

An ethnography of young creatives in  
Itsoseng township: Exploring the relationship  
between creative arts and non-standard  
employment in South Africa

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## Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to Itsoseng creatives. Not only did they teach me a lot about a life of a creative in an under-resourced township, but they also helped me realise my purpose in life.



Illustration Image of some of the Itsoseng creatives by Calmazoz

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## Abstract

This research project is based on four months of ethnographic fieldwork participation which I did among Itsoseng young creatives. In this thesis I explore and bring about understanding on themes of non-standard employment and creative arts among South African youth in Itsoseng Township, North-West Province, South Africa. In so doing, I show the relationship between non-standard employment and self-identified 'young creatives' in peri-urban South Africa by looking into ways which these 'young creatives' living in Itsoseng township make means to survive or get by in their day-to-day navigation of the unpleasant realities of South Africa's high youth unemployment rate. According to Ross (2010:272) South Africa has attempted to address apartheid legacies within a neo-liberal capitalist matrix, but its consequences have been problematic, and its successes limited. These young creatives, similarly to the shack dwellers that Ross describes, have fought on for their survival in a township where the struggles of the poor are experienced daily (Ross, 2010:272). Through exploring the notion of '*Ukuphanta*' (surviving or getting by) described by Motsemme (2011), I explored the creative arts gigs that these township young creatives work in and with, which bring about cash injection in their lives. I also discuss the stress and precarity that comes with being a young creative in Itsoseng township and I develop the locally used term 'to atchaar' to explain how young creatives in this research project manoeuvre around that. Additionally, discussions around the notion of world-making (Cox, 2022) and care (Van Dooren, 2014) to explain complex family relations and fictive kinship are explored in this thesis.

**Keywords:** Young creatives, non-standard employment, ukuphanta, creative arts, Itsoseng township, South Africa, world-making, care

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## Introduction

South African youth<sup>1</sup> (15-34 years) are the most vulnerable in the South African labour market as the unemployment rate in second quarter of 2022 among this age group was 46.5 percent, with approximately 32.6 percent being university graduates (15-24 years), during the first quarter of 2022, and it is arguable that factors around higher education plays a role in the matter (Department of Statistics South Africa, 2022). Although unemployment is a challenge to South African youth, young creatives<sup>2</sup> - understood as those working in South Africa's numerous creative arts industries - beget new cultural trends as they move from project to project.

This group of 'digital natives' - native speakers of the digital language of computers, video games and the internet (Prensky, 2001:1) use the internet to steer their interests, and they code-switch fluently between formal and informal knowledge, between online and off-line relationships where email, the internet, cell phones and instant messaging are integral parts of their lives (Canclini, 2017:III; Prensky, 2001:1).

In South African townships<sup>3</sup> young people are turning the struggles associated with unemployment into inspiration and make pockets of what Anna Tsing calls 'liveability' in their townships (Tsing, 2015:6). This research study explores how this liveability is made by a group of self-identified 'young creatives' in Itsoseng township, North-West Province, South Africa through a four-month ethnographic study.

The question of how different generational expectations of work and careers manifest in the decision-making process of self-identified young creatives in Itsoseng township is carefully explored by looking at the daily activities of young creatives and how they use the skills they have in creative arts to generate income and look after themselves and their families financially. Although there has been research done on Hip-Hop identity (Becker & Dastile, 2008) and decolonized practices of language digitization in Hip-Hop culture among the contemporary youth of South Africa, there are no studies that look into the creative arts as a whole and how having the skill/talent aid young creatives to deal with high rates of unemployment in South Africa.

This research study reveals that support, loyalty, and commitment towards shared objectives regarding making life and livelihood in the creative arts and entertainment industry in Itsoseng township, North-West Province, are the key aspects which bring about inspiration and hope among the young creatives in this research study, who are making means to survive the skyrocketing unemployment rate and the pressures that comes with it in an under resourced, yet talent filled, townships in South Africa.

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<sup>1</sup> Youth are people aged between 15-34 years in South Africa, and for the purpose of this research study I worked with young people above the age of 18 years old.

<sup>2</sup> Young creatives are young artists, designers, media makers, techies, educators, civil leaders, social entrepreneurs, and political activists who are building a new innovation economy in the face of unprecedented social, technological, and economic change (Watkins, 2019:4)

<sup>3</sup> Township is a residential area occupied predominantly by black South Africans which the apartheid legislation officially designated for black occupation. It is also referred to as Kasi in Itsoseng, and other townships in South Africa may refer to their area as lokasi/location.

Atchaar<sup>4</sup> and art addiction<sup>5</sup> are the two important conceptual cornerstones of this thesis. Through these concepts, discussions of the lived experiences of young creatives who are “hustling”, as the phrase means the same as ‘Ukuphanta’ (Motsemme, 2011:106), through their different talents and/or skills in townships unfolds. Setswana as a linguistic factor, alongside symbolic practices such as the nature of art in creation, networking with other local art creators and supporting fellow creative artists, especially within art genres which have more similarities than differences, serves as the basis for cultural capital locally. Cultural capital is the concept (Bourdieu, 1973) uses to explain skills that one can access to demonstrate one’s cultural competence and social status.

In addition to other concepts that will be used as part of this research project, “Non-standard employment” will be used to refer to casual *gigs*<sup>6</sup> and part-time and/or temporary contract work in creative arts that the young creatives get irregularly, which bring about cash injection in their lives. According to Sengenberger (2011:50) the exact statistical characterisation of forms of non-standard employment differs from one country to the next and this study will provide ethnographic detail for the case of Itsoseng. “Young creatives” on the other hand, will be used to refer to youth that partakes in creative arts and talent-based activities as a career path and/or means of survival.

The main objective of this thesis is to give ethnographic analysis of the ways in which young creatives in Itsoseng townships make means of survival through the notion of ‘atchaar’ via casual gigs and/or temporary contracts while some have financial responsibilities towards others; or are facing other serious financial challenges. Art addiction serves as an explanation for the hope and passion that the young creatives show when creating and performing different art forms.

This thesis comprises of five chapters where the themes of non-standard employment and creative arts among South African youth in Itsoseng Township, North-West Province are unpacked. Additionally, my lived experiences regarding Ukuphanta/go gereza (surviving/getting by, which I will explain later in the thesis) form part of this thesis.

Furthermore, I added maps of Itsoseng and the urban background right after the introduction section to give imaginative perspective of the field of my research to the reader. Chapter One is where I discuss the methodology and ethics of doing ethnographic fieldwork in Itsoseng, along with a thorough explanation of participation observation and how I implemented it in this study, looking into different settings and times I met up with the creatives and spent time doing what anthropologists call participation observation (Bernard, 2006:342).

In Chapter Two I bring the reader’s attention to ways in which young creatives in Itsoseng make life and livelihood through their different crafts. Chapter Three focuses on how young creatives in Itsoseng manoeuvre around the local creative arts and entertainment space and the uncertainty that comes with making a living under challenging and stressful circumstances in a township that has minimum tools and resources at the young creatives’ disposal. The chapter also explores aspects of healing through, in, and with creative arts.

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<sup>4</sup> Atchaar/Atchar is known as a South Asian pickled food made from various vegetables and fruit, preserved in edible oils along with various Indian spices. However, in Itsoseng, atchaar is a popular word amongst young creatives, used in place for doing, maneuvering, and taking action – the word is basically used in any way that makes sense in a sentence

<sup>5</sup> Art addition the state of constantly in need to create or do art even when it does not yield any positive outcomes for the creator and/or their loved ones

<sup>6</sup> Gig is a slang word for a job undertaken by creatives in this case which lasts for a specified period, normally a short-term contract

Chapter Four looks at support through family making and collaborations among young creatives in Itsoseng and giving back to the community. The final chapter is a chapter that concludes and summarises the argument of the thesis.

## Itsoseng Township: Home for my research study

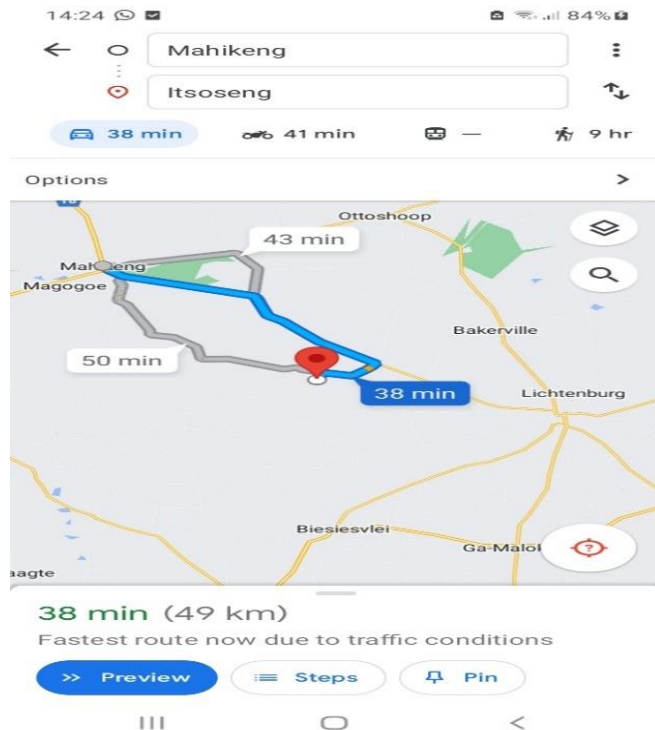


Figure 1: Screenshot of the drive from Itsoseng to Mahikeng from google maps

Itsoseng is a township between Mahikeng and Lichtenburg as shown by the map on figure 2. Due to the popularity of creative arts and entertainment that Itsoseng and Mahikeng share, I use Mahikeng (which is the motherland and point of reference used by creatives outside of the North-West Province to locate creatives from small towns in and around Mahikeng and nearby townships) to guide the audience to my fieldwork place. Although Lichtenburg and Itsoseng fall under the same municipality (Ditsobotla Local Municipality), traces of art dominating in the city varies from that in Itsoseng and its relevance is very little to this study.

On the way out from Mahikeng to Itsoseng, there are three routes the local transportation use. One passes through the Matshepe Village, heading to Bodibe Village then into Itsoseng, the second one passes through Letlhakane Village, heading to Bethel, then Bodibe Village, and into Itsoseng. The last one passes through Rooigrond, heading to Shiela Village (Thusong Hospital) then into Itsoseng. People from the above-mentioned villages and Itsoseng tend to be mistaken for originally coming from Mahikeng due to the proximity between the places and the complexity that comes with explaining the exact location of the places themselves. Additionally, Mmabana Arts, Culture, and Sports Foundation in Mahikeng birthed young talented artists from Mahikeng and nearby townships and villages who stand to represent the Ngaka Modiri Molema District well outside North-West Province.

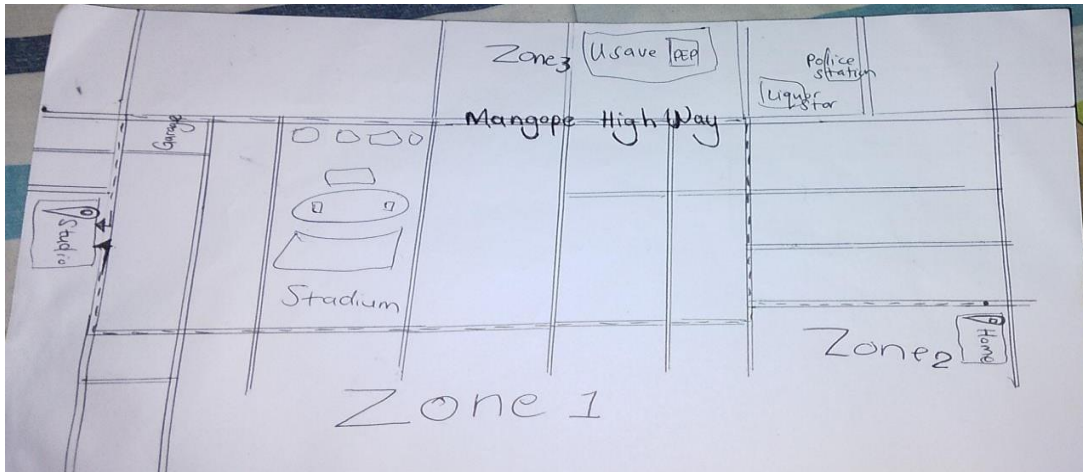


Figure 2: Itsoseng social map by the author.

When one googles the Itsoseng, it states that it is known as *Mooi Doornie*, an Afrikaans phrase which translate to *beautiful town* in English, because Itsoseng used to be a beautiful small town under Bophuthatswana before 1994. Bophuthatswana was a Bantustan that was declared independent by the apartheid regime of South Africa in 1977. However, its independence was not recognised by any country other than South Africa.

The residents then converted the name to Setswana word *Tlebebe* which means luxury. Both these names were suitable for Itsoseng as it was a beautiful place with good services provided by its administration structures, which also looked out for Itsoseng's neighbouring villages such as Bodibe, Verdwaal, Shila, Springbokpan, Matile, and Uitkyk.

Currently, these names contradict how the place looks like because the roads are ruined (the tar roads have huge potholes), some of the schools, just like what used to be a shopping complex, are now just forsaken buildings with no roofing, missing bricks, grass and weeds growing in those spaces, and the residents have turned them into illegal dumping sites. Additionally, service delivery is as bad as the smell of sewage that catches one by surprise, especially during and after rainy days, around the taxi rank area.

Although I was initially conflicted as to refer to Itsoseng as a small town or a township, I refer to it as a township because the residents in this place describe it and call it *Kasi* due to it being a residential place that was reserved for non-whites during Apartheid.

Itsoseng is divided into zone 1, zone 2, zone 2 extension and zone 3. The only street name we have in Itsoseng is the Mangope Highway which separates zone 3 from zones 1, 2 and 2 extension, other streets do not have formal names. Zone 3 is where most of the middle-class black residents of the township resides.

All the houses in zone 3 were initially four-roomed houses with a kitchen, a living room, a bedroom and a bathroom. All the houses in zone 1 and zone 2 were initially two-roomed houses (which the local residents refer to as *dikepese*, meaning cap-like houses) with one

side of the house built with bricks and the other side of the house built with zinc material (the residents can make whichever room a kitchen and the other one a bedroom).

Houses in zone 2 extension were initially subsidy four-roomed houses, then later on the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) houses were built in this zone as well. Currently, there is another section behind zone 2 extension where people settle which is referred to as “The new stands” – the pattern there is that residents start off staying in *mokhukhu*<sup>7</sup> then later on build their desired houses built with bricks.



Figure 3: Picture of Dikepese two-roomed house

According to Ross (2010:272) South Africa has attempted to address apartheid legacies within a neo-liberal capitalist matrix, but the consequences of these attempts have been largely problematic, and their successes limited. The young creatives in Itsoseng township, similarly to the shack dwellers that Ross describes, have fought on for their survival in a township where the struggles of the poor are experienced daily (Ross, 2010:272).

## Research participants

In this research study I use anthropologist Kath Weston’s insight into chosen kinship to make sense of the relationships I observed between my research participants (Weston, 1991). In

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<sup>7</sup> Mokhukhu is commonly known as a shack in South Africa, or a shanty which describes a small dwelling made of zinc and steel building materials.

exploring the notion of chosen kinship, there are bonds created by young creatives in Itsoseng which form small circles of 'fictive' kinship among the creatives in the diagram labelled annexure 1 at the end of the thesis. The term 'fictive kin' is used to explain relationships that are not formed by blood kinship, but by care, commitment, and symbolic practices which I will further discuss in the thesis.

For instance, Nathi, Notshi and Leano formed a non-blood related brotherhood bond through sharing Leano's backroom studio<sup>8</sup>. This brotherhood then grew as they individually started to work with other people, and then Khajow and TJ Mokhuane became part of the fictive kinship. In the annexure, all names used are pseudonyms which the participants chose for themselves.

Although I grew up in Itsoseng, I only knew a handful of young people doing arts in Itsoseng, and I had never spent a full day with any of them. Through connections, which in anthropology are sometimes referred to as 'snowball sampling' (Browne, 2005:47), I got introduced to eighteen young creatives (of which only fourteen are young participants of this research study) who were born and bred in Itsoseng and largely continue to reside there.

I knew two of these young creatives from basketball practices in our local courts; I went to the same school with one (I was a grade ahead of him); and two of them who used to stay in the same street, stay a block away from my home. The remaining number of these young creatives I knew their names from social media platforms and through their crafts, but I had never interacted with them in person before this fieldwork research.

For instance, Notshi and Nathi are popular local artists who have their music streaming on national radio stations nationwide, and I knew them from a distance – I used to see them at Nathi's place which is situated opposite the house of my mother's friend in Itsoseng Zone 1. ThatoSBK is locally known for painting murals. The two murals that introduced me to ThatoSBK were the ones of the legendary *Motswako*<sup>9</sup> pioneers in Mahikeng.

One was a tribute mural for the late Jabulani Tsambo. He was well known as HHP – Hip-Hop Pantsula and he was a Motswako/Hip-Hop artist who plugged all the famous Motswako artist such as Tuks Senganga, Mo-Molemi, Morafe, Notshi, Cassper Nyovest and others. ThatoSBK painted the HHP mural on the walls of Gaabomotho building, and he painted the other one which was commemoration of 10th anniversary of The MotswakOriginator album by Khuli

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<sup>8</sup> Backroom Studios are a combination of creative space which local producers use to record and create music in and sleep in.

<sup>9</sup> Motswako is a hip-hop sub-genre popularly known for its mixture of both language of origin (Setswana) and English in Southern Africa. Other languages used include Isizulu, Afrikaans and Sesotho depending on the rapper's origin.

Chana where he painted its cover on the wall of star shop. With his name as a signature below these murals, I went to google search him the time I was preparing to start with my fieldwork. See figure 1 below for the breakdown of young creative participants for this project.

Other creatives in annexure 1, such as Da RealKayCrack; Live D; Gogo MsKay; Jasten Case; Troublesome; ThatoSBK and Loving are associated (along with the above-mentioned fictive kinship) through crossing lines of work via collaborations in the local creative arts and entertainment space. Meanwhile LoyalSaint and Konkow are stepbrothers, they are also associated to the other local creatives by sharing backroom studios and by collaboration. All young creatives in this research study support each other's work by attending one another's local events which I also attended as part of my participation observation fieldwork where some creatives even perform at each other's events.

## Research Methodology and Ethical Considerations

### Methodology

On the 1st of October 2021, a very hot day in Itsoseng township, I was sitting on top of my single bed in my bedroom – more like my study room out of the four rooms in our house (the house has two bedrooms – one is the main bedroom, and then there is the bathroom, kitchen and living room). I was gazing at my research proposal, trying to figure out the action plan for my fieldwork research. My mind was filled with questions which raised my heartbeat and left my palms sweating out of anxiousness as I find the topic of youth unemployment and creative arts in my place of birth as provocative.

The reason behind this is that in 2020 I was unemployed, and with the Covid-19 outbreak which led to national lockdown level five which started in March 2020 until May 2020 in South Africa, I began writing poems as a coping mechanism for the stress which was caused by the pressures I felt as an unemployed graduate in a working-class household in a township. I chose to add some of these poems in my thesis as a way to reflect on ways I relate with the issue of youth unemployment in conjunction with the local young creatives.

Although I was not writing poems for financial relief, the emotional and mental relief I got from writing them gave me the fulfilment that probably an artist who released a song and it sold thirty thousand copies in a week would get. It made me feel like I am doing something about my wellbeing, it gave me a sense of achievement regarding self-actualization instead of sitting around and pitying myself and/or beating myself up for being a graduated

matlhalela<sup>10</sup>. It is because of my unemployment experience and finding haven in the creative arts space that my fieldwork research is centred around the relationship between non-standard employment and creative arts among young creatives in Itsoseng township, North-West Province, South Africa.

I spent four months (towards the end of October 2021 – February 2022) doing participation observation and interviews with local young creatives in Itsoseng to construct a holistic and contextual view of the lives of young creatives in Itsoseng when they are doing their creative work and when they are having leisure time. Participation observation fieldwork included PS4 (Play Station 4) Fifa sessions at Nathi's place, attending events with the young creatives – some locally and some out of Itsoseng, visits at Konkow's home, visiting the local studio and Leano's backroom studio, and having other young creatives at my home for interviews.

Bernard (2006:342) describes participant observation fieldwork as an anthropological research method where the researcher gets close to the participants to a point where they feel comfortable with having the researcher in their immediate space so that she/he can observe and take note of their lived experiences as her/his information for her/his research study.

I did auto-ethnographic study along with fieldwork ethnography based on the lived experiences of the fourteen local young creatives which form part of this research study. Auto-ethnography is a qualitative method that offers a way of giving voice to personal experience for the purpose of extending social understanding (Wall, 2008:38). The poems which form significant parts of certain chapters of this thesis are the voice to my personal experiences. Additionally, auto-ethnography is a method of research grounded in lived experience and evocative modes of representation that seek to engage readers emotionally, aesthetically, and politically (Tillman, 2009:94).

Re-typing the poems into my thesis felt like putting salt in open wounds because it still hurts even as I write this thesis, though I have chosen to do it anyway. It brewed in me emotions which feels like a choke of words on my throat and heaviness on my chest – thoughts hanging as I question myself whether or not I am doing justice to myself in the way I put them down on paper. As much as it is important for the researcher to build relationships and trust with their participants to gain access into their everyday activities and life experiences, and to enter their private spaces for participation observation, it was equally important to

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<sup>10</sup> Matlhalela is also known as a loafer which means someone who is unemployed (often an adult) and is dependent on others financially (particularly his/her parents)

trust my intuition and to know that giving voice to my lived experiences may bring about understanding to what South African youth is going through.

Given my lived experience as an unemployed graduate in a township, I had begun to notice that unemployment amongst graduates in South Africa is increasing and this sparked my curiosity as to what is it that universities and labour markets are missing regarding work readiness and life after university. According to Case, McKenna, Marshall & Mogashana (2018) little is known at a detailed level about how young people actually make use of their university experiences to craft their life courses, and even less is known about what happens to those who drop out. This made me realise the importance of gaining knowledge and using it to survive real challenges of the real world as a young adult. Through participation observation I learned that the youth in Itsoseng use their creative talents to make a living and life amid life's uncertainties, and whether they furthered their studies after high school or not because what is important is cultural capital.

I also interviewed sixteen participants (which fourteen of them are the young creatives in this thesis and two of them are the local studio owners above South Africa's youthful ages), and the interviews were audio and video recorded for data analysis purposes. According to Warr, Guillemin, Cox & Waycott (2016:117) video cameras (cellphones and cameras) are extensions of ourselves and are in communal with all research tools.

The interviews always were challenging to plan as my participants were quite difficult when it comes to sticking to any form of agenda. Therefore, some video recorded interviews were just a spur-of-the-moment where I saw an opportunity and used it, and the participants went along with it. Warr et.al. (2016:117) assert that video cameras ordain our intentions, social position, moral choices, and cultural biases, which are assured in the time, place, and context in which they are used, leaving imprints on participants and the environment long after the completion of research projects.

Following this, I started video recording short clips of my surrounding when I am with my participants during fieldwork. Initially, the idea was to make an ethnographic documentary of my research where I compile all the short clips and combine them with my voice on the background narrating the events as they unfold and create one full documentary with the permission from my participants. However, I experienced technical challenges where the phone that I had been using to gather the short clips got stolen during December 2021. This experience, though traumatic, was a lived example of the many hurdles that emerging artists face in spaces like Itsoseng. In the process of blocking the phone, all media got erased remotely for safety reasons and all personal data got wiped out.

Moving forward, I took videos of the interviews with my participants and of the events we attended with my new phone, and I transferred them to my laptop the same moment I get home for backup. These interview clips, along with videos of my participants working at events and/or during studio time are the ones which form part of my forty-two minutes long fieldwork video which is on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I-yo4kJb4>. Due to lack of proper equipment such as an HD video camera, microphone and lighting, the quality of the video is compromised, and the sound and lighting did not come out clearly in some of the clips. Nonetheless, it is an important component of my thesis, and if readers are able to, I hope they at least watch part of it.

In their journal article, Monatshana et.al (2021:8) clearly outlines the challenges that comes with using digital devices, especially when the infrastructure used to allow flow of ideas and/or goods over space is unreliable. Although digital devices are most convenient and primary tools for digital ethnographic research, they become a hurdle in a space where network connection is slow, and the digital literacy is not that much enforced in the community. Therefore, with little knowledge that I have in video editing and using video editing software, I had to atchaar my way around creating the fieldwork video for the purpose of this research.

Data for qualitative analysis most often consist of interview recordings and transcripts, field notes written during participation observation sessions, textual documents, and notes written about the data collection process itself (Goldman & Borkan, 2013:4), and this was no different to my qualitative data analysis methods. I jotted down ideas and keywords in my A4 exam pad and/or my phone as events unfolded during participation observation and interviews.

On a different occasion, I went to “The stay-at-home son v” event, organised by Jasten Case at the Pop-Up Lifestyle by myself and for the first hour I used my phone to take down notes of the activities taking place at that moment. The tension during this time was shared between me and the crowd attending the event. As much as I felt uneasy sitting by myself with my phone and taking down notes of events as they unfold in a pub filled with people drinking alcohol and dancing wildly to the music the DJs are playing, people kept giving me looks of curiosity which showed that they are wondering the reason behind my not-so-common behaviour at the pub.

Analysis is an ongoing process that begins as the first data becomes available and continues until the end of data collection (Goldman & Borkan, 2013:4). I carefully listened to the audio recordings and repeatedly watched the video recordings when I was compiling data to form a fieldwork video which I provided the link for earlier in this thesis. This was

another technique that I used to analyse the data along with reading transcripts and field notes of the data collected during fieldwork. It helped me identify possible themes that appear from the data and assisted me in coming up with a compelling story to tell in my fieldwork video. This is an anthropological process of becoming 'immersed' in the data (Goldman & Borkan, 2013:4).

Vernacular words such as ntwana/laaitie/boy – which translate to kid but means mates, were used among the creatives I mentioned above during PS4 FIFA game sessions (which were part of my participation observation fieldwork) as a symbol to show that the relationship between them is much similar to that of blood-related brothers. Additionally, the practice of sharing space, food, resources, and knowledge while working together towards succeeding in their respective crafts is what kept the bond in the fictive kinship tighter during trying times. Out of the creatives I mentioned in figure 1 on the introduction section, the ones I mentioned in the above paragraph share the strongest line of connection built to enable the flow of things or ideas and allow for their exchange over space (Larkin, 2013:328).

### Ethical considerations

The ethical questions that this research project raises include permission and informed consent; anonymity; and confidentiality. Getting permission from people under this research study was a very important step to take in ensuring that no data makes it to the final thesis and fieldwork video without their informed consent. For instance, I had to respect Tar's (pseudonym) wish to stay anonymous even though our conversations made a great impact on the initial stages of this research study. His knowledge about and the connections to and with the local creatives such as LoyalSaint, Jasten Case and others who are not part of this research study helped me build a solid foundation for the relationships I have with the young creatives in this study.

Upon introduction, or first meet-ups with my participants I verbally stated the aim and intentions of my research study to open up discussions on that which they do in the local creative arts and entertainment industry. In the follow-up meet-ups, I brought with me letters of permission for all of the participants to sign given that they agree to be part of the research study. Along with permission is informed consent, where I clearly stated the research goals; research methods; types of analysis, and reporting procedures for the participants' knowledge (Bonvillaine, 2010:62). The informed consent forms clearly stated that should the participants wish to withdraw from this research study at any given time they are free to do so.

The data from this study is reported in a form of a thesis and a fieldwork video. In the fieldwork video, only those who gave consent are personally identified. This means that for

the participants who wished to be anonymous, the reporting did not include their names, faces, or details that will help others to know that they participated (e.g., your address or the name of your school). The identity of the participants who consent to be part of the fieldwork video is shown on video as part of the fieldwork video report.

To protect the research participants' anonymity in the thesis, I use pseudonyms instead of their real names like I did with Tar on the first paragraph of the ethics considerations section. Using pseudonyms is the accepted and expected ethical practice for maintaining participants' privacy in qualitative research (Brear, 2018:722). Pseudonym refers to a fictitious name, and in this case, participants chose the names I use here for themselves before the interview started.

## Chapter 1: The youth who artchaar: Everyday life for young creatives in Itsoseng

*Makau, makgarebe, morafe otlhe wa Itsoseng  
Emang ka dinao, kgaratlang le Itsoseng  
Le ikaeletse go tswa jang bosetlheng?  
Bosetlheng jwa lehuma, tobetobeng, matlakaleng  
Leroleng la 'tsela le dikago tse di utlwileng  
Tse di suthilweng ke maiteko a lona a go lwela tse 'lokileng  
Re itlhokomolosa jang ba ba weleng?  
Re itse gore maatla a mo ngataneng!  
A re emiseng dithogo, re Itsoseng  
Le fa re setse re thanya lomapo lo sa le tsebeng*

*Maitlhommo magolo ke go tsosolosa tse di suleng  
Revive maikutlo, ditoro, le menagano e e lapileng  
Rise up and be the voice ya ba ba sa reediweng  
Zone 1, zone 2 and It's extension, zone 3 re kopaneng  
Re le basha re thusaneng, re aganeng  
For that's where our strength lies – in unity!*

*Let's stop being content about things we can contest!  
Let's rather be patient for the things we believe they're gonna be felt  
Felt by generations to come after us, things with no end  
I mean, o ya monateng... While you're there, you're rejoicing  
O jikele makhaya, O'lady a go botse "what were you celebrating?"  
O tiholwe ke karabo, and then start contemplating  
These things are just stressing!*

*They make you reside in your head, end up depressed because reality is frustrating  
Questions such as "what are you doing for a living?" are flippin' triggering  
Urge you to turn to your form of addiction, and vele you end up doing it because it's tempting  
Be it a good or bad addiction, you pour your heart and soul to it but yet it feels like no one  
realises that you're crying  
Crying for help because, damn.. you're suffocating!*

*Walls are closing on you, you feel like there's no escaping  
Plans are falling apart, there's literally nothing working.  
Even the youth is jobless, we're still fighting  
Fighting the status quo but it's rather challenging  
Hence, we've put the corporate gloves off, we're street fighting  
We're rapping, painting, singing, mixing, drawing, writing, reciting... we are creating  
We're creating the world how we see it through the lense of art, we're fixing  
Fixing ourselves through mistakes we made on the way, we're still healing  
Healing ourselves, healing our parents, healing the world  
The image is not perfect, it's scarred, bloody, muddy and ashy– it's artsy  
But it's all about rising beauty from the ashes, re Itsoseng.*

Poem by Thandiwe Twala

The aim of this chapter is to bring about understanding as to what it means to be a 'young creative' in Itsoseng township. This chapter brings the reader closer to the creatives' home through different sensations that I describe. The opening of this chapter is a poem I wrote in October 2021, bringing the township 'feel' to the reader as I sense and imagine it when I move around the "dusty streets of Itsoseng" – a township that I grew up in and where my family still resides.

In the poem I begin by addressing the youth of Itsoseng and pleading with them to wake up out of the slumber that the ruins of the township has drawn them to. Tsing (2015:6) refers to the ruins as spaces of abandonment for asset production which come as consequences of simplification for alienation. This is relevant as the young unemployed people in Itsoseng are constantly blamed by the local news reporters and local politicians for the damaged buildings and roads of the place because they allegedly burn tyres during service delivery protests.

As I was writing my fieldnotes, I remembered that a hand-full of young creatives from Itsoseng, who have been in digital interviews, publicly use the sentence "*I'm from the dusty streets of Itsoseng, not from Mafikeng. Please get it right!*", and indeed it is the dust, the ash, the poor infrastructures, and imperfections of this township that drives the young creatives to either a place of innovative thinking in their respective artwork and/or crafts, or to a state of depression.

Those who identify as young creatives *atchaa* their way to get by in their day-to-day navigation of the unpleasant realities of South Africa's high youth unemployment rate and the pressures they receive not only from their families but also from social media and their peers who seem to have "made it in their lives". Geagea, Vernon and MacCallum (2018) assert that for youth in disadvantaged schools, university expectations and participation are often limited by access to social and cultural capital that support expectations.

In South African context, "made it" means achieving a living wage which is estimated at earning between R15 000 – R20 000 per month. I borrow the notion of making it in a manner explained well by Auerbach (2020) whose work focuses on aspects of success and achievement for the Angolan middle class, where she acknowledges the importance of recognising the agency of 'world making' by those on the margins (Auerbach, 2020:181).

The main objective is to show that even though Itsoseng is an under resourced township, with useless buildings such as the library that is not operating and the youth centre guarded by the security guards even though it is not utilised for its intended purpose, young creatives in this urban space are not discouraged to a point of giving up without a fight.

In the same way that atchar (which in South Africa is the word for a savoury chutney) can turn a basic meal like pap and cabbage which was put together under low budget into a delicious meal, the young creatives in Itsoseng cook up ways which they can use to make their lives liveable under challenging circumstances – a profound discovery that although the youth is faced with employment struggles in Itsoseng, they demonstrate their agency and power through art and voice.

On the brighter side of the poem, I call upon unity among the youth of the community at large, knowing that there is still hope deep in the marrow of their bones. Hope to revive and be revived by the passion they have for art, hope that is evident when a young man drops out of one university where he was studying BCom Industrial Psychology and Labour Relations Management to register in another university to study acting. This young man had an underlying plan that the university residence will be his accommodation while he *atchaar* his way to television acting. Atchaar is a popular word amongst young creatives in Itsoseng, used in place for *doing*, *maneuvering*, and *taking action* and it is an important conceptual cornerstone for this thesis.

I argue that there is hope for the young creatives to make it through arts and entertainment as they find themselves artchaaring in between circumstances they are faced with that brings out the sorrow of weekly consumption of alcohol and the smoking of hubbly-bubbly<sup>11</sup>, cigarettes and weed (often caused by the stress of not having a paying job while having set of skills required for work) among the youth in Itsoseng.

## Art addiction



Figure 4: Screenshot of DaRealKayCrack's song from sound cloud

<sup>11</sup> Hubbly-bubbly/hookah pipe is an instrument with either single or multiple pipes for heating or vaporizing and then smoking of either tobacco, flavoured tobacco or sometimes cannabis. The smoke is passed through a water basin – often glass-based, before inhalation

Lyrics of a chorus from addiction by DaRealKayCrack

*“The only prison where the locks are only found on the inside  
We’re all addicted to something, whether it’s good or it’s not  
We lie, cheat, manipulate to get whatever we want  
When you can stop it, you don’t want to, when you want to you can’t  
One drink is just too many, and a thousand enough  
With depression comes addiction then you start to be blind  
Without addiction then depression just becomes a suicide  
But then recovery is a process, one step at a time”.*

According to Chetty et al. (2020:125) “sugars” or nyaope is an illicit drug cocktail where various ingredients including low-grade heroin are mixed together. Furthermore, Nyaope addiction is proven to be complex and challenging to rehabilitate, and Chetty et al. (2020:125) asserts that this may be due to the variation in its make-up, which may lead to ineffective treatment.

Rather than thinking of addiction only in terms of substance abuse, I borrow the phrase to explore the passionate commitment of many young people to art. Young creatives in Itsoseng often find themselves in a state of what I refer to as art addiction, where they are constantly in need to create or do art even when it does not yield any positive outcomes for them and their loved ones.

The notion of art addiction makes a significant contribution to Guyer’s (2017) discussion where he asserts that in a state of abeyance, economic actors defer action anticipating that there be ‘a beneficent agency in the world’ able to resolve the challenges of ‘bad and good luck’ that determine entrepreneurial success or failure (Guyer, 2017:150).

Furthermore, Duffy (2017) and Ross (2000) state that creatives tend to accept unpaid, underpaid, and short-term jobs while they are experiencing and enduring affective distress, burnout, depression, and anxiety in the hopes of securing a stable and well-paid self-expressive job and ‘the good life’ in the future. The hope that one day they will reap the benefits of their consistent hard work and endurance is the reason they stay hooked even under the above-mentioned unpleasant circumstances – and the local young creatives in my research believe it is better than using addictive and illegal substances.

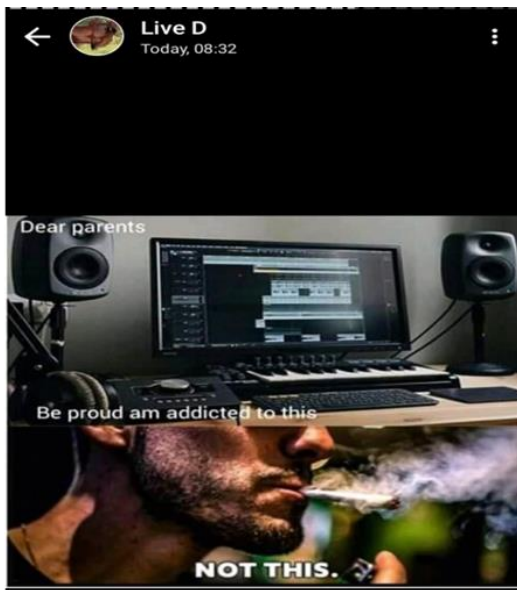


Figure 5: Live D's whatsapp status

Like any addiction, my research reveals that in Itsoseng there is an experience of rock-bottom to art addiction as well. Failure to atchaar around hurdles and challenges which Itsoseng young creatives face in their journey of making a living and creating life through their respective crafts often lead to a state of depression.

This is when their craft causes more sadness and disruption to their lives and that of their loved ones instead of bringing peace to them, and yet they still create and incorporate it in their daily activities. It is when they use it as their escape from reality, but the high from it does not last long enough so they stay at it longer than they should. According to Maisel (1994:211) an artist's transition out of the art may be the right thing to do, and even a life-saving thing to do, when art is not working out for them. Their continuation of art creation and consumption even after it has brought them sorrow and pain are the symptoms of the addiction I am referring to. Following the notion of art addiction, I will further show how this notion is used to atchaar precarity and stress in chapter three.

On top of the poor infrastructure that is evident on lack of distribution of basic services such as safe water supply, roads and streetlights, good health services, electricity, sewage disposal, municipal parks and recreational spaces, waste management and a lot of forsaken buildings, substance and alcohol abuse are issues that Itsoseng youth is battling with, and I see the abuse of substances as a fair comparison to art addiction due to their intertwined relation. High consumption of alcohol among young people in Itsoseng is a reality that we are faced with in our daily life experience to a point that fun and entertainment are most likely associated with the high from alcohol and smoking.

On the brighter side of things, Itsoseng is rich when it comes to young talent – young people singing, rapping, painting, Deejaying, MCing, designing, producing music, writing, and capturing memorable moments using their photographic skills. It is through the creative art gigs that the young creatives in Itsoseng, those with skills and/or talents that I mentioned, work in and with, which bring about cash injection in their lives, and entertainment that gives them a sense of purpose and hope as they are able to send out messages of awareness and showcase their talents.

Similar to Basil Matsika profiled in British newspaper *The Guardian*, (Chingono, 2022), who paints murals of local musicians and daily life in the streets of Mbare – a suburb in Harare in Zimbabwe, Itsoseng young creatives choose to bring out awareness about different social issues that the community is faced with. Like I mentioned on the above paragraph, they also use their various art forms to document the beauty that the society seem to be short-sighted towards because of focusing on what is falling apart. Although the infrastructure is deteriorating in Itsoseng, you will find work of art in small spaces which we mingle around, showing the agency of world making in “raw everyday life experiences of lack” (Ross, 2010:270).

## Chapter Two: *Go Phanda, Go Gereza: Making life and livelihood*

This chapter explores ways in which young creatives from Itsoseng partaking in this research project make a living out of their respective creative and/or artistic work. Following Auerbach (2020) whose work focuses on aspects of success and achievement for the Angolan middle class, I focus on what is working for young creatives in Itsoseng. Whilst Auerbach acknowledges the potential risks of focussing largely on 'the good', she also acknowledges the importance of recognising the agency of 'world making' by those on the margins (Auerbach, 2020:181).

### The use of skills and talent to commercialise art

The answer to the main question of how young creatives in Itsoseng make a living out of their respective crafts/skills lies in their different lived experiences within the practice, and on the level, they are at with their specific crafts. Ingold (2011) states that skills are grown, incorporated into the human organism through practice and training in an environment and they are as much biological as cultural. Nathi, Notshi, TJ, Leano, PeaceBeats, and Loving are what I refer to as *self-taught young creatives* who managed to place their first foot in the creative arts industry with their respective creative skills.

Leano learned how to produce, master, and mix songs in his backroom using the computer that his family bought for him with downloaded software that he uses for recording and producing music. Mastering and mixing the song means applying necessary edits to the song in order to amplify its quality using the assigned software. He then practiced how to make beats and later on got a microphone and speakers which he uses to record music for himself and other local artists.

His backroom became a recording studio for the likes of Notshi, Nathi and DaReal Kay Crack, amongst many more. Leano then taught PeaceBeats how to master and produce music because he saw the interest PeaceBeats had in music production and beat creation. The two are now *self-taught* young producers in Itsoseng, who produce music and create beats in their backrooms in their homes.

Notshi, a self-taught Motswako rapper/song writer/artist who is born and raised in Itsoseng, dropped out of COPA Academy, a music school in Midrand, where he was studying music production. He dropped out because he wanted to do everything music related by himself, but he felt that what he was taught was not aligned with the type of music he is doing, namely Motswako. Through practice and training, alongside constant reading and writing, his skill

grew from great to excellent. His music is now streaming on SABC radio stations and on music shows on television, even trending on Botswana music charts. The 2013 Metro FM Awards winner for best collaboration of the year, Notshi, asserts that the effort and hard work he placed into his craft qualifies him to say that music/motswako rap is not a hobby for him, but a profession.

In his words, Notshi noted that for one's craft to be viewed as their profession, there are determinants such as the seriousness behind making a living out of it and the craft being the creatives' main source of income which they do not practice only when they have nothing else to do with their time. Additionally, he said that education is another determinant, but not the only one, of whether the craft is professional or not.

For instance, when one went to study music at a college/university and have a qualification on music, they become qualified or professional musicians. Although this may be the case, it does not mean that self-made creatives cannot be professionals simply because they did not go to college/university to further their studies on their skill/craft. Notshi's biography demonstrates a mix of institutional and personal learning through music.

Nathi, who is also known as Mr Poo (Mr Bull) because of his hit single from Dinonyane album, which was released in 2012, is a self-taught musician/song writer/producer from Itsoseng. He started singing in church choir as a child and he fell in love with singing from the experience of being part of a Sunday school church group. He used to imitate Boyz II Men, a vocal group from Philadelphia, and he used to cover Boyz II Men songs and perform them around *Kasi* – as he refers to Itsoseng, with his former group called Brotherhood. As time progressed, he felt the need to write his own songs, hence he taught himself to pour his heart out on a beat using a pen and paper.

Being part of Brotherhood group gave Nathi a firm foundation for his career in the music industry. Sharpening skills through practice and imitation landed the group with recording deals with a music company which was then called BMG Africa, now called Sony BMG Music Entertainment.

Nathi states that they had to start local – by performing for free and they had *go gereza* to be able to record *demos* to take to music companies. *Go gereza*<sup>12</sup> continued even after the group separated, and he started his duo called Khaya (which directly translate to home) with his best friend, Mxolisi. After Mxolisi passed away, Nathi went solo and *go phanda* was not something

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<sup>12</sup> Go gereza is the same as Go phanda which is local slang in Itsoseng for hustle. The words are familiar among black populated areas in South Africa

he did only on his music journey, but in all aspects of his as well because the loss of Mxolisi left him emotionally shuttered and had a damaging effect on his life.

TJ Mokhuane is a young man of many talents who is well known for his appearances on South African famous telenovelas. He is a self-taught actor/rapper/poet/motivational speaker/former radio presenter and he dropped out of North-West University in 2017 to go and study acting at University of Johannesburg. While he was a student at University of Johannesburg, a producer introduced him to workshops and drama classes which helped him sharpen his acting skills.

TJ then got his first acting role of “Tshepo” on a South African telenovela, The River, and he stopped being an active student at University of Johannesburg and rather used the university residence he was staying at as his accommodation while pursuing his acting career. Many acting roles followed after his first *gig* as an actor on The River, which made it challenging to juggle university studies and work simultaneously. He had to *atchaar* his way around acting and being a student and focusing on acting was the main *artchaar* at that moment, which made university fall out of the equation for the time being.

Tshepo Prince Loving is a self-taught photographer, Founder and CEO of Loving’s Photography, he is also from Itsoseng township. His mother used to work with a camera most of the time, and he could not help himself but pick it up one day when he was still a high school kid. He once took it to school without his mother’s permission and he was taking pictures of his friends and random things around him during lunch break. Although the images were not perfect at that time, Loving knew that photography is something that he wanted to pursue.

After trying out the camera, Loving then went on YouTube to look for videos and tutorials on how to be a professional photographer. In his words, Loving noted that he came across some advice on the internet that to be a professional photographer, one needs to go to a college/university and study photography as a subject. Despite this advice, he continued to sharpen his photography skills and learned how to do editing (images and videos) by watching YouTube videos and using his mother’s camera until he got the hang of it. He noted that having a healthy competition within himself also helped him grow his skills set because he always strives to do better than he did on his last *gig*.

## The importance or lack thereof higher education training in commercialising arts

The first thing that the above mentioned self-taught young creatives have in common is that they are young creatives who did not graduate from a university/college for their respective craft, and yet their crafts is their profession. The main factor, for those who ended up dropping out of universities/colleges, is that the respective higher education institutions did not offer exactly that which resonated with them and is particularly relevant to their goal of becoming professional creative artists.

According to Vambe (2009:73) South African literature that South African youth consume is created for and not by the youth, and as a result the gifted young people of today experience the feeling of being held back because policies focus on other demographic groups such as the elderly as Goede (2017:508) asserts.

The challenges that came with learning more about their craft did not stop them from their continuous practices and training so that they could get to a point where they are making a living out of their respective crafts. Instead, the youth's poetic voices have chosen to announce their presence in a creative context in which the literature of development or the development of literary culture has been narrowed down to criticising issues which directly impact their immediate communities (Vambe, 2009:73).

According to Ingold (2018:161) skill is not the same as habit in a sense that skill is constantly challenged by unfamiliar situations. In the *self-taught* young creatives' case, the unfamiliar situation that is common is making sacrifices and investing time and effort into learning and practising different skills which contribute to their craft in hoping to make a living out of it without knowing what will transpire. Due to lack of the utility of creative arts outreach initiatives (CAI) which Geagea *et.al* (2018) suggest should be implemented in schools, neighbourhoods and homes in supporting local creatives expectations and building cultural capital in universities/colleges, the local young creatives go through trials and errors in the pursuit of commercialising their art and making a living out of it.

## Worldmaking practices: In what world will I get booked for a paying gig?

Through exploring the notion of *ukuphanta* (Motsemme, 2011) – *go gereza/go phanda* or to *atchaar* (manoeuvring in this case) as the phrases which the young creatives partaking in this research use for making ends meet, surviving or getting by, we look into the creative arts *gigs* that these township young creatives work in and with, which bring about cash injection in their lives. We also get to understand whether or not it is by choice that the young creatives in

Itsoseng township end up in non-standard employment within their creative arts spectrums through their lived experiences.

In the first chapter of his book titled *A life in the arts*, Maisel pose important questions such as are prospective creatives willing to spend the rest of their lives pursuing their passion in the face of the many significant challenges that will confront them? He continues to ask that can these creatives carve out a career in art, achieve the level of success they dream of, secure a measure of comfort, and find time for both artmaking and living? (Maisel, 1994:3) The most important question he is asking, which is also of relevance to this research study is that, can these creatives survive the artist's life, where an 'artist's life' is assumed to be one of material deprivation?

Performing young creatives in Itsoseng make a living by being part of and hosting live performance shows. The two important aspects of successfully making a living out of live performance shows, which tend to also be tricky and multifaceted, are exposure and resources. This means if a young creative does not have enough resources to make their own live show, and they are also not well-known (have not build a strong profile for themselves) they are most likely to struggle with making money out of their craft.

Abdou-Maliq Simone, in his book titled *improvised lives* (2019), argues that the practices for living with uncertainty will be found where there is a system in place for advancing despite long-term marginalization. Exposure carries the value of young creatives work in Itsoseng township. For instance, a young creative whose work is not known will not be paid (or they will be paid with food and drinks) for performing at a local show. Therefore, there is a need to establish a system that aid local young creatives to create exposure for themselves in order to make livable spaces out of unideal and less privileged circumstances.

Getting and maintaining a 'standard employment' – getting a monthly salary within the minimum wage, medical aid, Unemployment Insurance Fund and pension fund paid, has not been easy for many in South Africa and the arts are a space of entrepreneurship, however challenging. Why would a young, talented, and ambitious creative choose to live a life of constant improvisation? The answers are complex because young creatives, through various art creations, map out their lives in unideal circumstances (Simone, 2019).

The Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI) in South Africa are unpredictable and offer more precarious employment than jobs outside the creative arts industry (Hadisi & Snowball, 2017:1). This knowledge, along with the initial expectations both the parents and/or guardians and the young creatives have regarding the future of the young creatives when it comes to

career choice, sustainability and getting a stable income, adds pressure in the young creatives' journey of making a living out of their respective crafts.

In South Africa, chances of being unemployed or in vulnerable employment decline with education even though not all graduates enjoy this added advantage in the labour market due to particular circumstances that exist as graduates of certain courses are more probable to experience negative employment outcomes such as lengthier job searches or even unemployment (Mncayi, 2020:2).

However, Ndzuta (2021) brings to our attention that there have been regulations from various arms of the state for the Culture and Creative Industry which aim at generating more employment. LoyalSaint is also a self-taught young creative from Itsoseng who is battling to make a living out of his craft. He is a rapper/ song writer who dropped out of Vaal University of Technology, hoping that placing his focus in his craft would pay off the bills and put food on his table. He admits that trying to make a living out of rap music has not been an easy journey for him and he is still "trying to break the doors open because the key to success that Mandela said is, seems not to be opening the right doors for him".

He mentioned that the environment has a way to hype him into having realistic imagination which he does not necessarily end up putting into action because of limitations such as funds and timing. The problems restricting the growth of the sector are not self-inflicted, but rather made worse by an economic, political, and historical environment that does not enable the sector to grow (Ndzuta, 2021). However, Simone (2019) asserts that for everything a place appears to lack, it can be meaningfully lived with, if not transformed.

For instance, in 2018 LoyalSaint planned out a whole Itsoseng stadium event in his head while he was a VUT student. This was because he was in an environment where rap artists were successfully making money out of hosting and being part of live performance events in Vaal. When the idea left his head and went into the planning phase where he was emailing potential artists he wished to add to his line-up of the show and also enquiring about booking the Itsoseng stadium, funding stood on his way, leading to the event not taking place

I have established that Itsoseng young creatives are talented, and they are skilful when it comes to their respective crafts. However, talent has proven not to be enough or the only aspect to make a living out of their crafts. Notshi mentioned during our interview that took place in Midrand in 2022 that "the most challenging part, after establishing whether or not you are talented and skilled within your craft, is finding ways to make money out of it". The

importance of cultural capital, which I discuss further in chapter three, is key to making a living in the arts and entertainment industry.

He added that as a creative who knows that he is good at rapping and writing songs, he had to learn the “business side of the game”. This is the topic that is mentioned flippantly but is very important especially when a creative is looking to make money out of their craft. After years of economic and political instability followed by decades of neo-liberal reform, self-employment has become increasingly common in African countries and South Africa is no exception (Alacovska *et.al.* 2021:620).

### Atchaaring the market for one’s craft

According to Appadurai (1986:4) value is shaped through global market operations, and particular global commodification processes may create new social relations that can be anti-imperialist in nature, benefiting previously marginalised groups. This means that material objects acquire meanings ‘in their forms, their uses, their trajectories. It is only through the analysis of these trajectories that we can interpret the human transactions and calculations that brighten things (Appadurai, 1986:5). Following Appadurai, I look at the value of the Itsoseng young creatives’ crafts which is gained through their form, their use, and their paths.

Demographics such as age, language, and geographic area are key determinants, alongside platform, when a creative aims to make a living out of their craft. For instance, performing artists in Itsoseng have a certain target market which they are making music for. To *atchaar* requires one to diversify their craft. Like hustling, it manifests in the form of diversifying business portfolios with the addition of multiple micro-enterprises for risk management purposes (Alacovska *et.al.* 2021:628).

If we take Notshi for example, he is a Motswako rapper and this means that language (mixture of Setswana, English, Isizulu, and Afrikaans slang) is a key determinant when he is making his music, to reach the demand of his music in areas such as North-West, Northern Cape, Gauteng, Free-State, Limpopo, Lesotho, and Botswana. The languages spoken in these areas are “close cousins” to the languages he raps in when doing Motswako. Therefore, he knows that when it comes to live performances, he makes money from bookings in the above-mentioned provinces.

Today, how much Notshi makes is determined by his profile and all the challenges he has passed in his journey as a Motswako artist/musician/song writer. Notshi noted that his profile is like a CV, with all the big stages he has performed on and all the legends and big names

he has performed with as his references. He added that the experience part of this CV are all the challenges he came across and conquered in his music career.

Therefore, he charges according to his level of experience in all his *gigs*. Additionally, he also gets royalties because he is a registered artist. Royalties are, as Notshi explained during our interview, certain percentage of money collected by SAMRO (South African Music Rights Organisation) and paid to an artist and/or publisher of a song that is air played, be it on television or radio stations. Notshi is registered with RISA (The Recording Industry of South Africa) and SAMRO, both aim at protecting the rights of South African artists and producers and representing their interests.

Notshi took me through his ways of *go phanda/go gereza* during our interview. He said he used to perform at the cyphers<sup>13</sup> in Mahikeng where they used to freestyle and battle rap. That experience exposed him to the audience he still has until today in Mahikeng. He also mentioned that his classic song titled *My lady song* reached multitudes from Bluetooth sharings. The link to the above-mentioned classic song is as follows: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=83Pz\\_k3yB04&list=RD83Pz\\_k3yB04&start\\_radio=1&rv=83Pz\\_k3yB04&t=4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=83Pz_k3yB04&list=RD83Pz_k3yB04&start_radio=1&rv=83Pz_k3yB04&t=4) .

“Recording my material in a backroom studio ko go Leano daar (translating to at Leano’s), making plans to make the room soundproofed using egg boxes in a wardrobe with some whack microphone, but forward we were going. The quality was not compromised because we were good at what we were doing, both Leano and I”.

Notshi said so in our interview, explaining that not only did he *artchaar* his way to grow and enhance his talent, but he also had to *artchaar* his way around getting his music out there and ending up being heard by the legends of Motswako who took him to greater heights. I suggest, drawing from Pepe (2020), that cyberspace provides visibility for creatives and serves as a vital platform to market their work.

The dominating age group in an area, youth in this case, is what makes live performance events popular activity in Itsoseng which most of young creatives make a living out of. Van Dooren (2014:294) asks how putting care at the centre of our critical work might remake ourselves, our practices, and our world, and here I analyse this by extending Simone’s work on improvised lives (2019) in relation to Van Dooren’s concept of world making. Van Dooren (2014:292) asserts that care for some individuals and species translates into suffering for others, To some of the young creatives in Itsoseng improvising tend to lead to compromising

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<sup>13</sup> Cypher is a gathering of rappers and beatboxers in a circle where they make music together with crowd and spectators who are hyping the energy of a given cypher

the provision of needs for their loved ones, which then translates to suffering of those who are dependent on them.

By being part of the live performance events in Itsoseng, young creatives who are still performing for exposure often improvise to build their cultural capital while practicing what they love and care about dearly. Promoters on the other hand, cut deals that favours their financial needs with the artists in order to gain more from the events instead of working at a loss because of paying the venue, i.e., club, pub, tavern.

Therefore, the beauty of art is sometimes and for the society at large overshadowed by its association with settling for less in the name of compromising and caring for the art. The older generation in our local community has little exposure to the positives that come with art, seeing only some sense of success on television and those who have left Itsoseng like Notshi.

### Branding in creative arts meets entrepreneurship

With arts as a dominating activity in Itsoseng, culture cannot be left out of the discussion. Creative art forms alongside language and township swag (clothing items from local brands and the use of native slang by the youth) form part of identity among youth in Itsoseng township, and the society as a whole. When young creatives produce the work that is relatable and speaks directly to the community of Itsoseng, the community adapt the styles and characters in which the message is conveyed in. O'Reilly and Kerrigan (2010:19) assert that art, as another significant representational system, may provide crucial insights into understanding branding processes, particularly for developing brand identities and connecting value to visuals.

For instance, the young community members of Itsoseng township buy clothing items of local brands such as *Zwepa*, *Gatella Vastap*, *Ko Ga Lona Saan*, *Itsoseng – Tlebebe*, *Notshi* (*clothing brand by motswako musician/artist/rapper himself*) because they identify themselves with the concepts used on these brands and they easily relate to the language and images in use. Thus, turning to art forms a part to a larger effort to understand brands as basic cultural objects (O'Reilly & Kerrigan, 2010:19). The local young creatives whose names are behind these brands make a living from the sales of these brands.



Through my ethnographic research, I obtained insight into several aspects of consumer culture, including consumer behaviour, demand, price, and patronage, by analysing the content, form, and usage of art. As a result, art provides a fantastic and underappreciated platform for researching and understanding cultural dynamics in branding (O'Reilly & Kerrigan, 2010:20).

In context, the Kasi Market Day event organisers in Itsoseng, in collaboration with the local young DJs host events in local clubs and pubs where they know their target market spends their time of leisure at, and they set stalls of local brands where young creatives actively sell their products to people while enjoying music performed by talented local DJs. These events, artistically, provides insight into the complicated relationships that exist between society, economics, and culture (O'Reilly & Kerrigan, 2010:18).

BlueAvo (2019) states that we are moving towards a change that is opening up new and rewarding alleyways for all creatives to share their work, and it aims to give African talent a platform as investors, international companies, and social media platforms are showing a massive desire for the space, driven by the continent's youthful demographic, expanded internet connectivity, and high mobile usage.

The challenge that young creatives in Itsoseng have which limits them to tap into this opportunity is access to the relevant sources which can potentially lead them to the platforms that holds the keys to their breakthroughs. ThatoSBK, a young fine artist and mural painter I worked with during my ethnographic fieldwork, saw the opportunity of these new and lucrative pathways for all creatives to share their work from far and used it to his advantage even before the Covid-19 pandemic hit.

With his artwork painting the walls of social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, he landed a great opportunity of exhibiting his art amongst the greatest like him in Brazil for a Kaaysa Art Residency in 2018. The insight he has on ways to market and put himself and his work out there for the world to see played a key role in the success of exhibiting his artwork in Brazil.

For ThatoSBK, commercialising his work is a challenge when he is in Itsoseng because his target market is not in Itsoseng, he says. "Mo kasi, people only admire what you do as a fine artist when they see it, the moment you name your price the conversation changes. They expect me to draw them or their loved ones for free, but unfortunately I cannot afford to do it for *mahala* (free) at times", ThatoSBK said.

Although ThatoSBK paints murals on the plain walls he come across in Itsoseng without expecting any form of compensation when he is approached to do certain projects, it becomes business and not charity and/or bringing life to a dull wall or conveying a message or raising awareness through his painting to the community. He makes a living out of his craft by painting portrait images for people and doing murals like the one he did of Khuli Chana in Mahikeng and the other one he did at the Itsoseng recording studio. See figures 6 and 7 below.



Figure 6: ThatoSBK and Khuli Chana standing alongside ThatoSBK’s mural of Khuli Chana in Mahikeng



Figure 7: ThatoSBK yawning next to his mural at Itsoseng recording studio

The business of art requires a significant amount of time and care. As an artist, you need to have your own supporters and promoter(s), business manager, coach, salesperson, market analyst, and friend who knows the business side of art and is there to guide you through it and support you – even if it means you have to be all that yourself, but if you are not, you are most likely to have a marginal career at best (Maisel, 1994:102).

Commercialising one's art is not an easy thing to do – it requires patience, compromises, effort and networks. Physical performances, live shows, and exhibitions (which generate royalties for those who are registered artists) are ways in which young creatives in Itsoseng township make a living out of their crafts.

The word *go gereza/go phanda* which is used by these young creatives also indicates that the work/task at hand is not a smooth sailing process, but rather one with hurdles and challenges which one has to *artchaar* around to get to the other side. The success and/or failure to make a living out of creatives' craft lies in knowing the relevant demographics for the creatives' craft, preparation time, connections/plugs, and most importantly knowing the "business side of the game".

## Chapter Three: *Atchaaring out*: Stress, precarity (uncertainty), and healing

During the 2021 festive season, I realised that being a young creative in Itsoseng is challenging. From planning your working schedule around power cuts, loadshedding, unplanned home chores to having events ruined by rainy weather. Although there are local young creatives who can *atchaar* their way around some of the hurdles and challenging circumstances, it is rare to find one young creative who have all the resources needed to *atchaar* them all.

For instance, having Eskom's phone number is not enough to *atchaar* a zone power cut. Also, a sound equipment that is not waterproofed is not adequate to *atchaar* an event that is taking place outdoors in a rainy day. Lastly, living under your parents' roof when you chose the one career path that they warned you about is a hurdle only the "brave" local young creatives are able to *atchaar* in Itsoseng.

According to Larkin (2013:328) infrastructures are networks which are built to facilitate the flow of goods, people, or ideas and allow for their exchange over space. There are lines of connections between local young creatives, and these lines of connections enables the flow of that which makes making art in Itsoseng township possible.

The networks that each local young creative participating in this study has, even outside Itsoseng, becomes handy when infrastructure such as electricity fails and/or when unexpected challenges emerge. For example, think of the local young creative stuck far away from Itsoseng after a radio interview and needing transport to come back home. The exchanges amongst the lines of connections go to as little as a helping hand that will carry the sound equipment off the stage during a performance to a secure space during rainy weather and/or having fellow young creatives who are willing to perform for free at your local show.

### Cultural capital

It was on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of December 2021 around four in the afternoon when I decide to go buy the ticket for the "*stay at home son v*" show at the Pop-Up Lifestyle Pub gate which was taking place later that day. On this cloudy and yet busy day on the Mangope highway in Itsoseng township, the youth dressed up very nicely, one could say that they were dressed for the occasion.

Although their faces were masked up, I could hear their excitement through their loud conversations and their laughs under those masks – the same masks that will be down and

out of their faces the very moment they get through the gate at the social venue. After the *not so cool*/festive season that we had in 2020 where there was not much movement on the streets and the taverns, pubs, and clubs were restricted from selling alcohol and allowing sit-ins due to Covid-19, Itsoseng youth was out to play. This event was no exception.

Sweatpants, baggy trousers, stylish tops, shining jewellery, shaded glasses, and branded sneakers was the typical dress code that most of the people put on during this event, making it predictable that the target market for the event was young and hip-hop style. According to O'Reilly & Kerrigan (2010:19) placing importance on brand culture is part of a wider demand for inclusion of cultural issues within management thinking.

What the authors mean by this is that culture and history provide a much-needed contextualisation contrast to managerial views of branding's interaction with consumer and society (O'Reilly & Kerrigan, 2010:19). The clothing, drinking, dancing, and conversing behaviour during this event was evidence that art offers an excellent, yet underused vehicle for studying and understanding cultural forces in branding (O'Reilly & Kerrigan, 2010:19).

Jasten Case – a young motswako rap artist who also works at the local internet café around Itsoseng taxi rank, and his team organised the event, from arranging their homemade stage which was made with planks to hiring sound equipment to connect microphones and speakers. The event seemed to be a low budget show because even though a well-known artist from Klerksdorp, Maglera Doe Boy, was the main performing artist on the poster who attracted most of the crowd to the event, there were local upcoming rappers and the underground rappers who were invited by the organisers to perform for free alongside him.

I commend Jasten Case and his team for being able to put together the event with no additional funding or sponsorships. However, the risks were more when compared to the potential benefits from where I was standing. Hope is what Jasten Case and his team held on to that the event will be a success regardless of the challenges they may face.

*Mabogo dinku a thebana* is a Setswana proverb which means that a helping hand is a sign of humanity, and it was put into practice during the show at Pop-Up Lifestyle Pub. The local upcoming artists and the underground rappers gave their all on that plank homemade stage, dropping bars to entertain the crowd. They did not give a mediocre performance despite that they were doing it for free.

They went all out, and I could see the love and passion for their respective crafts shining in their eyeballs especially when the crowd cheers them up and shout their stage names out loud while they are on the stage performing.

The promoter and his team did not make profit from the event and young creatives like LoyalSaint amongst other local performers did not get paid for their performances. Despite their employment status, which shows a high rate of unemployment amongst youth in South Africa, young creatives in Itsoseng tend to let opportunities which they qualify for, and which have the potential to alleviate their financial stress pass them by because they do not resonate with them or they rather place themselves in situations where their art is seen than where they feel like they are diverging from their focus point which is art.

My data shows that this is because they are experiencing art addiction, art being the “addiction” the self-identified young creatives in Itsoseng are dealing with, hoping to get money for their next “fix” and reaching their high – a metaphor for the quickest way of making a living out of creative arts and reaching a point of success in the field of creative arts and entertainment. Ironically, it takes years of experience to succeed in the arts and entertainment industry.

Alacovska, Langevang & Steedman (2021:627) refer to hustling as a prominent manifestation of the work of hope as an active mode of dealing with everyday precarity. Furthermore, the authors state that the term defines the creative and entrepreneurial activities which creatives engage in on their daily basis in various contexts, including in the creative industries (Alacovska *et.al.* 2021:627). It is through watching the young and upcoming local artists in Itsoseng that I discovered their way to *atchaar* being *Matlhalela* (someone who is unemployed (often an adult) and is dependent on others financially (particularly his/her parents) by putting their talent to use and gaining exposure which aids them when it comes to making a living using their crafts).

Socialising and building creative networks: *Mabogo dinku a thebana*

Acts of kindness towards the community members as a local artist when you are not at work are vital because it is the very same community members who will offer a helping hand when you need it the most with your craft. Even when it started to drizzle in the middle of performances at the event, the crowd stood with their drinks right next to the stage to have a full experience of the performances and this was heart-warming to see and be a part of.

Witnessing the young upcoming rap artists building themselves a bridge from scratch which they may need in the near future by performing for exposure was the most profound moment for me because I know the feeling of building your own profile from nothing – it takes courage and resilience.

It started to rain cats and dogs when Maglera Doe Boy was still performing, yet there was still audience standing next to the uncovered stage and he still continued with his performance while some of the crowd was standing in the round-like building of the pub, under a roof made with grass, facing the stage to witness Maglera Doe Boy's performance.

I began to zone out from the event that was taking place and started being in my thoughts as I was reminded of a story that Tar once told me about a local event which he once organised and got disturbed by heavy rains. Tar attended this particular event to support a number of his upcoming rap artists friends, and the moment I came back to reality I could see him trying to save this event from a disaster waiting to happen. He was having an intense conversation with Jasten Case and his team – the conversation was accompanied by hand gestures and folded foreheads. I could see that this is a Deja vu moment for Tar, but the organisers were too slow to catch that.

The performance went on for a while on the rain, then thunder hit, and both the sound and the lights went off. Cell phone flashlights went on from the crowd and the organisers. The bouncers held Maglera Doe Boy's hand and led him from the stage to the room situated at the entrance side of the pub, the changing room. Maglera Doe Boy had a celebrity moment when the crowd was trying to touch him and have pictures with him while he was surrounded by bouncers who would not allow such behaviour around him as they were accompanying him to the changing room. Right about this time, Jasten Case and his team united and came up with ideas to *atchaar* around the circumstance they were faced with.

Heavy rains, thunder strikes, electricity off, and the crowd wrestling their way to get access to take pictures with Maglera Doe Boy – things were getting out of hand. People who knew and were close to Jasten Case went to him to ask where and with what can they help him and his team with. I even heard a man telling his friends that the previous weekend's event was way better than this one when it comes to organising even though the organisers seemed to be faced with the same heavy rain situation.

He was making a point that it depends on who is organising the event, what experience do they have, and what support do they have when it comes to organising events. *Mabogo dinku a thebana*, he said to his friends, and they started walking towards the direction where Jasten Case was standing so that they can help him with whatever he may need help with.

They moved the tables into positions where water was not leaking from the roof made of grass, and then they used their cars as the source of light up until the organising team – with the help of friends and acquaintances, was able to connect the spotlight at the changing room entrance.

The crowd started joining in to bring about order in the pub by telling all the people who wanted pictures with Maglera Doe Boy to kindly form a line and to try not to close the changing room entrance – there was even a man who was holding another flashlight that he used to brighten the spot where the crowd was taking pictures with Maglera Doe Boy for better quality for their pictures.

In a short period of time after people started helping the organisers, the lights were back on. Even though we were squeezed in a round-like building with grass roof to shelter ourselves from the rain, the worst was over. Although there were no more performances, people gathered together to continue drinking and enjoy the evening – Maglera Doe Boy and his crew came out of the changing room and sat on their table situated at the far corner of the pub away from the crowds to drink and enjoy the evening as well.

When all does not go according to plan, we artchaar

In the above vignette, take note that one man from the crowd did not solely speak badly about the organising team of the event, but he offered a helping hand as well, to make sure that the situation did not get worse than what it was. Although he made a comparison of the previous weekend's event to the one we were attending, it did not stop him from contributing to the course of bettering the situation. His act of kindness made other people who were attending the event help as well. The important aspect when one needs to *atchaar* around a very complicated situation is to be surrounded by resources and/or people who are in a position of helping you – after all, no man is an island.

The disturbance that was brought by heavy rains placed pressure on Jasten Case and his organising team, but because of the connections they had in the audience and local community, they managed to *atchaar* their way out of a disaster which would have occurred as a result of the heavy rains. Jasten Case did not have to worry about replacing a damaged sound equipment because they had helping hands to save the day.

It is not in all cases that the local young creatives and event organisers are accurate with their calculated actions when planning a local show. December 2021 was a rainy season in Itsoseng and one could say that outdoor events were done at own risks. However, the local young creatives had a long dry season in 2020 where they could not reap much of financial benefits from their respective crafts due to lockdown restrictions and the economic effects associated with a pandemic.

This placed them in a tight spot where they felt forced to choose between securing the gig no matter the risks or playing it safe by waiting for the circumstances to favour them before they can make their move. Unfortunately, the local young creatives did not have the privilege to wait with various negative voices in their heads and in the small circles they move around in the township which constantly place them under pressure by throwing the devastating youth unemployment status in their face every chance they get.

In the same way that Jasten Case went ahead with the event even when he saw that the weather may jeopardise it, there are other local young creatives who took risks to secure gigs during a season filled with uncertainty using their respective crafts so as to put bread on the table and survive yet another day in these trying times.

Following (Honwana, 2012) whose work focuses on the transformative potential of the waithood generation in Africa, the Itsoseng young creatives use the resources available for them and their artistic talent to try and become fully participating members of their township even without stable jobs that pay living wages. Survival instincts and hope play a major role when the young creatives opt to go ahead with their plans to make money out of their crafts even though the risks seem higher than the benefits.

During a rainy December season in 2021, ThatoSBK had to paint a mural on the outside wall of the Itsoseng recording studio. He stated during our conversation that he had to use the cheaper quality of paint which he was not even there to pick it out himself because the studio owners could not afford the right quality of paint which he had suggested to be used for the mural. On top of that, the rain kept disturbing his progress on the mural.

The art becomes the “addiction” the young creatives in Itsoseng are dealing with, as stated in chapter one of this thesis. This is a metaphor I use to describe settling for the bare minimum so that the local young creatives make a living out of creative arts and hoping to reach a point of success in the field of creative arts and entertainment – and in most cases it does not pay off as calculated by the creatives and tends to lead them into depression.

#### [Creative art as a double-edge sword: The pain and healing aspects of art](#)

LoyalSaint, for instance, stated that there was a time he planned a show in his head when he was still a student at Vaal University of Technology – this has already been stated in the dissertation, but I elaborate more deeply here. Due to lack of funds, LoyalSaint could not execute his plan, and because he had dropped out of university, he ended up being depressed.

He did not receive any financial help from his parents when he came back home in Itsoseng, and he had to always ask permission whenever he had to perform and/or attend gigs – this placed more pressure on him as he was performing for exposure and did not get paid well.

Nathi also experienced depression which led him to take a time out of creating and producing music. Apart from the loss of his best friend, Mxolisi, which he was creating music with, Nathi was exploited by record label managers, and he assert that it was because he did not have knowledge and experience when it comes to paperwork and/or contracts which needed to be signed between the parties involved.

In the same way that Monatshana *et.al.* (2021:155) bring to our attention the challenges faced by North-West University students during Covid-19 when there was a shift from traditional contact classes to remote learning, I argue that the struggles that young artists come across when signing record deal contracts with music record label companies stem from not having facilities of information which can potentially equip them for the career they are about to embark.

Due to lack of knowledge and experience regarding the business side of the industry, Nathi found himself not growing financially even though he was producing hit songs (which he did not get credit for). Furthermore, the album he dedicated to his late friend, Mxolisi, got locked in his producer/manager's recording studio because of a quarrel they had which led to the discontinuation of their working relationship. The amount of work and time, not forgetting to mention the emotional investment, that he put in making the album was in vain because the producer/manager ended up keeping it and not releasing it – and that broke Nathi's heart and led him into deep depression.

Maisel (1994:88) asserts that all the pressures we face collaborate to throw us off course and make it seem that we need to make a choice between attending to life or attending to art. LoyalSaint started to look for temporary and/or contract jobs which he said are not stable but help him to cover his basic needs. Contract jobs entails working for a set period of time and being paid for the work completed.

For example, LoyalSaint was working on a contract to build a pavement road, and he got paid according to the work he did on that contract. "Don't get me wrong, I did not give up on my goal of making it in the music industry, I just need to survive while I'm still working on making that goal become my reality", said LoyalSaint during our interview. Nathi also had an experience of working as a petrol attendant after all the unfortunate scenes of being exploited by record label managers.

Nomonde “Sky” Mlotshwa (a writer and poet I follow on Instagram and YouTube) once said that “artists go on stage with wounds, bleeding and hurting and yet they put a face to heal the wounds and mend the broken hearts of the audience”. As I reflect on her statement, it is evident that the local young creatives move around carrying heavy burdens and open wounds which their audience are not aware of because the focus is on the art they deliver and not on the hands or the voices behind the art itself. Nathi and LoyalSaint are living testimonies to what Sky asserts.

“I did not think I will be making music ever again in my life after such a horrible experience. What made it worse was that I felt alone even around my friends who were trying to be there for me – I did not feel the love that I had experienced when I am on stage”, said Nathi in our interview.

In conclusion of this section, Nomonde “Sky” Mlotshwa once said in her Instagram post “doing this art thing sober is almost close to impossible, especially if the world knows you as an alter ego or a famous creative”. Although Maisel (1994:95) assert that a depressed mood may envelop the artists, preventing them from working and leaving them with little to no energy to make art or to face life in general, I have experienced moments where I felt more alive in my poetry writings. Below is a poem I wrote in June 2020 when I was going through depression due to unemployment amongst other personal inconsistencies which kept unfolding in my life.

Ink saved my life

*I was on the verge, I had lost my light  
Felt exposed and vulnerable but in pen and paper I found a place to hide  
In the mist of it all, writing made me feel alright  
Hence, I write... because the alternative is to die*

*In my mind I choke at the words thought and not written  
I get brain damage, be as good as dead, without placing my thoughts in writing  
I am dependant on the process of writing  
It keeps me sane, keeps me alive – a life-support machine to me  
It's in the flow of ink out of the pen straight to the paper*

*If it wasn't for writing  
Suicidal thoughts would have won  
Depression would have defeated me, worn me out  
I'd be a walking grave, life's most defeated opponent  
I hope you understand how important the relationship between pen and paper to me is  
For I write...because the alternative is to die.*

Poem by Thandiwe Twala

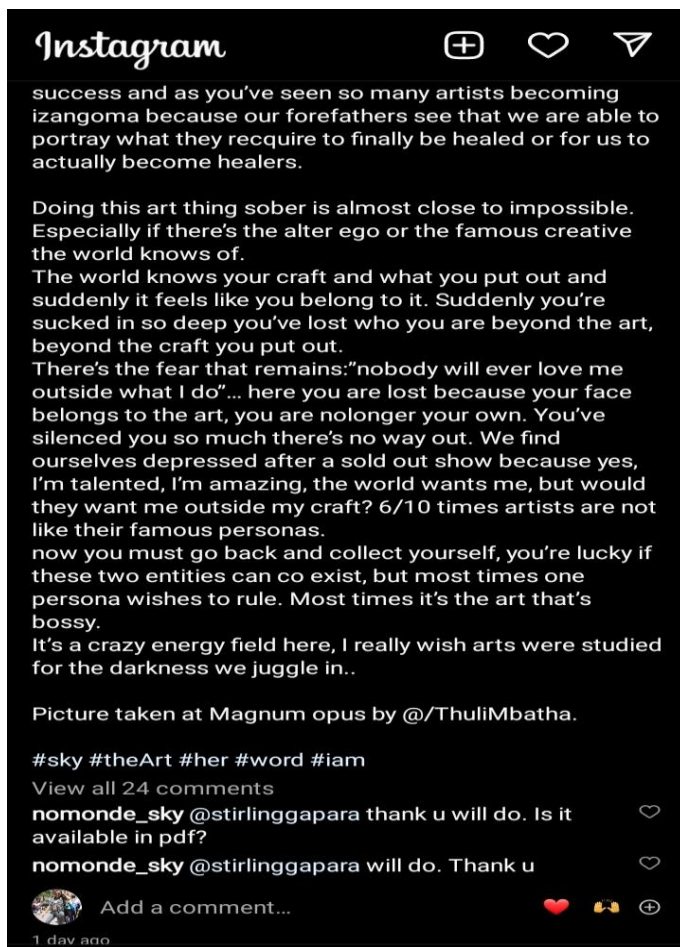


Figure 8: Nomonde 'Sky' Mlotshwa's Instagram post

Some of us – artists such as myself, find healing in writing our thoughts and feelings down, while others find healing in their process of creating a beat or painting/drawing a picture or writing a song. Nathi mentioned in our interview that he remembers times where he would want to be left alone but would listen to music which lifted his mood at the end of the day. There are also moments where the audience are on the receiving end of healing through different exhibitions and performances by the local artists, but the artists seem to find healing in the same craft that may have hurt them in the first place.

Konkwo – a local poet/song writer/beatmaker who is a close friend and a brother of Loyal Saint mentioned during our interview that the love they have for their different crafts often ends up being the source of their pain and the medicine they need when going through the healing process. To elaborate his statement, he told me that his father does not want him to pursue career in creative arts and entertainment industry – particularly music. This was because his father himself had the first-hand experience of the cruel side of the arts, yet he listens to music whenever he is overwhelmed by emotions of either happiness or sadness.

“He was in Johannesburg with the group he used to sing with, and they were out in the streets for days while they were chasing their dream of making it in the music industry”, Konkow stated in our interview. He mentioned that his father’s fears and anxieties towards the music industry are projected to him and that may be the reason he is sceptical about making big moves and fully investing in the music. According to Maisel (1994: 81-82) there are constraints of belief which make artists believe that art is not what they should go for yet. Sometimes, as he described, the voices of our parents serve as blocks.

Heartbeat racing, palms sweating and eyes wide open out of anxiety, is how Gogo MsKay described the way she felt the time she had to perform in front of a crowd at an event she was booked to DJ at. “A few minutes before my performance, I started to pray and to speak to my ancestors in private. I felt that I cannot do this on my own because I did not want to disappoint – disappoint myself, the crowd, and the guy who taught me how to DJ”, she mentioned in our interview. Alacovska, Langevang & Steedman (2021:631) asserts that in precarious geographies, one is driven more towards the use of religiosity in their work due to uncertain and ‘disabling’ business environment.

Gogo MsKay, who is a local female DJ and a traditional healer who also designs bags, shoes and accessories using the cloths used by traditional healers, stated that spirituality and creative arts are closely linked, and they work hand in hand for her. She continued:

“I remember that day when I was feeling nervous before my performance, the energy in the pub changed immediately after I prayed and spoke to my ancestors. I could feel that I was not alone on the decks, and evidence to that was that I zoned out while performing and the moment I came back to my senses I saw the crowd in tears because the house music I was playing had a healing sensation to it – It felt like I was in communication with the crowd’s souls”.

Although being a young creative in Itsoseng is not a smooth sailing experience, my research reveals that the young creatives in Itsoseng *atchaar* out the stress and precarity that comes with being a young creative in an under resourced township such as Itsoseng through line of connections which enables the flow of that which makes making art in Itsoseng township possible, showing that indeed *mabogo dinku a thebana* (a helping hand is a sign of humanity).

My research does not look passed the narrative of the local creatives who are unable to successfully *atchaar* their way out of a challenging situation. It explores cases which lead some local creatives into a state of depression and stress. In this chapter I looked into how the creatives I worked with during my fieldwork go about their lives in stressful situations and how they deal with mental health in general especially when and if the main cause of it is their respective crafts.

The other part of discussion in this chapter is on healing aspect of creative arts. Narratives from Nomonde “Sky” Mlotshwa, Konkow’s and Gogo MsKay’s shows us that in some instances the healing that the creatives intend to give out to the world is what the creatives themselves need and releasing it out only bring about healing to themselves as well. Additionally, she once said that “doing this art thing sober is almost close to impossible, especially if the world knows you as an alter ego or a famous creative”. This does not only bring to our attention the pressure that our artists and creatives are experiencing on daily basis, but also how their work can bring about healing to their audience.

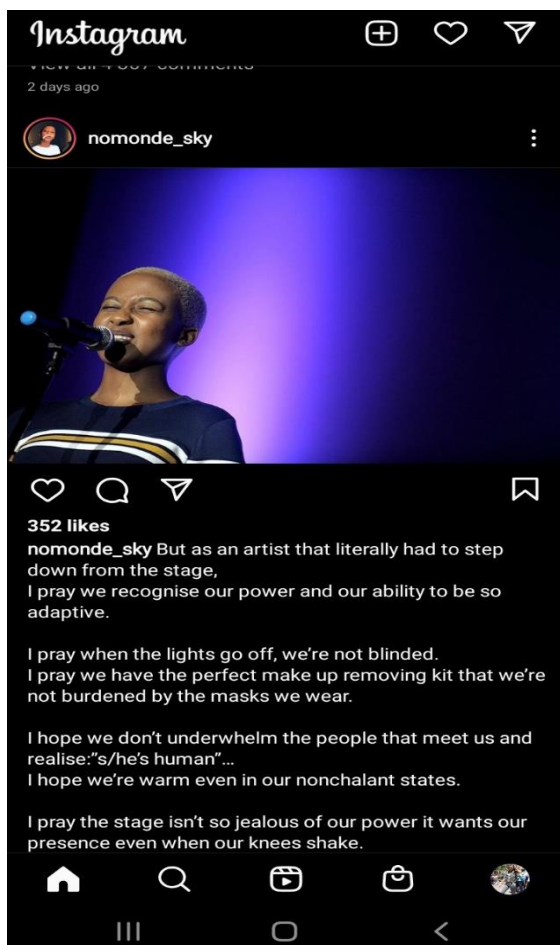


Figure 9: Nomonde ‘Sky’ Mlotshwa’s Instagram post on art and spirituality

## Chapter four: Making family, support, collaborations, and giving back

As stated in the previous chapter, the young creatives in Itsoseng township seek help from one another and the community members to *atchaar* challenging – sometimes unforeseen circumstances. Loyalty and support are vital when it comes to collaboration and world-making among young creatives in Itsoseng township.

### Kinship: Importance of support for young creatives

My fieldwork data reveals that these young creatives' "walls" when it comes to who they let in their lives (friends, potential work partners and acquaintances) are very high. Passing through them requires patience and honesty at all times, especially with me entering their private spaces as a researcher.

Ross asserts that route-finding involves a "sense of moving through space, navigating relationships, and careful weaving between the known and unknown" (Ross, 2010:59), and I had to find my route in the mist of engaging with the young creatives to understand the kinship relationships they have with one another and other people in Itsoseng township which this chapter focuses on.

As I continue to discuss the notion of world-making (Cox, 2022) and care (Van Dooren, 2014) which I use to explain complex family relations and fictive kinship (Weston, 1991) I explore how Kasi Market Day J4YS<sup>14</sup> in collaboration with local DJs and vendors organises events that aim to empower local brands and promote the young DJs which are performing at these events.

Kasi Market Day J4YS also give back to the community by donating food parcels to impoverished community members or organisations such as the Itsoseng Hospice. It is in this section of the chapter that I show that the vibey kasi market day events serve as a social event where local young creatives have an opportunity to network and make connections while they are selling their products and services and also contributing to the community.

*"If only our parents knew how happy we are when we are out, performing and/or attending gigs, doing what we love the most – music, they would let us be and probably give us their full support"*, said Konkow in our interview, with a straight face, no smiles and his eyes shining as though he was about to cry. He mentioned that it is ironic how we wake up to music playing on the radio at our homes; how we play music in our various celebrations like weddings and birthday parties; and how we sing our emotions out in funerals, yet parents

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<sup>14</sup> Kasi Market Day J4YS facebook page link <https://www.facebook.com/pages/category/Event/Kasi-Market-Day-J4YS-101911608006014/>

are sceptical to support some young creatives when they want to make professional careers out of creative arts.

According to Maisel (1994:83) support can sometimes come across very aggressively and as a burden through the message that the creatives' parents convey when its main objective is to protect the loved ones. Even though this may be the case, Konkow and TJ still believe that the older generation (parents and guardians to the young creatives) should let the young creatives experience their fair share of mistakes which they can learn from and reflect on for future references.

During my ethnographic fieldwork I found that there are household bonds among immediate family members (mother, father, siblings) that break due to misunderstandings around the topic of making life and a living using the young creatives' respective crafts. This may be because creative arts and entertainment are arguably seen as the most devalued career in South Africa – and perhaps globally. In 2015 only 2.52 per cent of all jobs in South Africa were classed as creative occupations (fine arts, music, film, performing arts, libraries, museums, crafts etc), showing a decline from the 2.93 per cent which it made out of all jobs in South Africa in 2014 (Hadisi *et.al.* 2017:28)

Referring back to LoyalSaint's chronicle of his parents not providing for him financially after he had dropped out of university, my research data divulges the tensions that come with the choices and decisions that some of the young creatives I worked with in this research make which favours making it in the creative arts field than pleasing their parents and immediate family members. These tensions include young creatives not having support from their immediate family and having to do creative arts related things with the immediate family being yet another hurdle to *atchaar* around. In the mist of this tensions, young creatives recreate their world into that which promotes and support their career journey.

It is sometimes because of the above-mentioned tensions that some young creatives in Itsoseng have a group of people amongst themselves who they confide in for support when it comes to their respective craft. The support that they get from one another, in its various forms, is an important aspect that pulls them towards the notion of sociable relationship which Allan (1979) refers to in his book titled *A sociology of friendship and kinship*.

The relationship amongst these young creatives in Itsoseng is not blood relationship, however, it is driven by the hunger to thrive in the creative arts and entertainment industry – creating a stronger bond than that they have with their household family. While they are in the process to *atchaar* their way around the creative arts and entertainment industry, they make family through kinship relations as well. It is arguable that this is the form of infrastructure that Simone (2019) suggests is important when living with uncertainty.

When local young creatives (especially those who their journey to making a living through their respective crafts is still new and rocky) met one another at the local events that we attended during December 2021, they would greet one another with warmth and excitement as though they had not seen each other for a long time. They would even share intense conversations filled with advice and words of encouragement in the mist of the background noises taking place in the social venue.

This gave a feel of family reunion happening at these particular festive season events. As a practice of building strong bridges of connections and a sense of belonging, the social spaces and live shows at the local events also served as networking spaces for the upcoming local young creatives. It is important to note that most of these events were organised by the Kasi Market Day J4YS organisers.

Being a witness to such practice which reveals how much care, loyalty, and support among the upcoming local young creatives and those who are more experienced in the creative arts and entertainment industry is associated with growth and resilience instead of dwelling on the poor infrastructures of Itsoseng township itself was profound for me. I started to experience the feel of being home when surrounded by people, and not associate the feeling of being home with the geographic space, Itsoseng.

The smile that lit up the room on LoyalSaint's face when he saw me at the Pop-Up Lifestyle Pub attending *The stay at home son v* event, and the customised handshakes accompanied by a pat on a shoulder which local fellow creatives gave one another had a loud gesture screaming "*I am here for you*" and "*you got my support*", and that is what some local creatives in this study project say they yearn for amongst other things intended at helping them flourish in their respective crafts.

In the same sense that (Becker & Dastile, 2008:21) assert that African languages mixed with English among Cape Town hip-hop rap artists provide support to the endeavours of young South Africans in creating a sense of their selves after the end of apartheid, it goes as far as body language at events in the case of creatives in Itsoseng. This also give them a sense of belonging in a space where they are understood and loudly supported by the crowds and fellow creatives.

Directly quoting DaRealKayCrack's words when we were waiting for our Kota orders at *Lawka* (a local place selling bunny chow and chips), he said, "*When the goal is common, and the energy is matched, and the loyalty is unquestionable, consider yourself part of the family*". He wanted me to be part of "Team Cracklyn" which is the team working together to make sure that his music and the brand run smoothly. He mentioned that I fit the criteria and

he trusted my judgement, and I felt honoured even though I had no idea how was I a fit in the team.

I argue that because people who are close relatives to a few of these young creatives distance themselves from their creative arts related practices and activities, some young creatives outsource fanbase and support from non-blood related people who are interested in what they do as a practice of worldmaking. According to Cox (2022:102) worldmaking is a creative practice that uses the limitations of a given social reality and pursues to remake current social conditions.

The concept of family making that goes along with the practice of worldmaking that I just mentioned above to explain the practice of outsourcing support and a sense of belonging among the young creatives who did not receive support from their household family members at the beginning of their career journey in creative arts and entertainment follows the idea of chosen kinship that Weston discusses in book titled *Families we choose: Lesbians, Gays, Kinship* (Weston, 1991).

As stated in the introduction of this thesis, young creatives who participated in this research study have built and created bonds with one another and other creatives who are not part of this research study, and there are various groups which are better explained as 'fictive' kinship among the creatives in Itsoseng. The uprise of fictive kinship among creatives in Itsoseng is due to the idea of sharing spaces, resources, common interests, burdens and/or hardships in the creative arts and entertainment realm.

The notion of cultural capital, most importantly social relations and networks, and family making among local young creatives in Itsoseng is apparent when we look at the utilisation of *backroom studios* and how the local artists and producers help one another to produce a song, or what they call "*projects*" (that being an album or an EP). For instance, Ganja – Leano's cousin, introduced Leano to Notshi by encouraging him to listen to Notshi's songs which were recorded using USA popular artists' beats.

The affiliation started on the basis of Leano producing and recording Notshi's music in Leano's backroom using an empty wardrobe as their booth, with a tiny microphone tied on a broomstick. Even though the equipment that Leano was using back then was handmade, it did not compromise the quality of the songs, and he produced great music with it. In a visit at Leano's place, he said that "*Quality has always been an important aspect when it comes to producing music for me ntwana. Listening to Notshi's songs, I could tell that he is a good songwriter and/or rapper. What started as a working relationship for us, birthed brotherhood – a bond I believe no one and nothing could ever break*".

According to Stack (1975:33) alliances between people are created around the clock as kin and friends exchange goods and resources and give one another. Although there is Itsoseng recording studio, the local artists in this study project still record and produce their music with their trusted producers who have backroom studios instead because there is no clear communication coming from the Itsoseng studio management to them regarding procedures of recording music at the studio.

As I have stated in chapter three, there are lines of connections which enables the flow of that which makes making art in Itsoseng township possible, and cultural capital is a vital aspect which forms the base of these lines of connections. Even though unspoken, the young creatives form alliances with those who practice reciprocated exchange with them.

The data from my fieldwork research shows that these kinship relations among the local young creatives spark the spirit of oneness where the vision to tell stories which will not only benefit them financially, but heal and unite the community as well, is clear and achievable to them. When there are complexities and tensions around the creation of art and the differences that rise from its intended purpose, the young creatives work together in their small groups to tackle the challenges. Even though this is the case, there are creatives who believe that there is room for more collaborations.

*“Imagine the beauty that will come out as a result of me working with a local poet and/or rap artist in an art exhibition which is put together by a local storyteller and/or curator. We have a lot of talent in Kasi, we just need to stick together and support one another instead of looking down on each other”*, said ThatoSBK. It is unfortunate that the parents/guardians show less patience when it comes to the development of the local young creatives’ respective crafts.

Maisel (1994:120) asserts that the talent and the skill an artist has, cannot be taken away from them, but the challenging part is having patience while they are figuring out how to make a living out of their craft. When the young creatives, especially those who are in their late 20s and early 30s, present their art experience with no evidence that they are making money out of it to their parents/guardians. Family feuds become the results of the situation, leading the young creatives to either the state of depression which I discussed in chapter three or seeking refuge to their home away from home which we are currently discussing in this chapter.

It is important to note that not all parents/guardians of the local young creatives in Itsoseng are sceptical to support their children in the creative arts and entertainment industry in Itsoseng. For instance, Live D’s parents have supported his passion for music since the beginning of his music career. They even took him to music school in Johannesburg, and they bought music production equipment for him to start his backroom studio in his home.

Furthermore, Leano's family bought him the computer, speakers, and a microphone that he uses in his backroom studio. His sister and brother-in-law attend the *gigs* he performs at, such as in the Notshi & Friends event which took place on the 28<sup>th</sup> of November 2021.

PeaceBeats, who also has a backroom studio at his home, has received support from his family through getting him equipment as well. These three local producers/beatmakers started off small in their backrooms, and their households encouraged them even though they had no precise words to use when explaining the line of work that they want to pursue to their families. In addition to the support that they are getting from their immediate family members, they also have alliances in the local creative arts and entertainment industry.

Leano; Live D; and PeaceBeats – like other local young creative in Itsoseng, are well aware that they need *plugs* (connections formed through networking) in and around the industry in order to be known and to make a living out of their respective crafts. There is a Setswana phrase saying, “*sedikwa ke ntswa-pedi ga se thata*”. It means that through collaborations and helping hands, we can overcome the most challenging and/or difficult task at hand.

On top of reciprocity that I mentioned earlier, connections and creating good relationships locally is one of the steppingstones when building and/or developing a career in creative arts and entertainment industry – and it is through those connections that the young creatives in Itsoseng find themselves having a kinship away from their immediate family.

As the affiliation between Notshi and Leano grew, Nathi became part of the brotherhood when he also started recording at Leano's backroom studio. Notshi and Nathi collaborated on songs, one of them being the track titled *koloi ya motswako* which its performance can be found on YouTube currently <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WvU2O1ay-9Q>. The collaboration song was produced by Leano, meaning that it is one of the songs that all three of them worked on together.

Notshi and Nathi have the skill and knowledge of writing songs according to their specific genres, but they trust Leano to master and mix their songs. People risk, or even learn, to trust others because of the urge to see positive change in their lives. Although it is said not to trust anyone, there has to be someone you are willing to risk trusting because everyone needs help in this world (Stack, 1975:39-40).

Backroom studios in Itsoseng are intimate spaces where access is gained according to degrees of companionship among local young creatives. As Stack (1975:43) asserts that an individual mobilises others as participants in their social network through exchange transactions, the owners of the backroom studios in Itsoseng have their web of creatives which they allow in these spaces, either for work or for leisure or both.

For instance, In October 2021, Leano produced DaReal KayCrack's song titled *addiction* in the backroom studio situated next to the backroom he sleeps in. As he was not hosting recording sessions in December, he then shifted the equipment to the backroom he sleeps in so as to prepare for the renovations of the previous studio room— making the room he sleeps in a shared space for both sleeping and recording music.

In the new setting of the studio, only close friends have entered the space – with limitations such as who gets to sit where. In January 2022 the recording equipment was still in Leano's sleeping space and the other backroom was used as storage for renovations materials. In January 2022 Nathi and I went to Leano's backroom studio to record Nathi's remake of his song titled *woza* (unreleased). Nathi explains that the space was welcoming and easy going, allowing him to be himself and hit those high pitch notes freely as well.

Through the Setswana slang language that we spoke; the way we set in Leano's room like siblings experimenting with their toys; and a meal of fat cakes, chips and cooldrink which Khajow joined us as we shared it in this very same space while remaking this song, I affirm that through the notions of reciprocity and worldmaking mentioned above, home (for some creatives in Itsoseng) can be found in people and the spaces they share instead of a building structure.

#### [Collaborations and giving back to the community](#)

Since I started spending time with Nathi, Notshi, Leano, TJ, and Khajow (T'zo as well, who is not a creative but a friend to us all) during PS4 FIFA session in December 2021, I got to see that indeed *mabogo dinku a thebana*. It is not only verbal support through motivational talks and necessary reprimanding that the kinship group show up for one another. They also help one another financially; they help one another when it comes to sharing knowledge and resources for their crafts; and they are there for each other even when it comes to family affairs and relationship affairs.

These practices not only show genuine support and care for one another, but it also secures a safe space where one can always come to in times of need. Van Dooren (2014:291-292) asserts that caring necessitates more than just abstract well wishing, but rather requires that we get involved in some concrete way where we do something (wherever possible) to take care of another. With the creatives I used to play PS4 FIFA with, it goes as far as having "*family meetings*" to discuss matters which directly affects the nature and quality of the affiliation or collectively resolving challenges.

Transactions of electricity tokens, data hotspots, cashsend, and random lunches among *mauthi*<sup>15</sup> are not just acts of kindness to these creatives but also shows that there is practice of care in their social network. The above-mentioned transactions are some of the concrete ways where they get to help wherever possible with whatever they have to better the next person's situation without passing any judgement, and the transactions are reciprocated among this group of young creatives without any of them being coerced to chip in.

Mauss (2002:89) asserts that instead of forcing our desires on a citizen to be either too good or too individualist nor too insensitive or too realist, we must step aside to let the citizen have a deep sense of awareness of themselves, but also of others, and of social reality. This is because it is the feelings of people, in their minds and in flesh and blood that always spiral into action and that have acted everywhere (Mauss, 2002:89), and this statement supports the acts of kindness and the exchanges between *mauthi*. It is an honour for me to have gained access, through my research project, to be part of the fictive kinship of Notshi, Nathi and Leano's network circle.

According to Mauss (2002:XI) the potlatch is an example of a total system of giving where each gift is part of a system of reciprocity in which the honour of the giver and the recipient are engaged. Similar to this notion of gifting, young creatives in Itsoseng exchange goods and services according to one's reputation as a potential exchange partner like in Stack's (1975) article. Young creatives in Itsoseng assist and do favours for one another in order for the same – if not something greater, to be done for them when they need *plugs* and resources which they may not have to push their crafts forward and grow their artwork.

For instance, Leano charges local artist for studio time when they need him to master, mix, and to record their music. On the other hand, he would not charge Nathi because he trusts that he will one day cash in the favour he did by recording Nathi with no cost – it may be in the form of asking for transportation or borrowing money or keeping a secret.

Nathi used to offer his car, provided that they buy petrol together, to take our group of friends to *gigs* where either Notshi and Khajow or Nathi himself is performing. In return, he knew that not only are we supporting a friend, but there will be times when one of us, if not all of us, helps him as well. For example, one time he needed to take his girlfriend home and his car did not have petrol and Notshi lent him his car to drop off his girlfriend home.

When Notshi's car was still at the local mechanic, getting fixed, he had no transport issues because two of his close friends in Itsoseng had cars and they were willing to take him wherever he needed to go or even lend him the car to drive himself wherever he needed to

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<sup>15</sup> Mauthi is a word locally used for mainly a group of male friends

go. This follows Mauss' statement where he writes that we run no risk of disappointment when we give as much as we take (Mauss, 2002:91), and that is how strong social bonds are created among young creatives in Itsoseng.

Sometimes financial gains come out of these social ties formed through reciprocated exchanges between creatives in Itsoseng. For instance, Notshi, Nathi, and Leano are very close friends with an excellent working relationship alongside their brotherhood, therefore Leano gets all the credits, recognition, and remuneration that is rightfully due to him when he produces Notshi's and Nathi's songs and/or projects. Furthermore, when the local artists (and those outside Itsoseng who know him through recommendations) need a beat to write for or on, Leano charges them with what he refers to as a *little something* (a minimum rate he charges for the sale of his beats) as the initial idea is not to give it away for free.

In the words of AsapNoob (my friend who gave a lot of insightful ideas for this research project, but is not an Itsoseng young creative), "alienation starts with friends who take your art for granted, free of charge". AsapNoob said that he has done a lot of work for some of his friends free of charge, and they have started to undermine his craft. He added that "things are taken seriously on different spectrums, and the services that people undermine normally do not get the payment they deserve". This shows how material objects acquire meanings and value 'in their forms, their uses, their trajectories (Appadurai, 1986:5), as stated in chapter two of this thesis.

AsapNoob made an example of when his friends used to ask him to design logos; T-shirts; or draw something/someone for them. He said they would tend to say that it is easy and does not take him much time, and they end up not paying him. He said that people forget that he placed hard work and a lot of practice to be able to do these designs and logos in a short period of time. I gained a lot of insight from him through these conversations we had over the phone.

According to Maisel (1992:102) care and significant amount of time are the two vital requirements for the business of art, and AsapNoob believes that an artist needs to care more about her/his art that she/he does not allow anyone to demean it by assuming it is easy or it is a hobby. This instilled curiosity in me to think more about the economic value and the sentimental value that the society, particularly in South Africa, place on art and its creation.

Hanson (2014:1) asserts that in order to facilitate structured loss and trade, modern elite philanthropy uses charitable exchange rituals similar to the primitive potlatch. These rituals simultaneously affirm and hide status and power, obscuring but also illuminating privilege.

Promoters in creative arts and entertainment industry use the same rituals to exploit young and upcoming creatives in the name of “taking them under their wings”.

In contrast to this idea of charitable exchange rituals, through collaborations with local young DJs and local brand owners and other vendors, Kasi Market Day J4YS organisers are not only inspiring and uplifting the vendors and the local DJs, but they are also contributing to making the lives of those who are impoverished in Itsoseng better. In November 2021 they donated food parcels to the Itsoseng Hospice.

During the four months of my ethnographic research, I attended three *kasi market day events* (these are events held monthly at one of the local pubs, with an entrance fee). The organisers invite local entrepreneurs and offer them stalls where they could advertise and sell their products which ranged from local brand clothing to home-cooked food. These events contribute to giving young local artists and young creatives a platform to advertise their designs and talents so that the community as a whole know of their craft and skills. However, this was limited to young creatives who already have established brand, or those who are in the organisers’ social network.

It may not be like the charitable exchange ritual, but Kasi Market Day J4YS should not confuse their donations with gifts because gifting is a “total system where every item of status or of spiritual or material possession is implicated for everyone in the whole community. The whole society can be described by the catalogue of transfers that map all the obligations between its members” (Mauss, 2002:XI).

It is in this regard that the Kasi Market Day J4YS, as an organisation, are able to approach corporations such as food retailing giants such as Pick n Pay<sup>16</sup> – who also have an obligation to give back to the communities through corporate social responsibility. In this case they were approached for donations of groceries and other items which they give to the disadvantaged members of the communities.

Although family-making and collaborations, built through exchanges and reciprocity of goods and services among the local young creatives, are the main *plugs* they need to *atchaar* around challenging circumstances, there is still genuine hope that art can be used as a tool to reshape and rewrite the narrative of Itsoseng community. ThatoSBK, like Matsika from Mbare in Zimbabwe, said he wants to paint away the dreary, boring, and ruined look that Itsoseng has and bring in colour of hope and life which brings inspiration to the local community members (Chingono, 2022).

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<sup>16</sup> Pick n Pay Feed the nation link <https://www.pnp.co.za/feed-the-nation>

At the time of writing, he already has 4 murals painted along the dusty, potholed streets of Itsoseng, and he said, in our interview, that his goal is to bring the art craft home where he can teach the coming generation about the importance of art. He wants to show them that it is possible to make a living in the creative arts industry even for a black child coming from the small towns that are hardly mentioned on televisions unless if strikes or riots broke out.

In conclusion of this chapter, the daily activities which young creatives from Itsoseng township engage in are their way of making life liveable under challenging circumstances that come with being a young creative in a small town and/or township. Although there are local young creatives who have their immediate family members supporting them in this roller-coaster journey of making a living out of their respective crafts, there are those such as Konkow and LoyalSaint who their parents and/or guardians are still sceptical to give their full support out of care and protection.

On the brighter side of things, through the notion of world-making and care which develops from social networks and collaborations which are a result of reciprocity and exchange, the young creatives in Itsoseng land themselves in what (Weston, 1991) refers to as fictive kinships. In these spaces which they share with their fellow creatives, they are able to do what they are passionate about and engage in their social network in ways that give their lives meaning and purpose, even when they are still finding their feet. This is because they are in these spaces with those who understand that their crafts require patience and care.

## Chapter Five: Conclusion

In this thesis I have discussed the relationship between creative arts and non-standard employment among young creatives in Itsoseng township, North-West Province. I began this thesis with an introduction where I clearly stated the South Africa's youth unemployment serves as a challenge we face, and clearly state that this is the problem statement for this thesis. The concepts which held this thesis through are explained in the introduction, and I also outlined the study background and methodology in the subsections following the introduction.

It is through support, loyalty, and commitment – which are built with cultural capital and worldmaking practices such as , music equipment and shared spaces that the making a living in arts and entertainment industry seems possible I bring to the audience' attention that the young creatives in Itsoseng township, similarly to the shack dwellers that Ross describes, have fought on for their survival in a township where the struggles of the poor are experienced daily (Ross, 2010:272).

I have shared how these young creatives, firstly, *atchaar* and/or manoeuvre around the devastating youth unemployment status that they are faced with on a daily basis, and I argue that even though Itsoseng is an under resourced township, there is still hope of redefining life and livelihood through creative arts and entertainment. Young creatives in this urban space are not discouraged to a point of giving up without a fight. In a poem (page 9), I call upon unity among Itsoseng youth of, knowing that there is still hope for a better future deep in the marrow of their bones.

Focusing on that which is working for young creatives in Itsoseng who took part in this research project, I discuss art addiction to explain the hope and passion that the young creatives show when creating and performing different art forms. I also discuss what being a young creative in Itsoseng entails reflecting into the everyday lives of the local young creatives who formed part of this research study.

I looked into ways which they make a living out of their respective creative and/or artistic work. I discuss the idea of *Ukuphanta* (Motsemme, 2011) – locally known as *go gereza/go phanda* to explain *gigs* that these township young creatives work in and with to provide for their families and loved ones and make a living out of. Deriving from Auerbach's (2020) work which focuses on aspects of success and achievement for the Angolan middle class, I argue that the success or failure to make a living out of creatives' craft lies in knowing the

techniques to use to build a strong knowledge foundation of the “business side of the game” – building connections/plugs is the vital way to *atchaar* life as a young creative in Itsoseng.

This is achieved by discussing themes of *go gereza* using skills and talents which young creatives can tap into to commercialise their art, the role of higher education training in commercialising arts, worldmaking practices, *atchaaring* the market for one’s craft, and Branding in creative arts meets entrepreneurship which I fully discussed in chapter two of this thesis.

The miserable income of the majority of performing artists in South Africa reflects both scarcity of jobs and the brief duration of those that are accessible (Maisel, 1994:3). This knowledge, together with the initial expectations both the parents/guardians and the young creatives have regarding the future of the young creatives when it comes to career choice, sustainability and getting a stable income, adds pressure in the young creatives’ journey of making a living out of their respective crafts.

I share my discovery that maintaining a stable income out of one’s craft is challenging and the young creatives *atchaar* the hurdles that come with this in different ways – some are still figuring out how to *atchaar* them. With power cuts, loadshedding, unplanned home chores, and having events ruined by rainy weather, the production of work is slowed down and young creatives in Itsoseng can never be sure whether they are working at a huge lose or a big gain.

My research reveals that the young creatives in Itsoseng *atchaar* out the stress and precarity that comes with being a young creative in an under resourced township through line of connections which enables the flow of that which makes making art in Itsoseng township possible, showing that indeed *mabogo dinku a thebana* (a helping hand is a sign of humanity). This is further explained in the thesis by exploring the idea of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1973). Chapter three discusses socialising and building creative networks, *artchaaring* in times of uncertainty, and the pain and healing aspects of art. This is to show analysis of how the young creatives in Itsoseng *artchaar* out stress and precarity that comes with being a creative artist in an under resourced township.

It is not all young creatives in Itsoseng who are able to *atchaar* their way around the challenges they are faced with as local creatives, this thesis explores cases which lead some local creatives into a state of depression and stress. Narratives from Nomonde “Sky” Mlotshwa, Konkow, and Gogo MsKay shows us that creative arts in some instances serves as a double-edged healing sword where releasing creative work out with intention to heal the audience only bring about healing to the creatives as well.

The young creatives in Itsoseng township continue to make their lives liveable through daily activities which shows practices of care, world-making, and the notion of fictive kinship under challenging circumstances that come with being a young creative in a township. These notions are results of practices influencing cultural capital, reciprocity, and exchange; hustling to make a living and life from creative arts; *atchaaring* out uncertainties and anxieties that come with being a creative artist in an under-resourced township; finding healing and offering healing through artwork; and support and collaborations which builds to family-making and giving back to the community.

### Anticipated future endeavours: Unity births prosperity

As stated in this thesis, creative arts and the cultural and creative industries in South Africa are unpredictable and offer more precarious employment than jobs outside the creative arts industry (Hadisi & Snowball, 2017:1), the young creatives in this study who are making a living through their crafts are able to provide for their immediate families and sustain their lifestyle. This shows that there is hope of making a living and life through creative arts for marginalized people.

Due to Itsoseng being an under-resourced township with no NGOs and/or functioning youth centre, and numerous disadvantages standing against the young creatives' production of artwork, taking creative arts as a profession and/or career may seem far-fetched. The narratives of young creatives such as ThatoSBK and Notshi discussed in this thesis should be used as evidence that *Maleka ga se makgona, makgona ke maboelisa*. This Setswana/Sepedi phrase means a person should work as if they are on a quest to achieve the ideal, and even after the goal is achieved, one should keep on working in a quest to surpass the ideal without complacency. This is far from the narrative of unemployed South African youth that young creatives so often hear from their parents!

Some of young creatives who participated in this thesis agreed to partake in the digital version of this research project as well. It is in the fieldwork video which I posted on YouTube [https://youtu.be/l\\_-yo4kJb4](https://youtu.be/l_-yo4kJb4) that they highlighted their needs to successfully make a living using their crafts, and some shared tips and ways of making a living and professionalising one's craft in creative arts and entertainment. Along with the discussions of support, mental-health awareness, their journey in arts and entertainment, they highlighted the need to value creative arts, both sentimentally and financially, more and acknowledge its visible importance in the digital world and the real world.

Young creatives in Itsoseng, those who were research participants of this study, are still producing artwork even though they are still experiencing challenges regarding equipment and other resources they need to produce artworks. Leano will be realising a five songs EP or two single songs (depending on the help he gets from his team) and Nathi will be releasing a single song as well before the year 2022 ends. ThatoSBK hopes to do some collaboration work with local young creatives, and Gogo MsKay will be working on an initiative that aims to help young girls with sanitary towels in Itsoseng. Their *aatcharing* continues, along with the *aatcharing* of the country of South Africa as it grapples with similar challenges at a national scale.

I believe that there is something valuable to learn from these young creatives in Itsoseng. Unity births prosperity, and I have discussed ways which young creatives created connections and continued to make their everyday lives liveable through creative arts, even when scarcity of jobs is a major problem in South Africa. Throughout the contours of narrations of young creatives in Itsoseng township that I communicated in this dissertation, I have shown how these young creatives continued to make means to survive or get by in their day-to-day navigation of the unpleasant realities of South Africa's high youth unemployment rate even when circumstances and/or the odds did not favour them. I admire and respect their hustling spirit; perseverance; and resilience, and I hope to collaborate with them in their future projects

What do I have to hold on to?

*What is it that I have to hold on to?  
When life feels like a dangerous slide  
With absolutely nothing to grip me  
What do I have to hold on to?  
When I feel like I'm being swallowed by a dark hole  
When I'm alone with my discouraging thoughts  
Mourning my existence meanwhile I'm still alive*

*Tell me what do I have to hold on to?  
When rejection has opened a podium in my life to dance onto  
When all odds are against my being too...  
The extend of self-blame and pity  
What is it that I have to hold on to?*

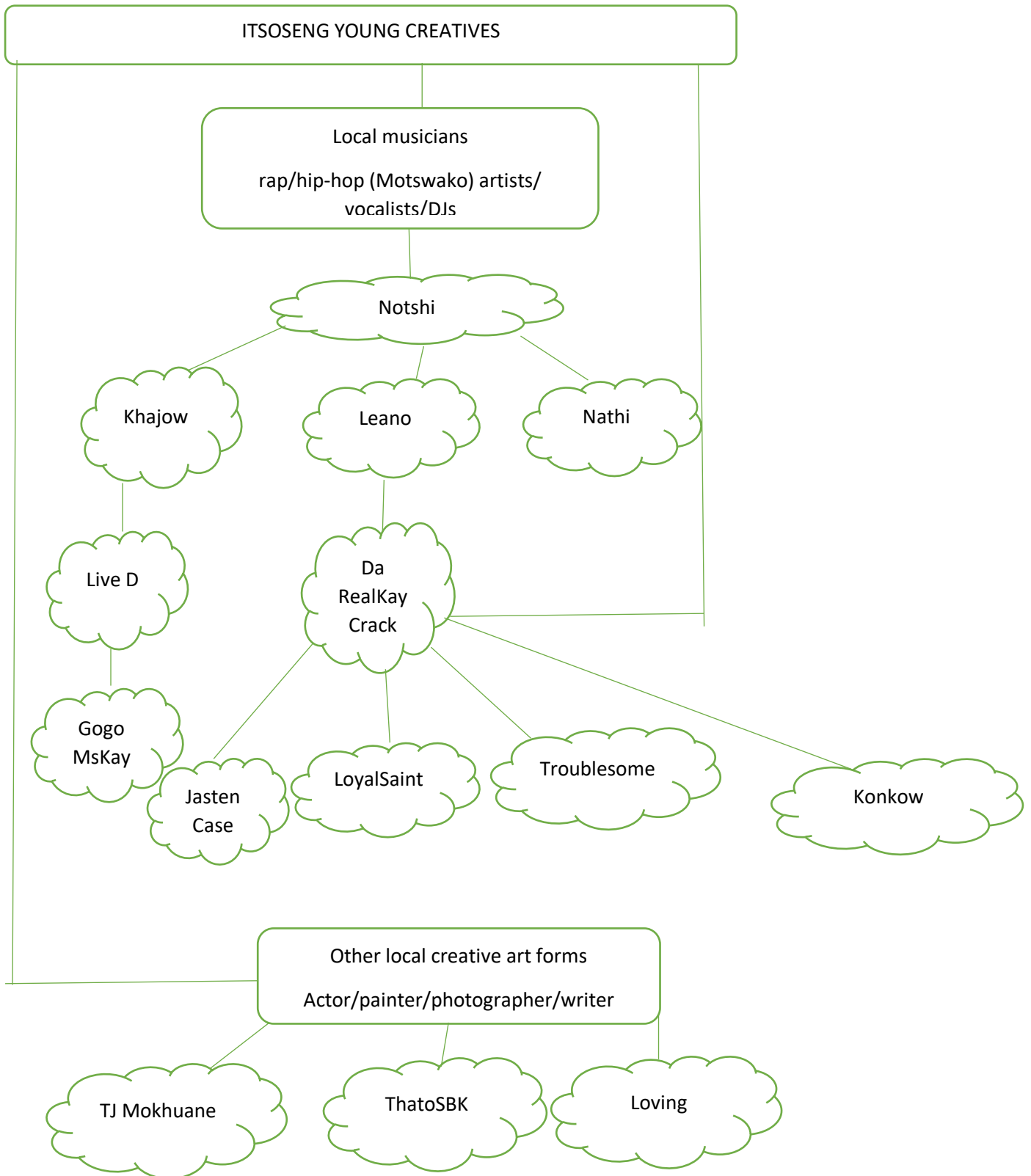
*Once, I was told education is the key  
And went with passion to study and grab my key  
Only to get at the door and find out that I'm still a kid  
Need more experience, need some feeding  
Or better yet, get in them sheets...  
With old men to score points in the work industry. Crap!*

*I'm not asking to be served on a silver Plata  
Nor complaining to be prioritised  
I'm just asking  
What is there for me to hold on to?  
Because I'm falling hard on my own.*

Poem by Thandiwe Twala

## Annexure

### The Creatives' Connection Web



Annexure 1: The creatives' connection web

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