agulu (2014) goes even further when criticising the Biennale's 11th edition in failing to produce the common². According to Curator's Simon Njami the common is understood 'as a unifying, edifying, unselfish process, actively generated in the context of cultural production but taking into account what one

² The theme of Dak'Art exhibition in 2014.

may refer to as the politics and the economics of sociability.' Okeke-Agulu (2014:5) suggests that the curators should have emphasised a theory of 'ubuntu':

Yet I cannot help but think that another notion of the common would have been more relevant here: that of ubuntu, the theory of communalism that philosophers such as Placide Tempels, Léopold Sédar Senghor, and Maurice Tschiamalenga Ntumba, among others, have argued to be at the core of African ontology, using it to explain everything from traditional African religions to contemporary socioeconomic formations.

Tissières' (2015) critique supports this suggestion, arguing that it would have strengthened the curators' argument regarding the thematic choice of 'producing the common'. Tissières (2015:312) argues that it would have demonstrated Western theories contribute reinforcing the illusion that Western productions 'bear greater weight'. Ubuntu embodies a strong Pan-Africanist idea and ideology: the idea of solidarity. As Okeke-Agulu explains it: 'Ubuntu is most famously encapsulated by the anti-Cartesian dictum 'I am because we are'-individual subjectivity attains its fullest elaboration through collective solidarity'. This serves as a great example of how the spectacle aims to make a change, as Debord argues. A critique by Olu (2004) offers the same idea of solidarity, arguing that African's should be the ones fixing the Biennale. This aim to have a change happens just as Debord argues. Olu (2004) and others (Tissières 2015, Konaté 2013) offer a strong Pan-African and postcolonial framework for the discussion.

The pan-African approach and manifest is very clear in Okeke-Agulu's (2014), Konaté's(2013) and Tissières (2015) articles. However, as presented above, many of the other critiques offer a postcolonial understanding implicitly. Nevertheless, the ideology of Western criticism and the non-Eurocentric view is present. For Debord (1983:215), the spectacle itself is an ideology in its pureness: 'The spectacle is ideology par excellence. The spectacle manifests and in its fullness the essence of all ideological systems: the impoverishment, servitude and negotiation of real life.' Debord sees ideology and spectacle as one, not separated from one another. As mentioned earlier, we perceive the world and communicate with each other through the spectacle. (Hanru 2009). Fairclough understands our tendency to perceive the world through presuppositions that contain certain ideas and ideologies. Through these ideas and ideologies, the spectacle aims to make a change. By offering a whole new perspective through which to analyse and consider the

Biennale, the critique aims to change the way Biennale is considered and the way Biennale understands and presents African art.

The critiques are aiming to have a change by offering a postcolonial and pan-African ideology. Moreover, what Debord criticises is the tendency to discuss in a certain framework. Critiques of Dak'Art are both the spectacle and ideology. They offer an ideology that Dak'Art is more complexly tied with colonial histories and that these realities need to be considered critically when discussing Dak'Art. The critiques offer an alternative way to discuss and understand the Biennale, and they create an ideology other than the Biennale manifests. One critique puts it well: 'Dak'Art is not meant to be a postcard vision of Africa' (Hecht 2000), emphasising that there is perhaps a misunderstanding or a problem in the way Dak'Art Biennale is perceived. The term 'postcard vision' gives an impression of the Western view, it gives an idea that Dak'Art is not something to be understood through western imagination, but it is an independent African event.

4.4 Power, Hegemony and the West in Dak'Art critiques

Power is always present in the discourse. Even though critics aim to analyse the Biennale by acknowledging the problem of Western hegemony, yet they cannot escape it. Stuart Hall (1997) asks whether a dominant representation can be challenged, contested or changed: meanings can never be really fixed, and images carry connotations over which no one has complete control. (Hall 1997) Before starting the analysis of this section, it is worth to explain briefly what is meant by power, hegemony, and culture.

4.4.1 Theoretical background of Power, Hegemony and Culture

The nature of critical discourse analysis lies in finding and recognising the underlying power relations. Ruth Wodak (2004) demonstrates that language can be used to challenge power, to subvert it, to alter distributions of power both in the long and short run. Michel Foucault (1980) emphasises how discourses are always tied to power. According to Foucault discourses are not just part of the power but also one of those systems through which power spreads. He concludes that those who create the discourse have the power to realise it and strengthen its competency as

a truth. (Foucault 1980:201) 'Language provides a finely articulated vehicle for differences in power in hierarchical social structures,' demonstrates Wodak. (2004:6)

Hegemony was first introduced by Antonio Gramsci and further developed by Stuart Hall. The idea is that the power of cultural hegemony is invisible; when a culture becomes a hegemony, it becomes common sense. Hegemony does not seem political, but it is hidden and implicit in stories, images, and figures of speeches and thus it is just harder to notice. According to Gramsci hegemony appears in two different ways: by oppression and coercion as well as by intellectual and moral leadership. (Femia 1987)

Power, hegemony, and culture are something that discourses create. Dak'Art critiques are also participating in this system of spreading and challenging power as well as realising and strengthening the competency of the power as truth. According to Hall (1997) power is always operating in conditions of unequal relations. He points out both Foucault's and Gramsci's ideas of how power also involves knowledge, representation, ideas, cultural leadership and authority as well as economic constraint and physical coercion. Richardson. N and Wearing. S (2015) discuss the representation in the media and remind that representation is always a re-presentation; it is not the reality. They clarify that the images we see are not the reflection or a mirror of the world but are constructs - images which have been built or produced. According to them representations never simply happen but are always constructed in accordance with specific politics or ideologies.

4.4.2 Critics are the elite

I thought that if everyone – artists, critics, former directors, jury chairs, participants etc – gave an honest take on the Biennale in such a review, we might at least begin to see where the rain began to beat us, as Achebe might say

(Olu 2004)

According to Debord (1983) culture is a representation of the reality and a general sphere of knowledge – 'culture is power of generalization existing apart' (1983:180). This occurs as division of intellectual labour and as intellectual labour of division. (Debord 1983:180) In other words,

Debord suggests that a select group, whether journalists, intellectuals or journalists, etc. share a collective understanding and create a distinct cultural perspective of the social whole. The quote above leads to the nature of power. 'Everyone' in the quote seems to mean the ones belonging to the higher social hierarchy, the ones having more power. Hall (1997) analyses the problem of representation in the media in his work *Representation: Cultural representation and signifying practices*. According to Hall to analyse representation we need to understand the nature of the power extensively. Hall describes power as something which is not understood only in terms of economic and physical coercion but also in a broader cultural or symbolic term which includes the power to represent someone or something within a certain 'regime of representation' (Hall 1997:274). In this case study, the critiques and their lexicon, typology are the images which have been produced. Stielau (2014) relevantly poses a question: 'In framing the exhibition in a particular lexicon – the language of the academic, the university, the elite – it is worth asking for whom the triumvirate of curators aim to produce this "common" ...' Stielau's question indicates how power and cultural leadership is present in Dak'Art Biennale.

Going back to Debord's explanation how a select group share a collective understanding and create a distinct perspective: in this case study the select group is the intellectuals, critics and journalists who write the critiques. To put simply, we could say that it is the elite of the society that are contributing to the critiques of Dak'Art Biennale. Critiques are the voice of the intellectuals and give the voice to the intellectuals: 'But how to put a face on a quantitative assessment of anonymous audience? To try to do so, I spoke to three important intellectual.'(Pensa 2012) They belong to the Western hegemony and cultural leadership. As mentioned earlier in this research, the critiques tend to challenge the hegemony of the West by offering a postcolonial understanding and pan-African thoughts. (Araeen 2003, Konaté 2013, Okeke-Agulu 2014, Tissières 2016, Olu 2004) However, as Hall (1997) states, the power of cultural hegemony is invisible. In addition, according to Hall 'images', in this case, the critiques carry always connotations of hegemony and in terms of this hegemony cannot be successfully challenged nor fixed. This section of the research focuses on the underlying power relations and implicit ideologies; it is not a question of whether they challenge the hegemony or not but rather how the connotations of hegemony occur from the critiques. The underlying power relations are always present, and as Hall (1997) emphasises it is important to dig deeper in order to recognise the hegemony and hidden ideologies. Dak'Art is an event that challenges in a way a western

hegemony showing that African Biennale is possible: 'The idea of African art that springs fully formed from the European gaze is extreme but not inappropriate.' (Konaté 2013) However, Biennale as a event challenging a Western hegemony would be a different research.

From the critiques occurs the idea that The West has the cultural hegemony, and this is being criticised thoroughly. Okeke-Agulu (2014) suggested that the Biennale should have adopted an African theory, 'ubuntu', into the discussion. Other critiques ridicule the Biennale and in a dismissive manner, implicitly claim Dak'Art to be just a product of the Western hegemony, 'Dak'Art was a spin-off from Venice, or a product of the French Cultural Centre, or a rebuttal to the controversial exhibition 'Magiciens de la Terre.' (Konaté 2013) Here Konaté refers Dak'Art to be just a secondary product from Venice Biennale, indicating that the West holds the power and the hegemony over the whole concept of Dak'Art. Another critique presents the same idea, again in a dismissive way.

African culture is only a raw material for the West, said an official who worked at the ministry of Culture at the time. It's like cocoa which grows in Africa, but when you try to make chocolate from it here it melts. (Hecht 2000)

The critiques hold the presupposition that the whole concept of African art and Dak'Art is a copy from the West. It goes along with the other analysis of African art and culture. Agawu V. Agawu's (2003) work 'Representing African music: Postcolonial notes, Queries, positions' offers an alternative critique to the discourse of African music (chapter 8: *How to analyse African music*). The questions raised are: Who writes about African music, how and why? The same questions are relevant here. The critiques analysed in this research are written both by Africans and Europeans. However, what they have in common is that they all belong to Western university institution and though I would argue them to belong to the same elitist, intellectual group. Agawu distinguishes the 'European' thought and 'African thinking'; he argues that European and African knowledge exist in separate, radically different spheres, which are originated in European thought, not in African thinking. Agawu outlines radically how this thinking was produced in European discourse and how some African (scholars) accepted it. He compares this to the process of how colonised assimilated the image and representation of themselves produced by the colonisers. Agawu (2003) turns to criticism of the European discourse about African art, arguing that the discourse and analysis is still based on racist historical knowledge. He presents Paulin Hountondji's argument on

how oversimplification of Africa's cultural past, its external designation and its presuppositions of difference.

Agawu's categorisation of African thinking and European thought seems relevant for this research. I would argue based on the data chosen for this research that the distinction between European and African scholars and their way of analysing the Biennale is not so simple. However, the distinction between European thought and African thinking is visible but not related to the background of the author. Okeke-Agulu's (2014) critique and the concept of 'ubuntu' would perhaps serve as an example of African thinking. Yet, the claim how African scholars accepted the European discourse and produced the African thinking from it seems reasonable. Even the concept of Ubuntu has developed from European theories under university institutions.

4.4.3 Dak'Art – 'The former French colony' and 'least developed country'

In other critiques Senegal and Dakar is often explained from the Western point of view, indicating that the Western understanding and way of perceiving the world is dominant. The quote from the critique indicates the common Eurocentric approach – 'a certain regime of representation' in Hall's words. If an African would explain Senegal or Dakar, quite sure the explanation would be slightly different from the following:

This Former French colony, which the United Nations counts among the world's least developed nations has diverted almost \$1 million from basic human services and from paying off its vast foreign debt to bring 57 artists here from 18 African countries and critics and curators from around the world. (Hecht 2000)

The unequal power relations are present in the quote. First, the author has chosen to represent Senegal as 'a former French Colony', and second, it introduces the country to be the least developed country. This distinction strengthens the image of those developed countries (mainly western countries) and non-developed countries (mainly non-western countries). This idea of development is Western-based, emerged in the 17th and 18th centuries. (Omar 2012). Omar (2012) demonstrates that the concept of development is a social construction, contextualised historically and discursively. It is a 'discursive product' which was created and shaped by the hegemony of the

West. In terms of this understanding, the quote indicates a Western hegemony in the way, the author expresses certain ideas and ideologies. The article was published in an American journal, New York Times and other quotes from the critiques represent the same ideology:

Representation in African art has always been largely symbolic Giving cultural meaning to found objects, as the European Dadaists did in the 1910's, or to raw materials, as Arte Povera did in Italy in the 1960's, is the kind of leap of faith common in African spiritual practises. (Hecht 2000)

The quote aims to understand African art through Western history and art. It compares African art to the development of Western art. Grabski (2017) argues that [Western] critics tend to analyse Dak'Art Biennale through their experience of Western Biennales. The quote indicates the same approach when analysing African art, and art history. The quote gives an impression that African art would follow the same path of development as European art. Another point to mention is that European art has traditionally been divided by country and style; however African art is understood as a whole. It is one aspect of the postcolonial critique; the simplification of Africa and other non-Western cultures. The author is not discussing Africa and Europe equally: Africa is simply Africa, and Europe is a continent with different countries and styles of art.

Debord (1983:180) statement of culture being 'a power of generalization existing apart' is very interesting and relevant for the research. The critiques exist apart in their own discursive platform. This generalization occurs from the critiques by means of discussing the Biennale through certain ideology and understanding that this certain ideology dominates the discourse: He [Nwezi] advances that it is the "discourse [of Dak'Art] which imagines and produces a pan-African 'exhibitionary' world" at odds with a dominant biennale typology. (Stielau 2015)

5. Conclusion

In this research I have analysed thirteen critiques of Dak'Art Biennale and aimed to analyse them thoroughly by means of a postcolonial approach and Debord's theory of Society of the Spectacle. The aim of this research is to provide a critical and analytical voice toward the critiques of the Dak'Art Biennale which otherwise is lacking.

I started from the headlines of the Dak'Art critiques and analysed how they indicate certain ideologies and ideas about the Biennale as well as what they reveal about the tone and nuance of the articles in general. Fairclough's model of critical discourse analysis was a very useful tool in this section helping us to understand the headlines more profoundly and dig deeper to the implicit meanings that they carry. As the analysis indicated, even headlines carry hidden ideas and ideologies aiming to represent the event in a certain way. The headlines were strongly indicating a negative tone toward the Biennale, which also support Fairclough argument how discourses and texts are never neutral.

After headlines, I moved to the content of the critiques, which I aimed to analyse thoroughly by means of critical discourse analysis combined with Debord's theory of the society of the spectacle. Debord's theory proved to be an excellent tool and supported to gain a better understanding of the critiques and its socio-political context. Debord's theory and postcolonial approach served as a fruitful combination assisting to conceptualise the critiques as well as understanding the underlying socio-political and geopolitical power relations that are always present. Debord's theory, in a nutshell, argues that 'everything that was once lived has become a representation – a spectacle.' (1983:1) I argue that this is what Dak'Art critiques represent in various aspects: the critiques have become a representation of something that is lived.

First, I presented how the critiques are the spectacle aiming to introduce the spectacle and its manifestation in the critiques. Then I analysed how the critiques indicate a logic of market capitalism. Curator Hanru(2009) argues that the logic of market capitalism determines every Biennale; my aim was to analyse whether the logic of market capitalism could be determined in the critiques as well. I argue that the logic of market capitalism can be found from the critiques. Critiques embody this logic in several ways: the contributors write critiques for their work,

critiques are published in chargeable journals, and Biennale itself exists in a capitalistic society. Critiques as a spectacle, just as Debord's claims, see the world as a world of commodity by focusing on the system that produces the Biennale and artworks and its impact on capitalistic society.

Debord's theory claims that the spectacle is always trying to have a change or change the world through a certain framework. This was demonstrated in the discussions by means of how critiques present a certain postcolonial and pan-African framework in order to discuss the Biennale. The postcolonial and Pan-African approach in the critiques is perhaps the most recognizable and underlines the nuances of the critiques. Debord's argument draws attention to how the spectacle's discursive framework is often limited. The critiques discuss the Biennale only through a postcolonial and Pan-African approach which I consider as a limited approach; no other framework is offered in the critiques. Lastly, I analysed the power relations and hegemony that occur from the critiques. The important notion is that the elites write about the Biennale. They belong to a certain group which according to Debord share a collective understanding and create a distinct cultural perspective of the social. Hall (1997) states how hegemony cannot be escaped. I argue that even though the critiques aim to challenge the Western hegemony and the means by which African art is being discussed by applying a postcolonial approach, yet they fail in it. The critiques analyse and discuss the Biennale through Western theories, perspective, and voices.

This research presented only a limited number of articles, and due to this, I cannot argue that the research findings would offer a comprehensive model of the reality of the Biennale critiques. However, I do argue that the critiques embody Debord's spectacle and the critiques analysed in this research offer an understanding that the critiques act in a same way as Debord's theory of the spectacle claims spectacle to do.

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