Socially engaged art in Rwanda

A case study of the Inema Art Center in Kigali

Zandra Persson
“We want to share our talent. We don’t want to give them fish but we want to show them where we get the fish from and how we get the fish out of there”

Kalungi Godfrey, Artist at the Inema Art Center
Abstract

The degree project explores how artists can contribute to social change processes in the contemporary Rwandan context. The general aim is to put light on the new Rwandan art scene and the actors involved in it. The study searches to understand how these artists perceive their role as actors for social change and the possibilities of art in Rwanda today. The Inema Art Center in the Rwandan capital Kigali serves as a case study for this purpose. The study is guided by the following two key research questions:

1. How does the Inema Art Center perceive its role as an actor for social change in contemporary Rwanda?

2. How does the Inema Art Center use art to fuel development?

In order to respond to these questions, the study applies a combination of methodological approaches. The primary approach includes the conduction of interviews with six artists at the Inema Art Center. The interviews are analyzed from a critical discursive perspective. The narratives from the artists reveal how the artists talk about art and see their role as actors for social change. This approach focuses on language use as an indicator of social change. The secondary approach comprises the conduction of a visual analysis of the Inema Art Center’s promotion video. The video is analyzed from a mainstream semiotic perspective. The aim of this approach is to conduct a detailed analysis of the meanings the video is communicating in relation to art and social change. Whereas the first approach explores the personal and individual perspectives of the art activities at Inema, the second approach explores rather the institutional perspective, i.e. how Inema through social media presents itself to the public. The main conclusions of the study can be summarized as follows: Inema uses art to improve livelihood at different levels: individual, family, community and national. Inema is a homegrown initiative addressing development issues, but has not the ambition to become a subversive political movement. Hence, Inema refrains from addressing politically sensitive issues and prefers to remain in the politically accepted “comfort zone”. My research suggests however that artists such as at Inema are forerunners of the creation of a new innovative cultural discourse that is changing the cultural landscape in contemporary Rwanda. Inema sees its role in educating people allowing them to see things differently. Inema’s mission is to communicate the role and potential of art as an income generating activity to the community, but also as a contributor to the productive means to the wider Rwandan society. This is how artists can contribute to social change processes in contemporary Rwanda and help building up the country.

Key words: passion, inspiration, creativity, happiness, business, industry, growth, sharing, community, connections, education and empowerment.
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1. Introduction
The Rwandan renowned artist Epaphrodite Binamongo grew up in exile in Bukavu, in the Southern part of Lake Kivu in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). When the genocide in Rwanda had come to an end in 1994, he decided to return to Rwanda and told me a few years back: “The country needed us, including the artists, in order to build up the country”. These short introductory lines raise the question about how artists can contribute to social change in contemporary Rwanda and constitutes this research’s general interest. Art being an element of culture, culture is nowadays commonly recognized as an important factor for development. However, it is only in recent time that the official Rwanda has acknowledged that culture matters for social cohesion and development. Therefore, in 2011 the Ministry of Sport and Culture (Minispoc) was given the mandate to develop and support the implementation of policies and strategies concerning sport and culture as a means to promote development in Rwanda. (minispoc.gov.rw, 2015) This recognition goes along with the growth of a new and innovative art scene, especially in the capital city Kigali, which indicates that Rwanda’s creative scene de facto is expanding and changing. Despite this tendency, the artistic and cultural life is faced with several challenges such as limited financial support from government or other funders, limited domestic market, restrictions against freedom of expressions, lack of public spaces and little availability of formal education around art and culture. This is the background that constitutes the research problem that gave rise to this study.

1.1 Aim and key research questions
The general aim of this study is to put light on the new Rwandan art scene and the actors involved in it. The study searches to understand how these artists perceive their role as actors for social change and the possibilities of art in today’s Rwanda, in view of the challenges that they are confronted with. In particular, this study aims at exploring how a small group of artists at the Inema Art Center in Kigali understand the role of their cultural practice in relation to social change in contemporary Rwanda - rather than the concrete impacts of art on society. The study derives from the premise that the way we talk and think about something is a start for social change to take place, which is elaborated in the methodological chapter later on. In order to approach this, two key research questions have been formulated. Whereas the
first question explores the wider ambition of Inema, the second question’s focus is on how Inema concretely uses art as a means to fuel development.

1. How does the Inema Art Center perceive its role as an actor for social change in contemporary Rwanda?

2. How does the Inema Art Center use art to fuel development?

1.2 The Inema Art Center

This study is limited to the Inema Art Center in the Rwandan capital Kigali. Inema was created in 2012 by the two brothers Emmanuel Nkuranga and Innocent Nkurunziza. Inema is a Kinyarwanda word for talent, gift and blessing. At the same time, it combines the names of the two founders. The art center is located in a rented spacious house on the top of the hill in the suburb of Kacyiru in Kigali. It consists of a collective of young artists, specialized in contemporary visual arts, mostly paintings, but also sculptures and mixed media expressions. At the moment (June, 2015) eleven artists are active at Inema. Three of them are from other countries than Rwanda. All artists at Inema are men except a female artist from India/U.S. Their art work is showcased at the center that also hosts a variety of programmes, projects and initiatives with the purpose to expand creative arts in Rwanda and to turn creativity into livelihood (inemaartcenter.com, 2015). Hence, the artists at Inema combine individual artistic work with community engagement. At the moment the center supports livelihood for about 100 disadvantaged women and children from the surrounding community. The center’s vision is to “fuel development through art” on a personal, social and economical level. They believe that the use of creative expression has the potential to keep the community and country alive. In addition, they have a mission to encourage a vibrant art scene in Rwanda and to create a movement for the awareness of art nationwide. (Ibid)

Inema is mainly run through the selling of the paintings rather than relying on donors’ support. In practice, this means that a percentage from the sale of an individual artist’s work is used to cover common costs for rent, art material and community activities. Inema also pays taxes to the state from the sale. What is left goes to the individual artist. The co-founder Nkuranga emphasizes that Inema is a business and not a NGO and is as such obliged to pay
taxes. Several of the artists live collectively at the center. The prices for a painting range from a few hundred to 2000 USD and above. Inema makes use of new information technology and has its own homepage and the center has online presence on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Meetings are regularly held among the artists to collectively discuss their daily work and visions. Today, Inema is recognized as the largest art center in Rwanda. On TripAdvisor Inema is ranked number two (after the Kigali Genocide Memorial Center) out of 41 things to do in Kigali. (tripadvisor.com, 2015). The center is open every day from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. According to Inema’s own statistics, the center hosts over 7000 visitors annually, most of them are foreigners.

1.3 Personal motivation and significance of the case study
First of all, it is significant to address my own relation to Inema in order to understand the motivation behind the selection of the case study. I have been living in Kigali since 2011 and have witnessed on the ground how new art and cultural initiatives are popping up in Kigali. Therefore, I was already familiar with the center before this study and had visited it a few times outside the project. This is the reason why the idea of the study grew. The innovative outspoken approach of Inema to try and use art to fuel development stroked me and constituted an interesting case to study from a ComDev perspective. Inema is furthermore an appealing research showcase since it exemplifies the development of an on-the-ground initiative, i.e. a local initiative that addresses development issues. The fact that I already had some connections at Inema facilitated it to carry out this research. These circumstances have thus influenced my choice of case study.

Nevertheless, there are numbers of other art studios and artists in Kigali with a similar community engaged approach like Inema such as Uburanga Arts, Yego Art Studio, Tongo Arts Gallery and Ivuka Arts. It is therefore fare to say that there is a tendency among art studios in Rwanda to engage socially in society. Many contemporary Rwandan artists grew their artistic talent at Ivuka Arts which is located nearby Inema in Kacyiru. Ivuka Arts is recognized as Kigali’s first art gallery created in 2007. Like many other artists the core members at Inema started their carriers at Ivuka before they went on to start up their own business. According to Nkuranga, one main reason for leaving Ivuka Arts was to get more space to grow. Notably the Centre Cultural Français, which used to be the reference for films and
performance in Kigali, was closed down in 2012 due to diplomatic tensions between Paris and Kigali. The other cultural hub, the Ishyo Art Center, was closed down shortly afterwards after being too outspoken on certain politically sensitive issues. (Katondolo, Nibagwire and Spackman, 2015:5, 22) As a consequence, Inema remains today as a trigger and a major source of inspiration for the Rwandan culture scene and is as such an appealing and significant case in order to explore the phenomenon this study is interested in.

The time frame given for this project has required me to certain limitations. As a result, I have chosen to conduct one focused case study of one cultural institution rather than including several art institutions which would not have allowed the same in-depth study. The purpose of a case study is to systematically collect information about a particular person, social setting, event, group or entire community to enable to understand how it functions or operates. (Berg, 2001:225) Additionally, it emphasizes in-depth studies on single cases in relation to social constructions and its meaning making in the real world. (Somekh and Lewin, 2005:34) Although this study is limited to Inema, it can serve as a base to further explore the creative sector and complement other sources on the cultural sector in Rwanda.

1.4 Literature review
Post genocide Rwanda has indeed contributed to a large production of academic literature on everything from reconciliation, conflict transformation, current politics on public memory, transitional justice, education and the countries socio-economic development. However, my literature review indicates that academic writing on the role of art and culture in Rwanda in general are limited and especially of the role of art and culture in contemporary Rwanda. One of the literature identified, Adekunle (2007), supports this notion. He acknowledges that not much has been written about Rwanda’s culture and customs despite “its long rich history”, which motivated him to investigate culture and customs in Rwanda from pre colonial times until present, i.e. until 2007 (when the book was published). The reading gives a valuable overview of the role of art and culture in the Rwandan society in the past. The current cultural development though is not presented. In general writing, Rwanda’s culture is frequently reduced to traditional cultural heritage - where also research has put focus on. For example, a new publication that offers insight into Rwanda’s history, cultural and societal values, as well as emerging trends (Uwanziga, 2015) emphasizes that “Rwanda is a country with rich history,
culture, customs, graceful dancers, artistic craft and friendly people”. Importantly, culture is more than culture heritage: “Culture has two dialectic dimensions: The dimension of tradition what exist and identifies us, and the dimension of innovation, what we build day to day through the process of cultural interaction”. (Wilkins, Tufte and Obregon, 2014:110) Other publications discuss how artistic expressions can function as a catalyst for healing and reconciliation in Rwanda after the 1994 genocide (i.e Chu, 2010 and Angus and Bent, 2010). Online I came across some current publications in foreign and domestic mass media which present the new art scene in Rwanda (i.e. The New York Times 2014, Deutschlandfunk.de, 2014 and The New Times, 2015). These publications support this study’s claim that the cultural life in Rwanda is changing and transforming. Moreover, a recent mapping study (Katondolo, Nibagwire and Spackman, 2015) for development cooperation in Kigali has provided useful indications and complementary information on the art and culture situation in Rwanda today. Given the fact that relatively little attention has been given in academia to the artistic and cultural life and its importance for development in contemporary Rwanda supports the significance of this study.

In the initial step of this work, a mapping of literature regarding “socially engaged art” was conducted. Mainly Bishop (2012), Mesh (2012) and Thompson (2012) are discussed and referred to in this study to define a framework and create a broader understanding of the field. In addition, general ComDev literature has been approached to get an understanding of the general meaning of culture within development. (Hall, 2013, Pieterse, 2010 and Schech and Haggis, 2002) Finally, the notion of ‘culture for development' endorsed by UNESCO and the today’s framing of arts and culture as the “Creative Economy” by UN have been relevant for the analysis/discussion. The literature review also includes an exploration of related studies and academic writings in other countries in order to further broaden my understanding for the field. In an African context, notably South Africa as a country marked by extreme inequality has a rich tradition of socially engaged art. Lastly, I acknowledge that additional notions and sources regarding such wide concepts as “art” and “culture” could have been considered and included in the study. However, the timeframe and length of this study has implied certain limitations on what to incorporate in the discussion.
2. **Overview of the contemporary Rwandan context**

The art and cultural practice at Inema cannot be analyzed in isolation from its surrounding environment. As art and culture is about freedom of expression (and belongs to the universal human rights), Rwanda’s current social and political context is relevant for the analysis and impacts on the art and cultural scene in Rwanda. The purpose of this section is therefore to give an overview of the socio-political context of Rwanda in order to understand how an art institution perceives its role as an actor for social change in this given society.

The 1994 genocide has become a point of reference in the Rwandan society and has significantly shaped its political and social order. In general writing of history, Kagame and his ruling party RPF (Rwandan Patriotic Front) are presented to have brought an end to the 1994 genocide and raised Rwanda from the ashes in its aftermath when they formed the new Rwandan government out of an exiled rebel group in Uganda. The Rwandan authorities have used the history as a lesson learned to orientate the Rwandan people around the principles of one civic identity as a way towards reconciliation and peace. The ethnic markers Hutus and Tutsis are wiped out: Today, the people of Rwanda are all simply Rwandans. In doing so, Rwanda has opted for a policy based on an integrationist policy centered on one civic identity as a way forward to unity, reconciliation, peace, security and state-building. In result, ethnicity is controlled in a way that serves political interests. (Vandeginste, 2014:1)

According to the official Rwandan streamlined narrative of the 1994 genocide, the Hutus in power systematically killed Tutsis. This is reflected in Rwanda’s labeling of the genocide as “1994 genocide against the Tutsis”. Any differing views, such as acknowledging that many moderate Hutus died as well, are in danger of falling foul of the vague laws that are put in place against minimizing the genocide. (Harber, 2014:14) Amnesty International argues that the laws on “genocide ideology” and “divisionism” that were introduced after the genocide and designed to encourage unity and restrict speech have a dangerous and chilling effect on the Rwandan society despite their legitimate aim. (amnesty.org, 2015)

There is no monolithic view on today’s Rwanda. To some Rwanda is a true success story, an African tiger rising from the ashes of genocide. Others qualify Rwanda as an authoritarian regime, repressive at home and with bloody military interventions abroad. Since Rwanda transitioned to a multiparty democracy in 2003 according to the new constitution, there has in reality been no real challenge to the dominance by the ruling party. The governmental control goes beyond formal politics making the state present in all aspects of social life. As a result,
there is no independent media or a free and pluralist society. (New Internationalist, 2014) Still, there is no direct censorship in Rwanda, but rather unwritten rules to stay away from politically sensitive topics like opposite perspectives on the 1994 genocide or criticism of the president and RPF. (Harber, 2014) According to the official Rwandan view, a controlled freedom of expression is a necessity in order to provide security to a worn torn country. The regime’s efforts to legislate ethnicity out of existence have at the same time been criticized for masking the monopoly of power by Anglophone Tutsi returnees, silencing political dissents and concealing the divide between rural and urban Rwanda. (Stys, 2012:6) Rwanda is today de facto governed by a Tutsi elite.

In sum, Rwanda has taken the choice to promote social and economic development at the expense of granting democratic space. In his latest report on Rwanda (Human Rights Council, 2014), the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, Maina Kiai, expresses concern about the prevailing opposition to vigorous debate and free expression of opinions, which makes the current social reconciliation process unstable. He further stresses that a society without room for critical voices to speak freely and peacefully is unsustainable. Whether this path is sustainable, remains questionable and difficult for an outsider to judge.

2.1 Art and culture in contemporary Rwanda
According to Rwanda’s Ministry of Sport and Culture (Minispoc), culture has not received much consideration in Rwanda prior to 1994 because it had not been perceived as a manifestation of the identity of Rwandans, but rather as a manifestation of the monarchy that the regime of the time regarded as the evil. Therefore, until 1994, Rwanda had no strategic plan for the development of its cultural and historical site. (minispoc.gov.rw, 2015) In contrast to the period prior to 1994, the Rwandan authorities nowadays recognize the role of culture as a significant aspect of development and social cohesion. Rwanda is a signatory to the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expression ratified in 2012; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, ratified in 1975; and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1975). Rwanda’s constitution does not explicitly guarantee freedom of creative expression, but does promise to safeguard cultural traditions which do not conflict with “human rights”, “public order” and “good morals”. There are especially three types of legal restrictions that have
implications for freedom of expressions; 1. Art work that can qualify as a vehicle of hatred propaganda and/or divisionism; 2. Art work that jeopardizes public order and 3. Art work that interferes with child protection. (Katondolo, Nibagwire and Spackman, 2015:7)

Rwanda has noticeably had its local art and cultural production since pre-colonial time. Industries such as basketry making, metalwork, painting, pottery and wood carving has since long time enriched the Rwandan economy and artists developed and transmitted the skill within the family from one generation to the next. (Adekunle, 2007:11, 64) Minispoc states in its policy report on cultural heritage (2014:2) that the Rwandan people and their culture have a “very rich history” but unfortunately most of this rich history is predominantly oral. The ministry notes furthermore that various authors have presented Rwandan history from a colonial perspective that distorts the origins of the Rwandan people, their political, social and economical relationship. Today, Rwanda’s cultural heritage is considered an important component of and national identity, but also as a tourism income generating activity. Traditional practices form a significant part of various cultural activities. Youths are encouraged to engage with traditional culture and perform with older traditional performers. At the same time, there are artists who challenge tradition for example by challenging the pre-colonial taboo against women playing the drum or taboos against eating in public, with the opening of a women’s run ice cream shop in Butare. (Katondolo, Nibagwire and Spackman, 2015:11) Today, Rwanda has several museums, including the National Museum of Rwanda in Butare, the Museum of Natural History in Kigali, the Nyanza Royal Palace, the Museum of Rwandan Ancient History and the Rwesero Art Museum in Nyanza. The Rwandan authorities commission artists for performances or concerts, and the Rwandan police have recently launched an initiative to employ artists for a sensitization campaign around crime. (Ibid:7)

At the same time, a new and modern art scene is growing, especially in Kigali. Today, there are domestic films, music and fashion productions, art studios, different kind of performing arts, creative collaboration spaces such as Innovation village and the Office, and art festivals such as the Rwanda Film Festival and the Kigali Up Music Festival which changes the Rwandan cultural landscape away from tradition and heritage. However, as highlighted in the introduction, they are faced with several challenges. Visual arts struggle with many of the same issues facing other practitioners in the same domain such as limited domestic market for their products and lack of formal education. In Rwanda, there is still little available in terms of public formal education around art and culture. Despite having a modern museum in
Nyanza, the museum rarely exhibit current working artists. Rwandan artists have therefore mostly to find their own spaces for exhibitions, often in hotels, restaurants or in their own galleries. A lack of public spaces has furthermore hindered cultural development outside the private sector. Restrictions against freedom of expression furthermore pose limits on artists’ ability to practice their work. (Katondolo, Nibagwire and Spackman, 2015:5, 12) Two recent articles published in international mass media show the basic challenges the Rwandan art scene is currently confronted with. The New York Times highlights the challenge of constructing a modern art collection in a country with very few art practitioners when a decision was made in 2006 to convert a former royal palace in Nyanza to the country’s first contemporary art museum. (The New York Times, 2014). In another mass media, a Rwandan artist states that in Rwanda you can find colors to paint the walls but no colors for artists. (deutschlandsfunk.de, 2014). Despite these setbacks, Rwanda has recently seen new promising initiatives in the cultural and artistic domain. Still, many Rwandan artists have not rejected the traditional painting methods and values in favor of abstract art. At the same time, changes are taking place as a result of demand and influence of foreigners and tourists. (Adekunle, 2007:67)

3. Conceptual framework

The purpose of this chapter is to define a framework that this study has identified to be of relevance for the analysis but also to put the study into a broader theoretical context. In a first step, I address the link between culture and development before giving an outline of how art can be engaged in society based on discussions in some of the current literature. Though the study is limited to the art practice at on cultural institution it acknowledges that “culture” as well as “art” are two wide and interlinked concepts which have had a variety of different functions throughout history. In this study I prefer to have a broad and including understanding of the two concepts as discussed below.

3.1 Culture and development

Art being an element of culture, it is indicated to put culture in relation with development and social change. As Hall (2013:xvii) emphasizes: “Culture is one of the most difficult concepts in the human and social sciences and there are many different ways of defining it”. However, culture is generally defined as “the set of distinctive features of a society, including arts but
also lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs, that shape lives and identity”. Schech and Haggis (2000:xi) argue that culture is central to our understanding of development processes and their impact on societies across the globe, and narrowly interconnected with economic, political and social change. “The cultural turn” within development implies that culture today is conceived as recourse rather than as a hindrance in development and culture has taken a central position in the thinking about global inequalities and social change. As a result, the relevance of the cultural dimension of development is nowadays increasingly prominent in policy and human development reports. (Pieterse, 2010:78) Ever since the World decade for Cultural Development (1988 -1998), UNESCO’s mission has been to encourage states to place culture at the centre of development policy and understands it to be a pre-condition for successful globalization processes that take into account the principles of cultural diversity. (www.unesco.org, 2015)

Development is no longer equal with economic growth. Nonetheless, cultural considerations have today become a significant factor within development business. The today’s framing of arts and culture as the “Creative Economy” has encouraged governments to see the role of culture as linked to economic growth. The creative arts industry refers to a sector of economic activity, which is concerned with the generation, or utilization of knowledge and information to generate income through trade and intellectual property rights. The creative economy is an emerging concept dealing with the interface between creativity, culture, economics and technology in a contemporary world dominated by images, sounds, texts and symbols. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development’s Creative Economy Report (2008) defines the Creative Economy as “the interface between creativity, culture, economics and technology as expressed in the ability to create and circulate intellectual capital, with the potential to generate income, jobs and exports earnings while at the same time promoting social inclusion, cultural diversity and human development”. In this context, “creativity” refers to the shaping of new ideas which are used to produce original work of art and cultural products, functional creations, scientific inventions and technological innovations. The word “creativity”, on the other hand, is associated with originality, imagination, inspiration, ingenuity and inventiveness, which are characterizations of an individual and the essence of intellectual capital. (Ibid:3)

Africa’s share of the global creativity is often cited to be less than one percent. (Katondolo, Nibagwire and Spackman, 2015:10) Despite the many talents on the continent as well as
richness of cultural traditions and heritage there has been limited commercialization of African cultural and artistic expressions on both the domestic and foreign markets. (Creative Economy Report, 2008:43) However, reframing art and culture as part of the cultural industry has become a trend, especially in the Anglophone African countries. It has furthermore helped cultural practitioners to show that their work creates employment and is directly relevant for MDG goals. Notably, the Rwandan government organized a conference with United Nation Development Program (UNDP) as early as 2006 on the role of the cultural industries in development. (Katondolo, Nibagwire and Spackman, 2015:10) A current article in one of Rwanda’s biggest daily newspaper acknowledges that the creative industry in Rwanda recently has grown in terms of the number of participating entrepreneurs as well as its contribution to the economy. (The New Times, 2015)

Moreover, artistic expressions are considered to be able to influence lives both on individual and societal level, for example by sparking new ideas, catalyze critical thinking, encouraging new actions, inspiring individuals and creating visions. (artforsocialchange.net, 2015) Through their art work, artists have a more distinctive way of reaching out to people than conventional communication methods. Some art questions cultural norms and fosters dialogue and some artists represent marginalized people and provide visibility for their society. In violent torn areas, artistic expressions are frequently used to heal wounds but also to pave innovative ways forward. Nowadays, art is for that reason used as a method to prevent and transform conflicts, and rebuild peaceful, multicultural, pluralistic and democratic societies after a conflict. (Spens, 2013:1)

### 3.2 Socially engaged art

In order to further understand my case study, I have chosen to apply the concept of “socially engaged art”. The concept is elaborated in the following and based on discussions by some of the current prominent scholars within the field that I have identified as relevant for the analysis and the art practice at Inema. In recent time, there has been an increasing movement of artists choosing to engage with timely issues by expanding their practice beyond the studio and right into the complexity of the public sphere. This kind of work has many names, such as: “relational aesthetics”, “social justice art”, “social practice” and “community art”. (Thompson, 2012:7). They share similarities with the perhaps more known concept of “political art”, when defined as an activity of collective decision-making that addresses current problems
confronting a particular group within that social body. (Mesch, 2013:2) In this study, the alternative term “socially engaged art” is used. The term is more neutral and inclusive, and more appropriate for the Rwandan context than primarily “political art” or even “art activism”. Is it essential to emphasize that it is me, the researcher, who defines the object of my study as socially engaged art and not the object itself. The reason for this is Inema’s engagement in community activities, and its outspoken vision to “fuel development through art” and to “create a movement for the awareness of art”, but also the way Inema is organized and functions share many similarities with the main characteristics of socially engaged art as identified in the literature. There are however also inferences.

Art with a public purpose is as such not new. In a European perspective, after the French revolution, visual art played a central role in the construction of states and national identities. Over the time, artists became the avant-garde that would enable social transformation. (Mesch, 2012:2f, Bishop 2012:271) However, unlike its forerunners such as Russian Constructivism, Futurism, Situationism and Dadaism, socially engaged art is commonly not conceived as a movement in the same logic. The practices of socially engaged art indicate instead a new social order. On the one hand, they emphasize on participation and challenging power. On the other hand, they expand models of art, advance ways of being an artist, and involve new publics in the process. (Thompson, 2012) Community building is a goal that seeks to channel personal identification and neighborhoods into participation in an agenda for social change expressing a common interest shared by a community on specific social issues. Artists use their work to improve lives on different societal levels and contribute to the productive means of a society. Instead of being stalled in galleries or museums, this kind of art work often exists outside the traditional gallery and museum systems, thereby emphasizing much more on the process of art than on art as an object. They often use the devises of new information technology to promote their work and to make art significant to social change and community goals. (Mesch, 2012:8ff)

In an African context, it is often said that new forms of political engagement based on personal identity grew from the atmosphere of post-colonialism and protest. (Ibid:7) The rejection of the ideology of colonialism made it possible for African artists to construct an independent notion of African identity. African artists collectively rejected western ideas of primitivism and sought to make their art work part of the repertory of modern art. Some
African artists took up the ideas of *Negritude* in order to deal with their own local culture in their modern art projects. Some artists found that the ideas of the avant-garde were relevant for their struggle against inequities and for social change. However, as Mesh (Ibid:44f) concludes, perhaps the single unifying characteristic of African modern art is its anti-colonialism and re-thinking of the African subject.

Thompson (2012) explores practices of socially engaged art around the globe. However, as each case is bond to its particular context, working with socially engaged art in a democratic state is different than doing so in an authoritarian regime, where an act of artistic expression can be a danger. (However, Europe recently witnessed how art became a goal for terrorism). For example, as public spaces are limited for artists in Rwanda they have to find other ways to expose their work and engage in the community. Each example of socially engaged art is therefore unique, but shares the common interest in social change. Thompson who takes a positive approach towards socially engaged art recommends the re-thinking of the role of art in world where art often is seen as a product rather than a vehicle for social change.

There are many different opinions on how artists (really) can contribute to social change processes, some less cherish. Bishop (2012) makes some critical remarks about socially engaged art. First and foremost, critical potential can only be realized if the boundary between art and life is not so strictly controlled by art institutions which work in the interest of established power. According to her, art produced within established power cannot be transformative. Also when art is produced outside the so-called established power, Bishop highlights some skeptical remarks about socially engaged art, especially for the following reasons: 1. The culture value placed on outreached projects is normally lower than that placed on so called real art by real artists; 2. Primarily it has been criticized because it seeks to conceal social inequalities cosmetically rather than structurally; 3. It reinforces representations of the privileged and unprivileged in society. Even if art engages with real people, this art is ultimately produced for and consumed by a middle-class audience and wealthy collectors, and represents therefore an elite culture. In addition, Thompson (2012:31) raises the question whether an artist is genuinely producing a socially engaged artwork to help people or whether it is another career-climbing maneuver. In fact, socially engaged art is more likely to justify public spending on art than any other art work. Besides, consumers of socially engaged art work may feel that they are doing something good for others while spending money on art works. To conclude, in light of the above discussion the following duals that
Bishop raises (2012:533) are significant for the concept of socially engaged art and for this study in general: 1. active and passive viewer; 2. egoistical and collaborative artist; 3. privileged and needy community; 4. aesthetic complexity and simple expressions, and 5. cold autonomy and convivial community.

4. Methodological approaches and limitations
In order to answer the two key research questions 1. “How does the Inema Art Center perceive its role as an actor for social change in contemporary Rwanda?” and 2. “How does the Inema Art Center use art to fuel development?” this study explores different elements of Inema by combining two different methodological approaches. The aim of using a combination of methods is to gain multiple perspectives and dimensions of what often is referred to as multidimensional and complex phenomena. (Cottle and Hansen et al, 1998:1f) The purpose of applying two different methodological approaches in this study is hence to provide diverse perspectives and angels that shall enrich the analysis and the answer of the research questions. In addition, it is useful to compare the findings from each approach. Below I present the two approaches and the elements that are included in the analyses and the relevance of each approach within this study.

4.1 Primary approach
The primary approach includes the conduction of interviews with artists at Inema. The aim of conducting interviews is to learn how the people who are involved in the art work at Inema are talking about art and see their role as actors for social change. This approach reflects the individual and personal perspective on Inema’s practice and is significant in order to understand the motivation behind art center.

4.1.1 Critical discourse analysis
I have chosen to analyze the data from the interviews from a critical discursive perspective, inspired by Norman Fairclough’s thinking. The aim of using a critical discourse approach for this part is to explore a discursive practice in a particular cultural institution and how it relates to social change. By “practice” Fairclough (1992:57) refers to “real instances of people doing, saying or writing things”. Additionally, this study is interested in exploring if/how Inema produces a new discourse in the Rwandan context. Given that the modern Rwandan art scene
Inema represents as such a new event in Rwanda. In order for new discourses on cultural and artistic production to emerge, contestation of established practice is necessary. (Costandius and Rosochacki, 2013:381). Inema’s outspoken mission to create a movement for the awareness of art in Rwanda indicates that they want to impose social change in some ways. The critical discourse analysis developed by Fairclough (1992) is in particular concerned with discourse as an element in social and cultural change processes and how this is linked with language use. An important aspect of critical discourse analysis is not to limit its analysis to specific structures of texts or talk, but to relate the analysis to the wider sociopolitical context of which it is a part of. The ontological assumption about the nature of social life is that it is socially constructed. People can therefore through their action and concepts of the world they live in contribute to its reproduction or transformation. (Jorgensen and Philips, 2002:15) People can thus be socially productive and agents of change. A common concern in critical discursive researches is about the relationship and tension between pre-constructed social structures, practices, identities, orders of discourse, organizations on the one hand, and processes, actions and events on the other hand. (Ibid:23) The significance of this approach lies thus in its attempt in exploring how people involved in the given domain understand their reality which can be viewed as a starting point for social change to take place.

In short, a discourse is defined as a particular way of talking about and understanding the world. Discourse analysis in general shares the view that our ways of talking and reasoning about things do not objectively reflect reality but rather play an active role in creating and changing it. (Jorgensen and Philips, 2002:1) However, discourse is a complex concept. There are many conflicting and overlapping definitions of discourse formulated from various theoretical and disciplinary positions. The textual oriented discourse analysis (TODA) developed by Fairclough is drawn on various linguistically oriented discourses and social theories. As Fairclough’s (1992:4) approach is concerned with language use, “text” is a central word and refers to any product written or spoken. For example a transcript of an interview or conversation is called a “text”. Although Fairclough’s emphasis is on linguistic texts, he acknowledges at the same time the need to extend the notion of discourse to include other symbolic forms such as visual images. In brief, TODA is based on three dimensions, namely: 1. Analysis of the text; 2. Analysis of discursive processes of text production; 3. Interpretation, including the question of which discourse types and genres the “texts” are drawn upon, and how they are articulated, and social analysis of the discursive event in terms
of its social conditions and effects at various levels. (Ibid:56) Fairclough suggests that structures are reproduced or transformed depending on the balance of power between those in struggle in a particular domain of practice, such as the school or work place. (Ibid:58). His focus is therefore on practice and struggle and his viewpoint is that people are social subjects capable of acting as agents. (Ibid:61) Fairclough proposes that in using the term discourse, language use should be regarded as a form of social practice and not purely as an individual activity. Firstly, this implies that discourse is a mode of action as well as a mode of representation. Secondly, there is a dialectical relationship between discourse and social structure. (Ibid:64)

Many discourses exist side by side or struggle for the right to define truth. In this study, discourse is applied by referring to a way of speaking which gives meaning to experiences from a particular perspective, i.e. an artistic discourse. Orders of discourse can be changed by creative language use, thus discursive change takes place when discursive elements are articulated in new ways. (Ibid: 71) My study does not have a historical dimension though, i.e. investigating change in language use within a particular institution over time. Rather its focus is on language use in a particular cultural institution at a particular time. Exploring change in language use over time is not feasible in this case as Inema has only existed since 2012. However, in relation to the cultural Rwandan context, one can argue that the contemporary modern art industry is changing society, since it was not there in the same way before. Hall (2013:xviiff) argues that all discourses always take place in specific social circumstances, therefore it tends to focus on how a specific language or meaning is used at particular times and in particular places. This study’s focus is hence on contemporary language use in a cultural institution in today’s Rwanda.

According to Michael Foucault, a discourse “defines and produces the object of our knowledge and governs the way that a topic can be meaningfully talked and reasoned about”. At the same time, it also rules out, limits or restricts other ways of talking or constructing knowledge about something. Significantly, a discourse is never consistent of “one statement, one text, one action or one source”. It is when a range of “texts” or ”representations” refer to the same subject in a similar way that they can be said to belong to the same discursive formation. (Ibid:29) In the analysis I search for recurring themes and patterns in transcripts from interviews with artists at Inema in order to identify possible dominant discourses in
communication and relate them to social change in a Rwandan context. However, as Rose states it is equally important to pay attention to complexity, contradictions as well as the invisible. (Rose, 2012:220) As a result, the analysis does not fully apply TODA but is rather inspired by Fairclough’s discussion on language use and how it is related to social change. As Fairclough (1992:225) emphasizes, there is no set procedure for doing discourse analysis; people approach it in different ways according to the specific nature of the project, as well as their own views of discourse”.

4.1.2 Interviews
The working material for my discourse analysis is based on the narratives from the artists. I have conducted interviews with six artists (out of eleven), including one of the founders, at Inema. These were the artists who were available for interviews during the timeframe for this study. The interviews took place in person, most of them at the center (in two cases at a restaurant). All artists speak English\(^1\); the interviews have therefore been conducted in English without interpreter. The artists that have participated in the research are all Rwandan and share the common background of having grown up in exile in the neighboring country Uganda. As many other Rwandan diasporas, they returned to Rwanda after the 1994 genocide. All artists are furthermore men and between 20 – 32 years. During the interview process, I was informed that several of the artists at Inema are family members (out of my respondents three are brothers, one is a cousin and two are non family members).

There are two main reasons for conducting interviews in this case. Firstly, written documentation is limited. Secondly, I want to get the viewpoint directly from the people concerned and not mainly through other representations. The focus of the interviews is on how the interviewees perceive their reality. For this purpose, I use qualitative and semi structured interviews. By qualitative I mean a type of research that produces findings not arrived at by statistical procedures or other means of quantification. Qualitative research is frequently used in researches about persons’ lives, lived experiences, behavior, emotions, organizational functioning, social movement and cultural phenomena. Some of the data on the person or the object studied may be quantified, but the large part of the analysis is

\(^1\) Rwanda has today three official languages: English, French and Kinyarwanda. English was introduced as a third official language in 2006 as a means to move away from the previously predominant French and communicate with the external world in a more powerful language.
interpretative. This method is useful in order to obtain information about phenomena such as feelings, thought processes or emotions that are difficult to study through more conventional research methods. (Corbin & Strauss, 1998:10f) I consider a semi structured interview model appropriate in my case study. It allows me to have a framework of questions that I want to explore while remaining at the same time open to the responses from the interviewees, which allows the emergence of new ideas and follow up questions during the interview. An informal grouping of questions or themes allows me furthermore to adjust the interview questions to the situation and the person I am interviewing. I have formulated a set of questions (see annex) in order to explore the following dimensions: 1. The motivation behind the founding of Inema, i.e. why are the artists there in the first place (collective/individual motivation)?; 2. What are artists experiences from being an artist in contemporary Rwanda?; What kind of art do they produce?; 3. Do they feel that they can express themselves freely in their art? If not, which kind of restrictions are they confronted with?; 4. How do they use art as a tool for social change, concrete example?; 5. What kind of social change do they want to effect with art?

There are several challenges with interviews as a research method. First and foremost, you cannot in advance control the qualities of the data. In a worst case, you get “rubbish in and rubbish out”. (Holly and Jefferson, 2000:26) This means that your research and production of data is dependent on the people you want to interview. My general feeling is that my interviewee spoke openly and appreciated being part of my study. Some actively said that it was good for them to talk to me and share their experiences and thoughts. The fact that this study is about learning more of the artists’ practices and visions has probably constituted a good basis for encouraging the artists at Inema to participate.

However, even when you have access to people, there are several things you must take into consideration as a researcher. Holly and Jefferson (2000.1f) highlight the importance as researcher to reflect upon people’s motivation and memory on what they tell and about your effect as a researcher on the answers given. Are people really telling it like it is and why would they be willing and able to tell this to a stranger interviewer? In their view, neither selves nor accounts are transparent, what is generally referred to as the “transparent self-problem”. Therefore, people’s accounts should not be treated as pure reflections of reality as people are known for having a more confused and contradictory relationship to knowing and
telling about themselves. Hence, what researchers deal with are representations. When conducting the interviews, it has furthermore been useful to keep in mind that: 1. The research subject may not understand the questions in the same way as the interviewer or the other interviewees; 2. The research subject wants to protect vulnerable aspects of him or herself; 3. The research subject may not know why they experience or feel things in a way they do and 4. The research subject is unmotivated to discuss some aspects of his or her actions. (Ibid:26) In addition, it is important as a researcher to create favorable interview conditions in order to get good quality of data. That is why I preferred to do the interviews in person. The narrative approach has moreover been inspiring to me, which implies that the responsibility of the interviewer is to be a good listener and the interviewee is a storyteller rather than a respondent. This approach is open to development and change depending on the narrator’s experience. (Holly and Jefferson, 2000:31) In the end though, the resulting narrative is always a product of the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee. (Ibid:46) It implies that I as a researcher also influence the answers by the way questions are asked or not asked etc. which I get back to in a chapter later where I further reflect on my position as a researcher.

4.2 Secondary approach
The secondary approach includes the conduction of a visual analysis of Inema’s 5:46 min long promotion video: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1kqlowxWzkg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1kqlowxWzkg). (youtube.com, 2015) The video is visible on the art center’s website. The video is produced by the Rwandan filmmaker and photographer Nasser Naisi about two years ago. The purpose of Inema’s promotion video is to give an overview of the variety of activities that take place at the center, the producer told me when I was able to meet him at Inema. I have chosen to include the video in the analysis since its present the institutional perspective on Inema’s activities, i.e. how Inema presents itself to the public. I consider therefore the findings from the analysis of the video to be complementary to the findings from the interviews which in contrast give the personal and individual perspective. The video is not chosen because of its reach in terms of number of viewers. At the time of writing (24 June 2015), it has been viewed 424 times on youtube since it was published 19 May 2014. Its reach and possible impact is thus limited. Since the video includes the core activities that take place at Inema to a larger and more concentrated extent than Inema’s website and other forms of online presentations, I consider the video as a relevant source for this study.
4.2.1 Mainstream semiotics

I have chosen to apply mainstream semiotic to analyze the moving images. What characterizes mainstream semiotic is that its focus is on the site of the image itself. (Rose, 2012:147) The analysis is hence limited to the content of the actual video and is not paying attention to the wider production process like social semiotic. It is important to underline that it is me, the researcher, who analyzes the video. Semiotics is concerned about how signs communicate meaning and particular views of the world, and the social effects of meaning.

Language, be it written words, sounds, digital images, musical notes or even object have the power to represent our ideas, feelings or visions. Representations through language are essential to the process by which meaning is produced and communicated. It is by our use of things, what we say, think and feel about them that we communicate meaning about them. (Hall, 2013:xvii) The purpose with this approach is to explore how Inema uses visual modes to represent themselves and the role of art in social change processes. Whereas the previous approach focuses on the narratives from the interviews, the second approach focuses on the visual part. However, since the video also contains verbal language (in English), this is also included in the overall analysis. Communication in and across a range of modes, verbal, visual and oral have becoming common in contemporary communication models, it is essential to pay attention to the multimodality of the actual site. Discourse analysis and semiotics are very close to each other given their shared concern about power relation and social effects of representations. At the same time, discourse analysis and semiotics can be conceived as oppositional methods. Whereas discourse analysis depends on intertextuality and frequencies, a semiological approach often includes a detailed analysis of images and relies on case studies. Semiotics is not concerned about finding images that are statistically representative of a wider set of images. The case studied in semiotics stands or falls with its analytical skills rather than its applicability to a wide range of material. (Rose, 2012:110)

Since the secondary approach contains the analysis of only one video, I consider semiotics a good option for this part in order to contribute with further perspectives to the answers of the two key research questions.

Semiotics means “the study of signs” and semioticians are primarily concerned with how meaning is generated at the level of signs and their relationship to other signs within a sign-system. In other words, different set of visual elements combined connote different meanings, and activate different social codes. The sign is the smallest unit capable of signification (meaning). Signs are communicating meaning when they come together and work as codes.
communicating particular views of the social world. (Cottle and Hansen et al, 1998:205ff) Together, they reinforce contemporary myths. That is representations that reflect the interest of power and work to legitimate social inequalities. (Rose, 2012:106f) For semioticians, a sign must consist of two parts: the signifier and the signified. The word “word” for example is a signifier; what it represents is something else — the “signified.” (Monaco, 2013) The distinction between signifier and signified is thus crucial to semiology. This means that the signifier and signified is not natural but rather conventional. The connection between a certain signifier and a certain signified can thus be questioned and explored. (Rose, 2012:113) Ferdinand De Saussure emphasizes that the relation between the “signifier” and the “signified” is not permanently fixed but rather changes over time, depending on changing attitudes towards “things” in the world. (Hall, 2013:17)

My analysis takes a detailed study of the moving images in the video, which I find conceptually interesting in relation to the research question and the study’s wider context. In a semiotic analysis, the first step is to identify the basic building blocks followed by the examination of its meanings. Dimensions that the analysis pays extra attention to are: 1. Representation of bodies; 2. Representation of manner, 3. Representation of activity and 4. Props and settings. These dimensions are particularly useful when the image includes human activities. (Rose: 2012:114f) In addition, I find Dogra’s (2013) reflections on representations of people in the global South and the divide between positive and negative images inspiring for the analysis. So are Hall’s (2013) reflections on representations of “difference” and the representational practice that is often called “stereotyping”. The analysis reflects briefly on some of these issues, but the analysis’ focus is on how Inema represents art and its role in relation to social change.

4.2.2 Moving images
It is generally acknowledged that more focus has been given to written and verbal language than to visuals. The word has been privileged vis-à-vis the image and the rational argument has often had seniority over the appeal to emotions, a dimension more often approached via visuals. However, there is no doubt that the visual dimension plays a crucial role in producing enriched and potentially strong messages, either independently or in combination with the written and verbal dimension (Cottle and Hansen et al, 1998:189ff). Human culture is made up of signs and the people inhabiting culture are busy themselves making sense of those signs.
New media has to a large extent contributed to the increased global circulation of stills and moving images. Inema’s promotion video is an example of this phenomenon and is as such appealing to include in the analysis. At the same time, it is a showcase of how new media technology can be used by individuals or institutions to promote their interests beyond local boundaries. Monaco (2013) suggests that films manage to communicate meaning like a language. Essentially, they communicate meanings denotatively and connotatively. The former is the descriptive level, where most people would agree, the latter is the level where the signs are connected to broader themes and meanings. (Hall, 2013:23) There is a notable difference between film and written language: moving images can communicate a precise knowledge that written or spoken language seldom can, whereas in still or moving images the signifier and signified are almost identical. For example, a picture of a book is much closer to a book conceptually, than the word “book”. (Ibid) Conventional language systems may be much better equipped to describe the non concrete world of ideas and abstractions, but they are not nearly as capable of conveying precise information about physical realities. However, films or moving images are often carefully controlled by a craft maker with specific intentions. Often it is the captions of an image that connote a certain meaning and the meaning does not only lie in the images itself but in combination with the spoken or written words, what in semiotic language is called anchorage. (Hall, 2013:218) When analyzing moving images, syntagmatic signs are especially important. This means that certain signs in a film may gain added meaning because of what has occurred in a previous or surrounding environment. Also paradigmatic signs are of particular relevance; they gain their meaning from contrast with all other signs. Signs can also be binary, i.e. carry more than one meaning. The term diegesis is moreover often used in film studies in order to offer a summary of a film’s denotive signs before a deeper analysis begins. (Rose, 2012:120)

5. Findings

5.1 Findings primary approach
The six interviews have been conducted in an average timeframe of one hour. I have transcribed most part of them, but left things out that were obviously irrelevant for the analysis or summarized them at some places in order to improve the comprehension. In general, the transcripts represent what has actually been said and the analysis is based on the
transcripts. Below, I present the findings and use direct quotes from the interview transcripts which I regard as relevant to support my argument. I have chosen not to use the artists’ real name but numbers to indicate that the quotes are coming from different sources, as away to protect the integrity of the person. The methodological perspective used to analyze this part is concerned about how language use is linked to social change processes (see sub chapter 4.1.1).

As a reminder, discourse analysis are defined in terms of questions about particular forms of social practice and their relation to social structure, in terms of particular aspects of social or cultural change. (Fairclough, 1992:226) Therefore, I have identified some common patterns in the narratives of the artists which can be related relate to social change, i.e. the transcripts have been coded in terms of topics. Notably, the narratives from the artists show a difference in level of social engagement and vision depending on the artists own social circumstances, especially between the core group of artist and the newcomers. Some say they are born artists, whereas others refer to a sort of “brother influence”. Despite the artist’s different individual responses, the texts analyzed contain to large content the same discursive information, i.e. they refer to the same topic in a similar way. However, there are also contradictions that the analysis pays attention to. Some artist may have emphasized some aspects more than others, while others left out certain aspects. Each interview situation is unique and the outcome depends on numbers of factor like how questions were asked etc. (my influence as a researcher) which I reflect more upon in a further step. It remains however true that although we can talk about things in numbers of ways, statements that are produced within a specific domain are rather similar and repetitive. (Jorgensen and Philip, 2002:13) In order to respond to the key research questions, I have divided the analytical framework in three main categories: 1. Personal change; 2. Community change and 3. National change. These categories constitute the motives of the interviewed artists to engage in art. In addition, an analysis is conducted from a 4. Audience and 5. Freedom of expression perspective, which are interlinked with the three previous categories and considered significant for the general discussion.

5.1.1 Personal change
The narratives from the artists indicates that Inema is not only about community engagement and creating visibility and income generating activities for marginalized groups. It is also about creating livelihood opportunities for oneself, i.e. the personal development. Unemployment or low salaries are in Rwanda a major obstacle for individuals in order to
create life opportunities for themselves and for their families. Inema uses art as a means to overcome this challenge. This possibly explains while most of the artists at Inema are relatives in one way or another. (As mentioned in section 2.1 artists in Rwanda have since earlier times developed and transmitted the skill within the family from one generation to the next.)

A common perspective among the practitioners is the chance they see in being innovative artists in today’s Rwanda. As a matter of fact, the modern art scene is not yet exploited in Rwanda and provides according to the artists potential prospects of growth: “I’m a young artist who started from nothing. Anyone with a driving force can do that and that only happens in countries where there are emerging markets. You don’t go to New York or Stockholm and start a business just like that.” (Artist 4). When I asked the same artist if he’s doing well as an artist he said: “Yes, it’s unbelievable. Look at me; I’m the happiest guy on the planet”. (Artist 4) Whereas all the artists confirm that they can live from art, there seems to be room for improvement though. Two of the artists I talked to have other professions beside, one is teaching art at an international school in Kigali and the other is working as an architect. The one that works as an architect during the week confirmed that he earns more on painting than architecture: “... all of a sudden I even found that I make more money from painting. When I sit down and calculate what I earn, painting out counts architecture”. (Artist 6) Actually, the narratives from the artists give an astonishing success story about self-taught artists who managed to sell a painting the next day: “Innocent and Emmanuel are my cousins. I remember one day I came and saw them painting and I was wondering what they were doing. I remember I tried to do one painting, that was in the beginning of 2013. I said, let me try to see if I can be an artist. I painted one and I sold it tomorrow. 100 USD was too much. After that I decided to see if I can get some more knowledge to be an artist”. (Artist 1) The making of art is thus important as an income generating activity for the individual artists themselves. However, art is also about identification, belonging and life style. Two words that frequently appear when the artists tell about themselves and their artistic work are passion and inspiration: “What I studied is very stressful; you always have to go to the field you know. But me as an artist I work when I have inspiration. If I don’t have inspiration I can’t work, you know. It means that art is very peaceful. Art is very good and art pays”. (Artist 1) Another artist stresses that “… artists do not just only wake up in the morning paint a painting and sell it in the afternoon. It’s something that comes from your heart” (Artist 3) One of the artists who came to Rwanda in 2011 describes how he struggled to find a place in his new home country and felt a sense of belonging when he encountered some of his fellow artists at Inema: “That’s where I met them. When I got there I saw this guys working, everyone was working.
“Yeah this is the kind of place I need”. (Artist 2) In addition, several of the artists stress the healing and stress reduction capacity of art, and how it has helped them improve their life not only in economic terms. This supports the notion (see sub section 3.1) of art’s potential to heal wounds but also to pave innovative ways forwards in violent torn areas. In sum, the findings reflect the artists’ individual/egoistical motivations behind engaging in art showing that art (also) is used as a vehicle for personal change.

5.1.2 Community change
Inema is built on the vision to give back to the community and to share the knowledge which has helped the artists at Inema to improve their life not only within the family but to the wider community. This is a fundamental cornerstone and integral part of Inema’s work. *Sharing* is thus a keyword. The findings reflect the notion of collective decision-making that address current problems confronting a particular group within that social body that characterizes socially engaged art (see sub section 3.2). I tried to understand where this idea comes from; why the artists at Inema engage themselves in community activities and why they not only focus on increasing their own talents? Although the answers I got were various, they stressed that sharing what you have, in this case an artistic talent, is important to them. This goes along with a profound wish to influence something bigger than yourself. On the one hand, these activities are important for Inema’s vision statement but, on the other hand, also to “sell art and be happy about myself (...) Van Gogh, Picasso, you heard about the selling stuff, but you have never seen the impact they had on the communities surrounding them”. (Artist 4) Another artists said: “I think artists are supposed to be useful to the society (...) you have to give back to the society that inspires you” (Artist 2). Income generating activities for widows and possibilities for disadvantaged children to go to school are concrete impacts of these activities: “The women, who are working at Inema, they are widows. Every week they get their money, to help their families and to help themselves. And the kids we’re working with is an orphans’ project. We teach them how to paint and we sell their paintings. We display their paintings and if we sell them the money goes back to them. We give them everything, the pencils, the colors, the canvas and the frames. (Artist 1) However, there are other noteworthy aspects too: “I believe kids just need to be happy. If art makes them happy, that’s enough”. (Artist 2) The same artist, who is less involved in these activities, stresses the responsibility that comes with it: “Before you start anything, you need to be clear that you take up any responsibility that comes up with it. I don’t want to take up all these responsibilities; I
already have responsibilities to help mum and my brothers.” (Artist 2) The collective aspects and responsibilities are prominent in the artists’ narratives, put in this way by one of the interviewed “Most of us here look after our families. We have extended families and our relatives rely on us. The fact that we can get something for our families is a big thing (...) We have many people behind us and we have to put something on the table, take them to hospital and that kind of things. It’s really development, trying to make our lives easier. Socially, we try to make connections with different people. If you want something, it’s easier to get it if you have many friends. We got so many friends here. The fact that other people are employed here means that you try to develop others as you try to develop yourself”. (Artist 5) I was wondering whether Inema is benefitting economically from these activities and whether it is profitable for the artists’ own individual career to be involved in these activities. No one explicitly said that this is the motive behind these activities, what Thompson refers to as another career-climbing maneuver (see sub section 3.2), but most of them did not deny that these activities have proven to be profitable for the center and for the individual artists. At the same time, as they provide visibility and livelihood opportunities for disfranchised groups in the community, their own work gets exposed to a wider range of people and may increase sell. Yet, the predominant motive behind these activities is again, put in another way: “We want to share our talent. We want to show them where we fish. We don’t want to give them fish but we want to show them where we get the fish from and how we get the fish out of there”. (Artist 5) It means that the individuals included in the activities have to perform in order to get something. In sum, the findings reflect the collaborative artists who engage in the convivial of the community.

5.1.3 National change
In a wider perspective, Inema’s engagement in the community is a significant element in their ambitious work to form a movement that increases the awareness and value of art nationwide. The kids whom they teach how to draw are part of this movement: “When we get a big voice, it’s going to be easier to make the industry grow”. (Artist 5) And the kids are represented as the next generation artists: “Especially, we focus on these young kids because in the end of the day they’re going to be the future. They are going to be these cool kids, thinking differently and being associated by their community as revolutionary, someone who does something else better”. (Artist 4) The artists moreover underline the need to promote art and creativity as important components in societal development and change processes nationwide in various
aspects. Words that reoccur are creative industry, business, clients and growth. Art is viewed as an industry, a valuable and unused source that has the potential to support Rwanda in achieving the UN Millennium Development Goals and its homemade Vision 2020: “you need to have a creative culture where people coming up with cool ideas, cool concepts, cool designs (...) if you have a society that has that driving force to be creative, it could be so much done.” (Artist 4) The artists stress that Rwanda has its own cool traditional art products. What is lacking is an innovative and creative culture that can take the society to another level. The so-called art industry is above all seen as significant for tourism, tax contribution, and for Rwanda’s marketing: “I think it’s important to produce something that is more representative of the contemporary time” (Artist 6) In the same spirit, Inema represents itself as a business: “We also have to pay taxes since it’s a business and not a NGO. We worked close with a few other institutions but getting funding from them for art programs is a ton of administrative work”. (Artist 4) Education is seen as a key channel to promote art in Rwanda: “We need to push it through the education system so it can reach all corners of the country” (Artist 5) It is evident that the artists get their inspiration from Rwanda and beyond. They have exposed themselves to influences from other ancient or contemporary artists and culture abroad, where the cultural value of art in society is more acknowledged or worked out, such as in Uganda, Western countries or international big companies like Nike and Adidas. Several artists mention the value of the statue of liberty in New York as a landmark for the city. To get Rwanda there, they see the necessity to incorporate the authorities in this work: “If it’s incorporated with the government, I feel it’s going to get bigger and stronger”. (Artist 5) Despite the challenges the artists are confronted with, they also underline the possibilities and fun to be a part of this growing creative industry. In addition, they highlight the potential of art in passing on messages to society. This is addressed further under the following last two categories. In sum, the findings reflect first and foremost today’s framing of arts and culture as the Creative Economy and its link to economic growth (see sub section 3.1).

5.1.4 Audience
The power of art practices to pass on a message depends on its audience, who is exposed to the message. If art wants to engage in society, the question of the audience becomes instrumental. In this area a major contradiction and challenge in Inema’s work is observed and is therefore discussed in a separate category. In fact, a vast majority of the people who visit the center and who are exposed to Inema’s art work are foreigners, tourists or the expat
community: “In China I have clients, from South Korea I have clients, from U.S., from Sweden. My paintings are all over the world. The clients I have they are abroad.” (Artist 1) This corresponds to Bishop’s criticism against socially engaged art that even if the art engages with real people in the community, it is produced for and consumed by a middle-class audience and wealthy collectors, and represents thus as such an elite culture. In consequence, it risks reinforcing representations of the privileged and unprivileged in society (see sub section 3.2). Although the center is open to anyone, and they would appreciate if more Rwandan came to visit the center and their exhibitions, all artists admit that their clients are emanating from the international community. Limited access to public places frequented by local people, be it museums, schools or market places, prevents on the other hand Inema from making their art work more accessible to their fellow countrymen and women. The artists are aware of this challenge and would like to see a change in Rwanda: “There are no museums, and the art they are interested in is not the art we do. Hopefully, as time goes by... we can’t get there before the government appreciates art”. (Artist 2) Equally, Inema present itself as a business and has to know where the market and potential clients are: “I need to have my programs running, I never fundraise for my programs. I have to create new markets. (Artist 4) To be in places where their art works are appreciated is thus central for the artists’ individual art production: “I want to see my paintings in good places. I don’t want to see my paintings in bars where they are not appreciated. I want to reach good clients, who appreciate and respect what I’m doing. I want my paintings to be in good and positive places”. (Artist 1) Their ambition knows no borders and, like any business, they want to extend: “I’d love to do a painting at someone’s school, for the kids to know the message. Or make a painting for a commission for the bank or a ministry, hotels. I’d like to have gallery exhibitions maybe in Sweden, anywhere”. (Artist 2) One artist emphasizes that it is a matter of the essence of the message: “If I want to talk about something here for the Rwandan people I wouldn’t like them to be in the U.S. I’d like them to stay here because this is the right place “. (Artist 5) The general impression I have is that the artists have big and global ambition for themselves and the future: “As I told you I’ve been inspired by guys like Michelangelo, Anthony... Sometimes I think I’m crazy to try to get in here. Other times I always remember who have managed to do it with passion and hard work. Who knows? It’s a long way to go”. (Artist 6) The vision for Inema is to continue to grow as the creative hub in Kigali, open to all who wish to explore the creativity of art. In sum, the findings reflect the dualism between the privileged and needy community and the active and passive viewer, but also the artist’s personal aspirations.
5.1.5 Freedom of expression

As a last theme, framed by the Rwandan social and political context (see sub section 2.), I consider it significant to address the question of freedom of expression. During the interviews I asked the artists if they feel that they can express themselves freely in their artistic work. In most cases I felt that the respondents conceived the question differently than I did, i.e. they did not relate it to politically sensitive issues in the same way. Thus I realized I needed to be more specific. The answers I got support my preconceived assumption that the artists at Inema do not have any intention to address political sensitive issues in their art work. This can sometimes be explained by disinterest and in other cases by the awareness about the limitations provided by the Rwandan context: “There are some issues I’d wish to talk about, to paint and work on, but I kind of put that aside because of… you know, we need to learn. As artists we’re still learning. As artists you need to know your constitution, what is required of you, you just can’t do it. It’s better to preserve yourself until you learn”. (Artists 2) Some artists expressed furthermore that it would be contra productive for their work: “I think I can do positive messages but questioning provocative things I don’t think is good. If I’m political then I’m not an artist. Because I’ve seen a few artists being political and they don’t really do well. I’m comfortable with what I do so I don’t want to go beyond the boundaries. Or question things that should not be questioned”. (Artist 4) I interpret the answers as Inema’s being or not being is directly related to the Rwandan authorities’ appreciation and that the artists are well aware of that. The feeling of freedom is certainly individual and subjective. The findings indicate on the other hand that in most cases the artists do feel free in their artistic expressions due to the circumstances that their interest is not in addressing politically sensitive issues. However, in one artist’s words: “I don’t think I can be limited, I can use signs etc. There are many other forms of expressions”. (Artist 2) Either way, the artists have in art found a powerful tool to pass on messages to people, be it beauty, happiness, environmental or other social issues. Each artist has developed his or her own unique style for doing so. Furthermore, art is conceived as a silent language that can speak for itself and without the constraints that linguistic languages have: “I could use English and some people won’t get to understand what I’m saying. But if I make a painting they easily learn” (Artist 2). Some express a need to expose the Rwandan people to positive messages: “I think there’s need to move forward with different things of expressing oneself with intensive, positive messages like the president usually says. You can heal yourself by believing that something good is happening with you. Not something bad, that the whole world is against you”. (Artist 4) In sum, the artists at Inema there seem to be well aware of the limits of the topics to be
addressed. As a consequence, self-censorship may also be applied – to a certain extent – in the art scene. In few cases there seem to be a certain willingness to modestly push the limits or communicate positive message. For others, art is apolitical, i.e. art for art.

5.2 Findings secondary approach
The purpose of the findings from the secondary approach is to give a complementary perspective to the findings from the first approach, the interviews, on Inema’s activities. In contrast to the primary approach this approach gives the institutional perspective, i.e. how Inema presents itself to the public. The main focus of the video is on Inema’s engagement with the community. For that reason, I chose below to address how the five core activities included in the video are presented. In separated analytical sections below, which are however not isolated from each other, I assess the meaning they communicate. The activities include: 1. Art Jam; 2. Inema dancers; 3. Art with a mission; 4. Nziza Artworks and 5. Yega Yoga. I focus on concepts which are off significance to the research question and the overall discussion. Each section starts with a diegesis (summary of the scenes’ denotive signs, i.e. what we see and hear) before addressing their connotive signs (meaning). The film sequences are accompanied by the voice and presence of the co-founder Emmanuel Nkuranga who is presenting Inema and its activities along with the moving images, which adds complementary meaning to the images. The up-tempo music, fast sequences and bright atmosphere provide a rather dynamic and modern impression.

5.2.1 Art Jam
Diegesis: The viewer is informed that the activity Art Jam is dedicated to Kigali community and people around Rwanda. It happens every last weekend of the month through the whole year. The purpose is to bring people together, shape creativity and use imagination. There are sequences of still images of people who are participating in the Art Jam. In the first image, we see two of the Inema artists together with four people with white skin color, two young men and two young women. They are holding pencils and colors. In the background, there is a colorful painting. The second image shows a girl with dark skin color in front of a canvas holding on to a color pallet and a pensile. She seems to concentrate on what she is doing. The third image shows three western looking girls next to a painting. The forth image shows a group of young people of mixed sexes and skin colors dressed in a modern style. They appear to be an audience, looking at something in front of them. The fifth image is a part of a colorful
abstract painting and a white skinned hand holding a pensile. The sixth and last image represents a white skinned girl with long open blond hair playing with fire. All images are outside in the garden, in evening light. All people look happy and seem to have a good time.

**Connotive signs:** First of all, the objects in form of colors, pencils and canvas are signs that symbolize creativity and imagination, they are thus *symbols*. That is an arbitrary sign in which the signifier has no direct relationship to the signifier but rather represents it through conventions. (Rose, 2012:120, Monaco, 2013) The happy expressions of the people who are represented in the images and the setting (the happening take place outdoors in the evening light) associate it additionally with feelings of happiness and pleasure. The images contest the outdated stereotype that people from the global North help or assist people from the global South in achieving something. These images, especially the first one, communicates reversed roles and contest therefore social inequalities in this sense. It contest what Hall (2013:2016) calls “negative images and transform representation practice around “race” in a more positive direction”. In a further perspective, it may connote home grown development, something that comes from South. However, the activity that is represented is related to pleasure and not primary as an income generating activity in order to improve lives, like in the other community activities. Consequently, one might guess that people who are already privileged (independent of the skin color) attend this activity. It reinforces thus the stereotyped picture of art being reserved for privileged and well educated people (see sub section 3.2). Despite Art Jams’ out spoken dedication to Kigali community and people around Rwanda, it seems to attract a narrow crowd of people, who not necessarily represent the average Rwandan men or women as also discussed in previous section about Inema’s audience. Only the image of the young girl stands out in this case, i.e. *paradigmatic sign*. There is thus a contradiction between the information given by the voice and the meaning the images communicate. However, the image of people from different backgrounds, who are actively doing something together, connote art with group dynamic as well as collectivity and support the purpose of Art Jam.

### 5.2.2. Inema dancers

**Diegesis:** The viewer is informed that *Inema dancers* is a program addressed to young children to be trained in traditional Rwandan dance as a means to continue live and appreciate Rwandan culture. The classes take place at Inema three times a week. We see groups of
children and teenagers, with dark skin color and of mixed sex performing dance, songs and drums outdoors at the center. Notably, one girl is wearing a green T-shirt with a portrait of the Rwandan president. The crowd of people is casually dressed and looks happy. An older man is teaching the younger ones. Towards the end of the episode, there is a close up picture from behind of a small child sitting on the ground with his/her face turned to the group of people performing in the background. It is a bottom up perspective, i.e. the camera angel is from below.

*Connotive signs:* The performance, in form of traditional Rwandan dance, songs and drums suggests tradition and indigenous culture. On the one hand, this can be interpreted as backwardness and reluctance to move forward which stands in contrast to modernity. On the other hand, it can be conceived as a value of locally rooted traditions and a will to keep those alive and incorporate those in contemporary art practices (see sub section 2.1). The performance is symbolizes Rwandan identity. In a way, the images connote ideas of *Negritude*, a way to deal with their own local culture in their modern projects (see sub chapter 3.2). The people who are presented in the moving images are presented in a powerful and positive manner - they are performing together and are part of a collective and dynamic context. The small child is also part of this collectivity since the other people are visible in the background. In contrast, a negative image often portrays people as helpless, passive and removed from the context. (Dogra, 2012:34) This child may connote the future, and is therefore a symbol for the next generation (artists). Moreover, the camera angel from below suggests power and self-confidence. The sequence of the older man teaching the younger is furthermore a symbol for knowledge sharing between generations and to the wider community. Finally, the visible portrait of the president on one of the T-shirts connotes the presence of the public authority in the Rwandan society (see sub chapter 2.), this particular sign is in this view *synecdochal*, i.e. it represents a part of something.

5.2.3 *Art with a mission*

*Diegesis:* The viewer is informed that *Art with a mission* is a program targeting vulnerable kids. It trains young children how to become skilled and successful artists. The activities take place in the neighborhood of Gikondo (area of Kigali) and in centers such as SOS. The program helps kids to be creative, imaginative and to use art as a life surviving skill and as a medium for them to fulfill their potential. There is a large group of kids and teenagers
painting together on a big paper sheet on the ground. The Inema’s co-founder Innocent Nkurunziza is visible around the kids. In the background, a typical Rwandan house is shown indicating that the happening takes place in the neighborhood outside Inema. In a later sequence, we see a landscape view over one of Kigali’s green hills which is covered with houses before moving back to the group of people again. All people are active and concentrate on what they are doing, not looking into the camera. In the end, we see some completed paintings. All people have black skin color except a white skinned woman who seems to observe the activity.

**Connotive signs:** Similar to the previous discussion, the kids and teenagers are represented as active and part of a larger context conveying a positive image. They do not look needy into the camera. The shape of the house in the background and the setting suggest however that the activity takes place in a disadvantaged surrounding. The views of the hill and the neighborhood are *synecdochal* signs for the community and symbolize the engagement of Inema in activities outside the center. The presence of Nkurunziza connotes knowledge sharing or passing on artistic skills to the younger generation. The completed paintings are *symbols* for productivity and products that can generate income to, for example, cover school fees. In short, Inema represents its engagement in the community and the colors and other painting material are *symbols* for creativity and imagination that can bring the community alive. The white woman stands in contrast with the other group of people, i.e. *paradigmatic* sign. She is not participating but observing. This suggests that she is someone coming from outside, someone who is interested in what they are doing. There is a distance between her and the other people. This connotes the dualism between active and passive viewer which may assume that “poor” only can engage physically, while the middle classes have the leisure to think and critically reflect. (Bishop, 2012:794) On the other hand, it reflects openness towards others and inclusiveness, which mirror how signs can connote different meanings.

### 5.2.4 Nziza Artworks

**Diegesis:** The viewer is informed that Inema arranges the program *Nziza Artwork* for women with limited recourses teaching how to use art as an income generating activity. They are trained in scissors and other hand craft work. Their products are sold in the shop at Inema. The products help them to generate income and Inema pays the women a salary every week. First we see Nkurunziza, the founder of the program, in action working on one of his own
paintings. He is alone. The next image shows close up pictures of women who are actively producing art work inside the sawing studio, using traditional sawing machines. Most of them are dressed in colorful and traditional clothing. One sequence reveals the red polish nails of one of the women. One of the women has a child on her lap. Towards the end, some of their finished products are presented. There is a mobile phone on a table among the art products.

**Connotive signs:** Traditionally, women are the most disadvantaged group in developing countries and constitute the poorest at the bottom of society, in sharp contrast to the political and economical elite. Especially women in global South have often been represented as passive, isolated, traditional, vulnerable and nourishing mothers and have therefore been linked to deserving “Third World Women”. (Dogra, 2012:39). As these women are part of this program, the women are undeniably associated with vulnerability. However, they are portrayed in a positive manner differing from the traditional representation already discussed previously. Their activity connotes power and self-reliance and portrays women as productive economic actors. They are able to generate income for themselves. The visibility of the child on one of the woman’s lap brings us somehow back to reality: Women remain the main responsible for home and constitute the backbone of the family (even when they work), especially in the global South. The red nails connote female hood as well as dignity, so does the colorful clothing. The representation of Nkurunziza decontextualises him from the women who are represented collectively and connotes hence the individual artistic carrier of Nkurunziza apart of the women program. On the one hand, this connotes difference between masculinity and femininity, and on the other hand it represents the circumstance that the (visual) art scene in Rwanda is dominated by men. The presence of the mobile phone along the traditional sawing machines may be a symbol of the melting pot of modernity and traditions.

**5.2.5 Yego Yoga**

*Diegesis:* The viewer is informed that Inema partners with *Yego Yoga* to give room for people who love yoga to practice it at the center. It happens twice a week. We see a group of people practicing yoga indoors, all are women and have white skin color. They are dressed in a relaxed way, in solid workout cloths. Art works are hanging on the walls and there is candle light.
Connotive signs: The representation of this last activity stands in contrast to the previous and surrounding representations, i.e. the syntagmatic signs. Similar to Art Jam, the activity of Yoga suggests relaxation as well as pleasure and is not associated with income generating activities like in the women’s and children’s program. The candle light reinforces this impression. The fact that all people represented are white and Western looking indicates that yoga remains an activity for privileged people from the global North. The moving images reinforce thus the differences between groups of people and contemporary myths that reflect the interest of power and work to legitimate social inequalities. It connotes thus the dualism between privileged and needy community (see sub section 3.2). The contrast between the western looking women in relaxed yoga dress and the local working women in colorful clothing in the previous scene adds to this notion. Despite this, the activity of yoga symbolizes inclusiveness and openness to incorporate various activities at the center and can be read as a response to expatriates’ needs.

5.3 Reflections
Before moving to the general conclusion and answering the key research questions, it is indicated in a separated section to reflect on my own position as a researcher. First of all, carrying out an analysis requires some sort of critical reflection on your own research practice. This is especially true for an analysis like this, which is to a large extent based on interpretations. Obviously, my analysis is one among other possible understandings. I have been living in the Rwandan capital Kigali for nearly four years. Without that experience, I would have been unlikely to have picked this particular research topic in a first place. My experience from Rwanda has furthermore informed my understanding of the research topic and helped me to relate it to a wider political, social and cultural context. Not only has my experience from Rwanda informed my understanding of the research topic, but also my experience of being a ComDev student, the framing of this research and in short my personal “cultural luggage”. It is vital to emphasize that, as a researcher, you are investigating experiences of others. At the same time, you are as a researcher an experiencing subject as well. In research, experiences are used to develop knowledge about our lives and the lives of others, in other places, times and circumstances. Although the positive value often added to experience, it is never objective, pure and transparent. The specific experiences we have are always in some degree different and individual to us, as are the ways we derive meaning and
connotation from experience. (Pickering, 2008:18f) Admitting your own subjectivity, which is
the purpose of this section, allows probably best to try to be as objective as possible.

There are different levels of interpretations and multiple narratives going on in parallel. There
are the interpretations of the social world by the artists at Inema, my interpretation of their
narratives, the video maker’s interpretation of Inema’s activities, my interpretations of the
video and finally the readers’ interpretations of this study and so on and so forth. Moreover,
researchers have the power to modify, simplify, select and interpret the research data.
Therefore we deal with representations and interpretations. (Holly and Jeffersson, 2000:5)
What is told, is selected because it is understood as having a meaningful place within the
current research. There is no narrative that can tell everything. (Pickering, 2008:34) However,
my aim has been to be as transparent as possible in my discussion so that my conclusion
allows a logical understanding and increases the reliability of the study.

Being a white woman from Western Europe has distanced me from the research object. This
possible advantage allows you to discover particular discourses when you are not part of the
particular culture of your study. When working with a discourse close to oneself, it is
particularly difficult to treat them as discourses since a lot of things are taken for granted and
common sense. (Jorgensen and Philips, 2002:22) The same circumstance has also allowed me
to ask certain questions that otherwise perhaps would not have been asked by a local
researcher. Being a foreigner might therefore bring the advantage of being able to ask
somehow “naive” questions. At the same time, it is important not to disqualify yourself by
breaking some cultural unwritten rules. This act of balance was a challenge during the
conduction of the interviews, especially regarding questions of politically sensitive nature. As
a researcher, you are on the territory of the other and depend on his or her hospitality and
cooperation. However, the aim is never to advocate for the object of your study’s interests. It
is true, investigating on social subjects may produce conflicting interest between participants’
integrity and the wider purpose of the research. It is therefore vital to find the right balance
between pursuing the research goal and remaining humble in the situation.
The limited time frame for this research obliged me furthermore to be selective and neglect certain potentially interesting aspects which have occurred during the process of this study. At the same time, it has been an explorative journey for me and I gained new understandings along the way, which has constantly required me to go back and reflect and adjust the content of this paper. It is however true that my different cultural background may have made me oversee or misinterpreted certain aspects of the data. My findings reflect thus my interpretations of how Inema perceives its role as an actor for social change in contemporary Rwanda and how it uses art to fuel development. Since the study includes one case study the findings are limited to Inema and cannot be used to make generalizing assumptions about other art centers’ and practitioners’ activities in Rwanda.

I consider the two methodological approaches applied in this study as useful in order to answer the key research questions and to explore Inema as a cultural actor. Whereas the analysis of the video’s discusses the core activities at Inema and their wider social significance, the analysis of the narratives from the artists reveal the wider spectrum of Inema and the individual artists’ ambitions and visions which is not represented by the video. Therefore, the two approaches have been complementary and added to a wider understanding of Inema.

6. Conclusion
The result from this study indicates that Inema uses art to engage in society in numerous of ways. First of all, Inema engages in society predominantly through their community activities rather than through the actual content of their art work. Yet, the analysis has revealed that there is an awareness and will among the artists to expose Rwanda to different kind of messages and through that contribute to social change in some ways. The individual artists have developed their individual style and there is no common characteristic among the themes. However, many local and traditional themes such as animals, nature, and village life and market places are to be found among the paintings. Some of the artists work with abstracts or recycle things like plastic bottles and cars to create art work with environmental messages. The findings show that Inema suggests that art can trigger social change at different levels; namely personal, family, community and national. In addition to engagement in the community, art is perceived as a tool to produce livelihood for oneself and contribute to the productive means of the wider society. In addition, in a conflict affected country like Rwanda,
the artists believe they can contribute to healing and reconciliation by for example exposing the country to positive messages. On a community level, art is promoted as an income generating activity but also something that can bring joy and happiness.

The study has explored how language can be an indicator of social change. According to this perspective, discursive change takes place by creative language use and when elements are articulated in new ways. Given that a modern and innovative art scene is growing in Rwanda, especially in the capital city Kigali, my study suggests that social change de facto is taking place. Artists such as at Inema contribute therefore to the formation of a new cultural discursive practice in Rwanda. However, Inema’s practice is not necessarily opposed to Rwanda’s official interest. These artists can rather be understood as forerunners of this social transformation and of the creation of a new cultural discourse. This discourse is concerned to incorporate the dimension of innovation and modernity with the dimension of tradition. The artists at Inema are not only inviting the cooperation with the Rwandan authorities but also view it as necessity in order to promote the value of art in the Rwandan society. In result, their ambition is not to address issues of political sensitive nature or challenge power as such. As Fairclough (1992:12) argues the actions of social actors are conditioned and constrained by existing structures on the one hand, on the other hand social change take place through interconnection between existing structures and the strategies of social actors to sustain or transform structures. The key point he wants to make is that lasting social change to take place is the consequence of a change between institutions and the “real world”, which ties economy, governance and culture together in new ways. (Ibid:27) For that reason, this study concludes that social actors such as Inema contribute to the transformation of cultural structures in contemporary Rwanda. Art produced (partly) within established power may therefore have a potential to be transformative. As noted in the analysis, Inema is faced with the challenge to extend its audience further beyond the international community in order to succeed with its ambition to contribute to a cultural transformation. Moreover, Inema communicates with the public in English which is not the language of the average Rwandan men or women. Many do not have access to new information technology that Inema to a large degree uses for communication. On the other hand, Inema is also about pursuing its own interest to make an artistic career and living. The individual motivations behind doing arts are various.
Beside the artists’ individual careers, Inema develops projects by promoting collaboration with individuals and communities, creating thus participatory art that exists in and outside the center. Through engagement in the local community the artist try to better life of individuals and community. Their activities raise furthermore the consciousness of economically challenged communities and marginalized groups. They target women and children who are often disadvantaged in a development context. Art is represented as a means for empowerment in terms of income generation but also as a means to bring life to community through creativity.

To conclude, Inema is a homegrown initiative addressing development issues. Inema sees its role in educating people allowing them to see things differently. Inema’s mission is to communicate the role and potential of art as an income bringing activity to the community, but also as a contributor to the productive means to the wider Rwandan society. This is how artists can contribute to social change processes in contemporary Rwanda and help building up the country. The future of this initiative to create a new innovative art scene in Rwanda is however dependent upon the establishment of a free and pluralist society in particular and on the socio-political development of the fragile surrounding context in general.

6.1 Further research opportunities
During the progress of this project, I came across a relatively new initiative called Kurema. It is an initiative launched in 2014 by a network of Rwandan artist using visual and public arts as tools for sharing stories, building relationships and transforming opinions and ideas in collaboration with civil society, governmental institutions and local business. (kuremarwanda.com, 2015) The aim of one of their recent participatory projects is to raise awareness of HIV and fight against AIDS related stigmas by colorful mural making and public mirrors at different public location around and outside Kigali. The fact that the Rwandan governmental institutions are showing a certain willingness to open up public spaces to art initiative in order to create public dialogs around certain issues points in an exciting direction. Moreover, “creativity” and “cultural industry” are de facto buzzwords in contemporary Rwanda across a variety of development actors. For example has the Swedish Development Agency SIDA launched a new programme which seeks to boost the creative industry in Rwanda through joint cooperation between the two countries. (The New Times,
2015) This tendency within the Rwanda’s creative sector can provide an appealing context for further researches related to art and how artist can contribute to social change processes in the Rwandan society.
The Inema Art Center

Photo credit: Zandra Persson, 2015
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Annex

Interview questions

1. How do you describe your art?

2. Where do you get inspiration?

3. Can you tell me how you became an artist?

4. What have you done before, other professions?

5. Can you tell me how you became an artist at Inema Art Center?

6. How would you describe the art scene in Rwanda today?

7. Can you explain to me why Rwanda needs artists?

8. What is your experience of being an artist in Rwanda today? Difficulties? Possibilities?

9. As an artist do you feel that you can express yourself freely in your art work?

10. How do you describe your audience?

11. What kind of audience would you like to reach?

12. Where do you want your art to be shown?

13. Do you have a particular purpose with your art? Anything you want to influence?

14. Inema artists are combining individual artistic work with community engagement? How did this idea com up? What does this mean for you as an artist?

15. In your opinion, how can art improve people’s life? How do you use art for this purpose?

16. Do you have a vision for the future, for you and for Inema?

17. Finally, how come that the art scene in Rwanda is dominated by men? You are all men at Inema?