

Common Life: Collectivity, social and ecosystemic sustainability in the creative and philosophical practices of arts initiatives in Africa

Within the broad spectrum of social change oriented artistic practice on the African continent, there is a substantial collective engaging their creative practice toward reimaginings of common life. For these practitioners there is a complex navigation of how creative practice plays a role in creating better socialites, shared ways of living and collective interdependence. Much of this practice is deeply context specific and addresses local challenges to societal and ecosystemic sustainability in ways that enable dignity, subsistence, respect for traditions as well as future oriented strategies for good living. In many ways these practices respond to the deep impacts of colonialism, racism, extractivist economies and the long term damage of structural adjustment policies and corruption that has decimated good living across the african continent.

The Common Life project is an action research project that looks to collate case studies on the emerging threads of thought and practice on collectivity and social and economic sustainability in African arts initiatives. The research will run for 6 months and looks to pair researchers with arts initiatives in 5 sites across the African continent. The research is intended to work collaboratively between each researcher and initiative, engaging both with the research interests of the research and those of the initiative. The research is also intended to work towards the development of a collective publication of the case studies, and a series of practical, useable tools that emerge from the practices and knowledges of these collectives.

The intention of the research is to better frame the kinds of approaches artists are taking to engage and address our burning global issues in systemic and tangible ways. Kher Thiossane's Jardin Jet D'eau and School of Commons in Dakar, Senegal, or Kino Kadre's deeply non-hierarchical and self determined frames of political creative practice in Cape Town, South Africa are two examples of such case studies. These present examples of extended practices of arts initiatives that are committed to praxis and intellectual framing of how to live together, and to address the urgencies of social justice and good living in our contexts.