

PASSAGES OF CULTURE

MEDIA AND MEDIATIONS OF CULTURE IN AFRICAN SOCIETIES

A RESEARCH PROJECT AND PARTNERSHIP NETWORK OF AFRICAN AND EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES FUNDED BY THE VOLKSWAGEN FOUNDATION

1. Abstract

The project aims at a deeper understanding of the significance of media for the rapidly changing culture of African societies. It focuses on medial shifts and how they affect and inform the negotiation of culture. This is of particular importance to the rapidly transforming life-world of African societies, in particular in urban settings. The methodological approach is based on case studies: From live performance to radio, CDs, Video and TV (South Africa), from theatre to film and TV (Cameroon), from live music to multiple media shifts in literary and visual culture (Nigeria), and from face-to-face to mediated interaction through the electronic media (Cameroon/ Germany/Switzerland). These passages of media are linked by four transversal themes that are at the centre of our empirical inquiry: the changing modes of perception and the transformation of agency, the transformation of subjectivities and identities, the emergence of transnational spaces and new public spheres, and the question of national imaginations and the politics of belonging.

By establishing a network of African and European universities, we aim at an exchange of scholars and in particular PhD candidates to overcome the limits of regionalized research and teaching.

2. Aim of the Project

Media in African Societies. It is obvious that, in processes of globalization, media are of increasing significance for the negotiation of culture within African societies and beyond. Culture is negotiated in new spheres of public exchange, for instance the radio, the TV, popular video and VCD films, and not least the internet and the mobile phone. Face-to-face communication certainly remains dominant in local settings, but it is more and more complemented by mediated exchange. This change is most visible in the field of the arts, understood in wide sense as all modes of expression that possess an aesthetic or emotional quality perceived by those who produce or use it. The contemporary arts in Africa thus serve as a central sphere for the understanding of processes of cultural negotiation. The emerging new styles and genres of music, theatre, film and painting among other art forms all show how intensive such processes may be. New media as the internet and the mobile phone are also quickly integrated into the existing realm of media. The interaction of men and media also shows how new spaces of political and societal negotiation or conflict emerge, thus stimulating alternative modes of thinking about social and political issues.

It is important to understand this transformation in order to understand societal change in Africa in general. Identities, subjectivities, cultural as well as political belonging and representation are all subject to processes of embedding and disembedding in which media increasingly play a role. These processes do not fit to the models of social change based upon European history. It is misleading to conceptualize social change in Africa as modernization in the lineal sense of the western experience (Probst et al. 2002). With regard to media, the societal *figuration* – understood in the sense of Elias (1968) as a dynamic, shifting set of connections as relationships become more and less important and active – is clearly different in Africa. To name but one factor, this process does not emanate from the “Gutenberg Galaxy” (McLuhan 1962), a culture based on the use of script and prints. In African societies, the relationship between media and the people that make use of them is framed by other social as well as cultural settings. Media thus have a dif-

ferent impact on how social actors negotiate their culture and how they redefine “the modern” or, more precisely and more generally, their contemporary life-world.

African societies thus cope with processes of globalization in a particular way. The changing modes of perception and the transformation of creativity, the transformation of subjectivities and identities, the emergence of transnational spaces and new public spheres, the question of national imagination and the politics of belonging are simultaneously embedded in local as well as global processes, and media play a decisive role in how actors see and situate themselves in this world. Again, understanding the relationship between media and culture is of immediate relevance to understand social and cultural change in contemporary Africa.

The general aim of the project is to improve our understanding of this relationship. Our two general basic research questions thus are complementary and engage in a cross-cutting perspective, framing the relationship between culture and media by focussing on media on the one hand and on culture on the other:

- **What happens when culture passes through new spheres of media?**
- **How does mediality affect the modes of negotiation of culture?**

With regard to African societies, the main question is:

- **To what extent do cultures and societies in Africa redefine themselves through the use of the new media and how do these media influence the dynamics of change in a globalising world?**

The project adopts a wide and comparative approach since we are convinced that studies of isolated cases will not answer the more general questions: How do these questions of intermediality play themselves out at the micro and macro level in specific societies, and in communities within these societies? (Ginsburg 1995, 1997; Marcus 1996) How do these negotiations between media take place? What forms and genres (novels, theatre, performance genres, popular song, artwork, film, video, radio, TV, DVD) take part in these passages of culture, and to what effect? In other words, how is the material mediated by these processes of intermediality? What precisely is transformed (subjectivities, identities, moral content, creativity, styles, ideologies, languages, etc. as comparative, transversal topics) and what emerges as the end product?

The project thus aims at bringing a significant variety of case studies together. In order to establish a sphere of scholarly exchange that bridges the gaps between different parts of Africa, the project aims at establishing a research partnership network composed of senior scholars and PhD candidates. It provides PhD candidates with grants and expenses for field work, but also endows senior scholars with research funds. To stimulate scholarly exchange, it also provides funds for workshops and summer schools in which other PhD candidates and scholars from the participating partner institutions are invited to participate. The events will be organised by all participating institutions on a rotating basis. The applicants thus hope to foster a continuous exchange between the research partners and invite other scholars and institutions to join the network once it will be established.

3. State of Research

Already in 1999, in their introduction to the second edition of their book about the experimental moment in the human sciences, George Marcus and Michael Fischer argued that “transnational communication and visual media in new modalities ... are effecting transitions as profound in modes of rationality and cognition as those earlier from orality to literacy” (Marcus/Fisher 1999:xvi). They added that this could become a new and promising field in the humanities after the “paradigm-chaos” that fuelled anthropological discussions since the 1980s. Since then, the relevance of media as an increasingly important space for the negotiation of culture has increasingly been recognised by anthropologists and scholars from neigh-

bouring disciplines.¹ Since the early 1990s, many scholars acknowledged the significance of media for the rapidly changing culture of African societies (Abu Lughod 1997; Armbrust 1996; Fuglesang 1994; Hannerz 1996; Larkin 1997; Spitulnik 2001; Wendl/Behrend 1998). The anthropological gaze is also shifting and expanding to include these important social changes in communicative practices and technologies. Media Anthropology as a new subfield of social anthropology hence emerged during the late 1990s and the first few years of the 21st century (Ginsburg et al. 2002; Askew/Wilk 2002; Rothenbuhler/Coman 2005; see also the Media Anthropology Network of the EASA founded in 2004).

Over the past decade, numerous studies have addressed specific questions and fields, also with regard to Africa. Within the broader spectrum of media as emergent sites of community and subject formation, the relationship between public spheres and inequalities and the politics and technologies of representation and cultural production soon became a special focus. For instance, they showed how media opened new spaces for the representation and negotiation of identity (e.g. Smith/Kollack 1999; Renninger/Shumar 2002; Werbner 2002; Werbner/Ranger 1996). Other studies focused on the appropriation of particular global media in local settings (e.g. Haynes 1997; Fardon/Furniss 2000, Barlet 2001). Still other studies addressed specific media in relation to social change in one society (e.g. Coplan 1994; Okome/Haynes 1997; Erlmann 1996).

Many studies situated the research within the broad realm of popular culture in Africa (in general: Barber 1987, 1997; Fabian 1998; Mbembe 2002). However, by its application to a wide variety of highly different phenomena and modes of expression, the concept has lost much of its former heuristic value. Furthermore, the implicit dichotomy between popular and high culture does not fit to most African societies. The assumption that popular culture is a critique of political domination in African countries and a subversion of Western culture (e.g. Scott 1990) has also been questioned (e.g. Dawson 2003). There are reasons for this tendency in popular culture studies: The approach privileges agency on the side of the local and ordinary people, thus neglecting the impact that new media and the global may have on them. A more balanced approach is needed.

It is obvious that media and culture in the context of contemporary African societies constitute a syncretic realm where reconfigurations of culture are a daily necessity. When looking at the state of research, there seem to be two perspectives for empirical enquiry: One that concentrates on the media and how they influence culture and life-world; and another that focuses on the practices and interactions of specific social actors making use of the media. Both approaches have their shortcomings and a more general understanding of how media re-model culture and how media are re-defined by specific actors within the web of culture is still to emerge. Combining the two perspectives will lead to a less biased approach.

4. Theoretical Base and Methodological Approach

Theoretical Base: Globalisation and the Negotiation of Culture. It is a truism that globalisation leaves no society and no culture untouched. The rapidly growing interconnectedness of spaces and societies leads to more and more encounters between social as well as individual actors. It is increasingly difficult to maintain the notion of a culture as a sphere of shared values, convictions, persuasions and beliefs nor is it possible to live according to such a notion. The exchange and negotiation of ideas has become everyday practice. It is virtually impossible to assume that one's culture; one's own central assumptions about the lifeworld may persist unquestioned in the presence of others who share other basic values. Bounded notions of culture fail at a practical and theoretical level (e.g. Appadurai 1996, Marcus 1995, with regard to media also Ginsburg 1991, 1994, Abu Lughod 1997, Ginsburg et al. 2002) – though some actors desperately try to maintain such ideas because of the incertitude that goes with unbounded concepts and that they experience as a threat. Hence cross-cultural encounters may be perceived as dialogue, as discussion, as dispute, as confrontation, as conflict, as clash. But whatever the perception is, it is certain that such moments of encoun-

¹ The scholars working in this project have all contributed to this debate: Adamu 2007, Butake 2005, Förster 2003a, 2004d, 2005a,d, 2007a; Gunner 2004; Schlehe 2001, 2004, 2006a.

ter often lead to a negotiation of the cultural assumptions that would have remained taken for granted under other circumstances.

Such moments of negotiation always existed (e.g. Ginsburg 2005). There is no culture that has not been shaped by them, and to some extent, all existing societies and their cultures are the outcomes of such processes. However, with the acceleration of time and the compression of space as one of the main if not the main attributes of globalization, the interaction between societies and their cultures has intensified to an extent that some scholars (e.g. Albrow 1996) see the coming, even the “advent” of a global age. Other scholars claim that a global culture will never emerge because of the processes of localization that always counter the processes of globalization (e.g. Robertson 1992). It is a debate about heterogenisation versus homogenization as the ultimate outcome of globalization (e.g. Dürschmidt 2002). The two trends are often merged into one that is labeled as “glocalisation” (e.g. Robertson 1994, Wellman/ Hampton 1999). The neologism stands for the human ability to relate to global as well as local conditions of life in one situation. In a more theoretical strand of thinking, glocalisation is understood as a heuristic means to cope with the complexity of the constantly re-configuring lifeworld of today (e.g. Urry 2003). But again, it points to the actual encounters that actors have to cope with and in which they have to articulate local and global references.

We believe that a teleological debate about heterogenisation and homogenization will remain fruitless unless the actual modes of negotiation of culture are better understood. We will try to look right at the core where the articulation of the local and the global is a daily necessity: At encounters in which culture is negotiated. We will first try to identify significant situations of negotiation of culture, then examine them on the basis of a methodology that is based upon a shared understanding of them and last but not least engage in a comparative analysis of their impact on actors and society. We thus hope to contribute to a better understanding of such processes of negotiation in general and in particular with regard to the African societies that we will examine.

Situations: The relevance of media

The general debates about processes of globalization often lack an empirically informed account of what actually happens on the ground. One of the basic figures of thought that dominates the discourse about media in processes of globalization is that of “flows and networks”, “closures and disclosures”, “mediascapes and mediaspheres” and similar metaphors. As notions, they all point at the fact that actors, be they social or individual, make an increasing use of media in their daily exchange and that these mediations of everyday life experience directly contributed to the time-space distancing as a major attribute of globalization (Giddens 1990). A few examples of such changes in everyday interactions will suffice to demonstrate their relevance for contemporary African societies: Migrants communicate with their relatives back home by e-mail or publish their photos on the net to let their relatives participate in events like, say, marriage ceremonies if they cannot attend. But they may also publish photos to prove that they spend the support that they received for the purpose intended: photos of arms or legs in bandage show that the depicted person actually went to hospital. Another example are films, VCDs and other media that represent a life-world that is constantly re-invented by the actors that produce, distribute and consume such media. At times, the discourse about political issues is more embedded in such popular media than in institutions that claim to be representative of the people.

There is a wide variety of societal situations shaped by the use of media. The entire figuration of society may be transformed by such mediated interactions. Identities, subjectivities, cultural as well as political belonging and representation are all subject to processes of embedding and disembedding in which media play a role. Our approach thus calls for a comparative study of media in society, and it advocates a deeper analysis of the practices of the use of media. The general notions of “flows” and the like, however, offer no direct access to an analysis of such practices. There is a necessity to transform such notions into clear cut concepts. In order to generate a common basis for our research, we adopt – or rather adapt – the concept of

intermediality² for the analysis of media in African societies. We take intermediality as a heuristic concept, not as a theoretical model.³ In order to avoid the wide spectrum of definitions that can be found throughout the literature, we understand *intermediality* in a narrow sense as *the thematic and/or formal interaction between media, art forms and the practices that inform their societal significance* (literature, music, the performing arts, fine arts, photography, film, radio, television, the internet, etc.).

This preliminary definition avoids the shortcomings of media studies that often engage in examinations of intermediality to uncover the properties of specific media. Focusing exclusively on media as a technical endowment of the senses could lead into an essentialist misunderstanding of Marshall McLuhan's well known metaphor "The Medium is the *Massage*" (McLuhan/Fiore 1967).⁴ We are less concerned with the essential properties of media but with how their properties enable actors to engage in social interaction and how media thus shape their life-world.⁵ We also distinguish intermediality from intertextuality⁶ because we want to address the difference between the semantic interplay of texts from which new meaning emerges and the media that also work beyond the purpose of communicating semantic meaning. In other words, we see the interplay of media at another level than that of texts. This relates also to the fact that media may foster a wide variety of sensory experiences. In particular the transition from text to image and performance and vice versa is a promising field of empirical enquiry as it accompanies many medial shifts in contemporary African societies. It is this transformative power of medial shifts and intermedial relations that is an important component of the social and cultural transformation of contemporary Africa.

The main advantage of the definition adopted here lies, however, in the fact that we see mediality as the outcome of how media in their materiality and sensory presence relate to human practice. Hence, our aim is not to improve our understanding of the properties of media *per se*, we address the link between media as material and sensory enhancements of the human senses and how practice, i.e. the use social or individual actors make of the media, shapes this enhancements. It may mean that some parts of these enhancements are not relevant to the actors, for instance a particular interactivity of some websites or color in portraiture. It may also mean that the actors appropriate the medium for their own means and ends, as for instance the community radio that today complements gossip in some African cities. In addition, practice understood as actions bound to the specificities of a wide variety of social and cultural frameworks will enable us to analyze the specific configurations⁷ of actors that are relate to each other by their interdependent intentions. Such configurations lead to particular transformations (e.g. emergence of new modes of interaction between the African diasporas or the establishment of VCD industries in some African countries; Ibrahim/Ibrahim 2000, Okome/Haynes 1997). The description of the configuration of individual and social actors within a societal frame also aims at analyzing the entangled relations of power and domination that these actors are part of (e.g. Kasfir 2007). It addresses also the link between agency and "structure", or more precisely the iteration of links between actors over a longer time span.

² Intermediality is rooted in the study of literature and first addressed the interaction between film and writing, e.g. novels that adopted the sequence of scenes from movies (e.g. Paech 1988, 1994, Helbig 1998, 2001).

³ As a systematic, theoretical model, it would relate to the development of media as a growing technical endowment of society over the 19th and 20th century and the interactions that accompany this "mixture" of media.

⁴ The earlier and even more popular slogan "the medium is the message", elaborated in his book "Understanding Media" (McLuhan 1964), would need further clarification. In our understanding, it argues for an examination of the empirical level of consciousness that goes with the use of media (Lonergan 1983).

⁵ We use the term life-world (from the German *Lebenswelt*) as a phenomenological concept as introduced into the social sciences by Alfred Schütz (Schütz/Luckmann 1975).

⁶ Intertextuality is one of the sources from which studies of intermediality emerged, in particular in post-structuralist French literature studies (Kristeva 1980). The concept is, however, useful when two media make use of texts and when meaning shifts with the transition of texts from one medium to the other.

⁷ We adopt the concept of societal configuration from Elias (1968, 2004) because it includes the intentionality of the actors (while the concept of structure is a construction at a meta-level that does not necessarily take the actors' intentionality into account).

Intermediality thus has two complementary aspects: One is the materiality of media and the sensory experience that it fosters, i.e. their ability to shape our perception of the world by providing a specific perspective at it. The other is the social as well as individual practices that lead to an interaction between media.

Methodology

As mentioned above, our shared methodology starts from the basic assumption that the impact of media materiality and/or technology changes with the accompanying activities, briefly the context in which the media are situated. New media do not only offer new spaces for the representation of an existing culture.⁸ We are convinced that media may transform the very modes of how culture is negotiated by social actors. Media “create” social space, but they are simultaneously “created” by their social and cultural context. In particular intermediality seem to open a window to look into such processes of negotiation.⁹ When basic cultural convictions and assumptions pass from one media into another, they may remain stable or they may be subject to new modes of interrogation and questioning. On the other hand, the use of the media may change when it is introduced into another cultural setting. It is during such passages that changing modes of negotiating culture become visible. Accordingly, both the materiality of media and their contexts are issues that we have to look into in order to address the difference of picture and image.

Hence, our shared methodological approach is based on two cross-cutting perspectives and adopts a two step, circular procedure. The two perspectives address different aspects of the subject and, by combining them; we hope to overcome the inherent bias of both. Our two perspectives are independent of each other and best termed as *object-centred* (I, addressing the materiality and sensory qualities of media), and as *action-centred* (II, addressing the practice in which media are embedded). They are then juxtaposed in an *interactional analysis* (III). The methods and methodology are adopted in all field studies alike:

Object-Centered Perspective

Tracing the (re)production and movement of media

This perspective first addresses the presence of media in the social space of African societies. It tries to follow media as objects and material endowments of the senses beyond the knowledge of those who use them. Hence, the first step is to achieve a comprehensive knowledge of where, when, to what extent and in which settings media are used.

A. Mapping the past and present distribution of media

It is essential for all empirical work to have a reliable database of media in the respective natural and social spaces. We believe that such databases will generate also a link between the different sub-projects and that it will stimulate a comparative approach after the first year of the overall project. Such a corpus of data will also allow tracing medial changes over the past years, which is of particular importance in regard to the quickly changing contemporary African societies. The appropriate methods adopted by the sub-projects will be described below.

B. Mapping the proliferation of medial contents

In order to document the movement of contents that pass through media, we will examine to what extent particular contents moved through the media and the social space. It is central to achieve more

⁸ We adopt a pragmatic and narrow concept of culture: “Culture” are the norms, values, beliefs and basic assumptions shared by the members of a society in everyday life and reproduced by shared practices.

⁹ We take intermediality as the way how different media relate to each other, e.g. the performing arts and film, and how the passage of, say, a genre of drama from stage to the TV screen transforms its particular appearances and thereby its character as a space of cultural negotiations. Intramediality on the other hand is understood as the passage of different genres, contents and matters within a given media and how this shared space creates new opportunities for the negotiation of culture (Müller 1996, Helbig 1998).

knowledge about when and in what medium certain contents first showed up and eventually how they was transformed when they were integrated into the other media.

Action-Centered Perspective

Describing the use individual and social actors' make of media.

The second perspective is, as already mentioned, a complement to the first and looks into how individual as well as social actors make use of media. Its central research question is: how do individual as well as social actors engage with media? As the object-centred perspective, it has two heuristic aspects:

C. Practices of production and creation

We will first document how media are produced, reproduced or adopted to the local social and cultural setting. In a second step, we will look at how the knowledge of producing pictures is socially and culturally embedded. As methods, participation, observation and narrative interviews will be adopted. Again, the methods that will be adopted by the sub-projects will be described below, and they are also the subject of the Summer School planned for 2008.

D. Practices of consumption and appropriation

This aspect is dedicated to the modes of audience engagement. It first looks into how producers (actors, artists, filmmakers, etc.) communicate with their clients and how the material appearance of the media is negotiated. This topic needs observation of spontaneous interactions and eventually a record of interactions in the past by narrative interviews. A second theme is what the audiences know of pictures. Here, semi-structured interviews are the best method to adopt. Another issue is the engagement with media outside the immediate context of interaction with the artists and other producers. Qualitative methods are needed to answer such questions, in particular observation.

It is also important to learn more about how actors address their engagement with media in verbal terms. Mitchell (1994: 151ff.) already showed how important it is to acknowledge the limits of verbal expression, but he also showed that strategies of *ecphrasis* exist and generate another sense and meaning of visual media. We intend to record such utterances about media as fully as possible and examine them by discourse analysis. Narrative interviews will probably be needed as a complement.

The project thus concentrates on observable facts. Accordingly, participant observation is central to empirical research. It is complemented by standard methods of the social sciences to address questions of representativeness, for instance standardised questionnaires and guidelines for interviews. An appropriate methodology, however, has to be developed with regard to the specific subjects of the PhD projects and the projects of the participating senior scholars within the framework of the summer schools and research workshops.

5. Brief Working Program and Time Schedule

Passages of Culture is composed of four interrelated case studies. Each case study is based on the expertise of the scholars who will be heading the study. The case studies will be endowed with PhD grants according to local regulations. The heads of the case studies will also serve as doctoral advisors to the PhD candidates.

Case Study I: Medial Shifts and the Constitution of Power: South African Case Studies (Liz Gunner). The change to a democratic culture in South Africa in 1994 has brought about a sharp change in the availability of media space to a range of popular cultural forms in the country. Lyrics which hold (often contending) popular perceptions of people's lives, the state of the country, gender relations, employment and so on) have always had a place in African oral performance and in popular genres which lace together "tradition" and the modern (Barber 1987; James 1999; Gunner 2004). What has become clear since 1994 is the way in which certain popular genres produce commentary on national events (e.g. the trial of the ANC politician and former Deputy President of South Africa, Jacob Zuma), or on new national policy (such as

the “50-50” attempts at legislating gender equity in the country) and reach a significant body of listeners by means of the flows through different media. This in turn affects the perceptions of power and authority in the national space and it affects debates on the nature of contemporary society and the individual’s role in it. For instance the *maskandi* singer, the late “Mfazi Omnyama” (Black Woman), was one of the figures whose lyrics and music, although previously popular, after 1994 shifted him to a more central position as a messenger of popular opinion, and debate – both rural and urban – through increased media coverage. His work covered medial shifts from live performance to CD, to increased radio coverage, and to DVD and TV. The songs also moved dialogically between the urban and rural space and flowed as well between other forms such as young girls’ wedding songs, and more hybrid forms such as the largely male dance and song genre of *isicathamiya*. The flows through media of genres such as *maskandi* music, *isicathamiya* and some gospel music (ambiguously secular and religious) has led to an increased energy in public debate about the nature of the new state and the rights of its people. Radio, through its increased playing of “local” music (every station has to play 30% South Africa music) and through the new validation of the African-language radio stations operated by the public broadcaster, the SABC, may have contributed to this; the increased circulation and production of audio-cassettes and CDs, and the rapidly increasing production of DVDs often by small production companies alongside the giants such as EMI and Gallo may also have played a part in this new energy and confidence emanating from previously marginalized groups largely outside the small black elite and the other elites, white, Indian and “coloured” in the country. In other words new networks and new urban and rural forms have come into operation through these transmedial workings and new spaces for the operation of cultural practices have been formed. This sub-project asks how the moves through media of popular genres and performers such as those mentioned have changed the ways in which culture is perceived and operates in the post-apartheid South African state. The projected work draws on ideas of cultural style and the negotiation of the local and the cosmopolitan used by James Ferguson (1999); it is influenced by the work of Brian Larkin on media and culture, in particular on the ways in which “media generate urban [and rural] form by activating connections in a network” (2002a). It will use Lefebvre’s notions of the links between space and capital, and of the ways in which social space is produced. Important work by David Coplan (1994) and Veit Erlmann (1991; 1996) has underlined the role of popular cultural forms in the practice and production of culture in South Africa but shifts across media and their importance in creating new flows of culture in post-apartheid South Africa have yet to be documented and discussed. This sub-project aims to go some way towards doing so. While Liz Gunner will focus largely on the passages across media of *isicathamiya*, two doctoral students will work on the adjacent areas outlined above.

Case Study II: The Imaging and Empowerment of Peripheral Cultures in the Era of Globalisation: A case Study of the Identity and Cultural Expression of Anglophone Cameroonian Performance Forms in a Francophone dominated Centre (Bole Butake). Imaging, through performance, drawing, fine art, carving, sculpting, photography, video, film and television, is an activity that has lived and evolved with mankind from the beginning from the very beginning of existence. Its importance as a medium of communication has virtually been taken for granted, seeing the vertiginous developments in modern forms of communication especially in this digital age. These inventions have so revolutionised communication that, indeed, planet earth has become a “global village” (McLuhan 1964) resulting in such concepts as “global economy” and “global culture” (e.g. Robertson 1992).

In the specific case of Cameroon where there is deep rivalry between two European languages and cultures especially with the disadvantaged status of the English speaking population who account only for about twenty percent of the inhabitants and so find themselves pushed away from the centre where political, economic and even cultural decisions are taken to the periphery where they encounter a lot of difficulties of self-identification and cultural expression, how do they negotiate belonging? In other words, the Anglophone Cameroonian is daily confronted with how to express his individuality, his identity, his perception of his immediate environment and his understanding and assimilation of a global culture that is really an imposition from the creators and propagators of a rapidly evolving communications era.

In this situation of winner-take-all, and within the context of a nation that is dominated at the centre by a highly centralized French system and a francophone 'majority syndrome', how does the Anglophone Cameroonian strive to negotiate his own cultural identity with respect to the highly suffocating cultural context.

The research investigation seeks to propose tentative responses through an investigation of the performing arts: traditional theatre (with the accompanying paraphernalia of ritual and masquerading, orchestration and dance), modern drama and theatre, video and film. More and more, the media landscape in Cameroon is characterized by a multiplicity of public and private radio stations broadcasting in FM, several national as well as transnational, public and private television channels that are competing with each other for the attention of viewers. This apart, the mobile telephone with its ability to capture and transmit images and SMS messages, the great strides taken in the evolution of the digital video camera which has become more and more affordable in terms of cost of purchase or hire in addition to easy manipulation has led to a great number of Cameroonians celebrating life or mourning death through images. The main research questions then will be:

- How are Anglophone Cameroonians appropriating the new media and using them for the purpose of proclaiming their individuality and collectivity, their identity and culture, their sameness and otherness vis a vis their Francophone counterparts within the structure of the Cameroonian nation and other cultures worldwide?
- How is their expression of their sameness and otherness shaped by the instruments of the new media that they adapt and adopt?
- How could this new method be judged to be aesthetically satisfying and satisfactory for themselves, other fellow Anglophones, their Francophone compatriots and finally the transnational spectator?

The empirical questions are complemented by a more theoretical interest in the analysis of the present situation: Is there a new theoretical frame in terms of drama and theatre or film evaluation that could be drawn from this phenomenon? How does this compare to other research going on in radio drama and theatre or the adaptations of foreign films to local realities and to what aesthetic effect and theoretical considerations? With regard to the focus on radio and drama, the Case Study is directly related to Case Study I on radio and CD genres in South Africa. In its focus on film, it complements Case Study III, and in its focus on new media and transnationalism in Cameroon, it addresses similar questions as Case Study IV.

The answers to these questions and many others will be provided by Ph.D research candidates working on one the following topics:

- Identity and Cultural Negotiation through Stage and Screen in Cameroon: A Case Study of Anglophone Cameroonian Performance Forms.
- Visualisation of the Centre from the Periphery: Anglophone Drama, Theatre and Video Production in Cameroon.
- Ritual Drama and the Home Video in Cameroon: A Study of Mutations in Traditional Performance and the Home Video.

The PhD projects mainly relate to the transversal themes of a) changing modes of perception and the transformation of creativity, and d) the question of national imagination and the politics of belonging. The candidates will have to be currently registered for a doctoral thesis at the University of Yaoundé I and working under the supervision of Professor Bole Butake.

Case Study III: Intertextuality, Intratextuality, and Intermediality in Muslim Hausa Popular Culture (Abdalla Uba Adamu). This study focuses on "migration of text" and the re-negotiations of cultural identity in the transformation of the messages in text as the text passes through different media and receptions (audience) in Muslim Hausa popular culture. In particular the study wishes to determine what was retained and what was rejected in the process of intertextual transformation, and how the choices of accep-

tance and rejection were made. The specific areas of research focus are prose fiction, video film and international films.

In looking at the migration of the text, the study wishes to look at how such migrations occur *within* a homogenous community (referred to as intratextuality), and it happens *among* heterogeneous communities (intertextuality). In this context, Intertextuality refers to both the medium as the carrier of the message, and the cultural industries as the sites of production of the consumer outcomes.

In looking at the medium as the substrate of the intertextual migration of cultural messages, I would want to trace the migration of the message from different media, thus interrogating its intermediality as well as its Intertextuality. Media technologies have provided African communities with hitherto unknown processes of creation, re-creation and appropriating, using the canvas of various media to create a larger canvas of intermediality. In the process of such medial exchange, messages often become recast – “lost in translation” – in ways different from either the intended media, or the intended bases textuality.

The study will focus on different areas of intertextuality and intermediality, all focused on determining how the medium affects the message as the latter moves from one substrate to another and appeals to different audiences. These focus areas are divided into PhD projects to tag the specific focus of research.

Text to Text: Lost in Translation? – Literary Migrations and Local Appropriations. Migration of literature and the appropriation of the literature in Muslim Hausa popular culture. In this cluster, the main focus is on how prose fiction with antecedent origin in one location became appropriated in Hausa popular culture. The base rationale for such intertextual migration is premised upon “cultural resonance” theory that sees sharing of cultural spaces between lending and adopting identities, which, even if separated by the chasm of physical space, feel enough empathy to share cultural spaces. The focus lies on the evolution of classical Hausa prose fiction and its Asian and Middle Eastern Islamic antecedents, and how such literature was “downloaded” from such diverse sources into Hausa prose fiction.

Text to Video: Intermedial migrations of text to video. In this cluster, PhD candidates will look at the migration of text from prose fiction to the video film medium by young Muslim Hausa novelists in the 1990s. When the video film medium became widely available to young Hausa novelists, they started experimenting with the idea of translating their novels into the new media; thus re-creating the entire structure of the novel. While in some cases the classic strategies of literary adaptation were followed – complete with screenplays – in other cases the novel served as a direct template of translating dialogue and action from the pages of a novel into the video film. Eventually, and devoid of the original literary base, some of the video films, in the form of trailers, found their way on the Internet (particularly on YouTube) – thus changing the media environment. The main focus is to determine how messages were changed in the intermedial migration.

Video to Video: Transglobal Express – Journey of the Video Text. Here, the researchers will look at intertextuality in the video film medium as the message moves from radically differing social milieus. The focus is particularly on how Hausa video films were appropriated from Hindi films, and how such films themselves were appropriated from Hollywood films. In this transglobal intertextuality, the same message goes through different cultural climates and negotiates its acceptance. There are two processes involved in this: *vertical Intertextuality*, which looks at textual migrations the film medium from the West to the East to Africa; and *horizontal intertextuality*, which looks at the migration of text from the East to Africa. In another example of horizontal intertextuality, Hindi films were appropriated into Hausa video film medium. The main question in these cases of intertextual migrations is what element(s) of the original messages were retained in the original film? How do these messages became adapted for different audiences?

Vinyl to MP3: Soul to Soul, Funk to Funk – Music Maestros and Local Appropriations. In this PhD project, the focus is on how music lyrics as texts become transformed from one social setting to another. The research will look at how contemporary musical compositions from the West (particularly United States) to Asia (particularly India) were appropriated as Hausa, substituting both the music and lyrics, but retaining the original structure of the composition. Using new media technologies, Hausa musicians were able to reproduce the original studio sounds (“the vinyl sound”) of Western musicians using Yamaha synthesizers and

pirated computer music software (“the MP3 sound”) to approximate the original sound, but substituting with adapted lyrics (not translations).

All strands of research do not only address questions of intra-, intertextuality and intermediality, they are also linked by a shared interest in questions of cultural domination or imperialism and politics at the national and transnational level (transversal themes c and d). The cultural imperialism thesis is not actually one thesis but a complex and often contradictory set of views, which have been increasingly seen as both conceptually flawed and insufficiently supported by empirical evidence (Tomlinson 1991). From the level of horizontal flows (Hausa to Arabic; Hindi to Hausa) it is clear that a new perspective to the idea of media imperialism in the negotiation of cultural identities would have to be created to capture the current status of intertextuality of popular culture. This study aims at providing empirical data to this more general debate on intertextuality and intermediality.

Case Study IV: Internet, Mobile Phone and Transnational Space: Africa in the Upper Rhine Valley (Judith Schlehe, Till Förster). With globalisation, affordable means of transport and in particular cheaper and faster technologies of communication have led to a rapid expansion of social and cultural spaces beyond the limits of their former geographical space (e.g. Pries 1997). This process has led to the emergence of what already Marshall McLuhan (1964) had called “the global village”: events in one part of the world could be experienced from other parts in real-time, which is what human experience was like when we lived in small villages. McLuhan’s early insights also addressed the social effects of the medialisation of the life-world. However, his assumption that this process would result in one and only one rapidly integrating global culture has proved to be wrong. The situation today is more often conceptualised as an overlapping and simultaneous existence of distinguishable cultural spheres in one place. In particular the societal reality of metropolitan areas and “global cities” can best be conceptualised as layers of different social spaces of which some are local and others transnational (Sassen 1991, Smith/Kollack 1999).

The changing character of migration has significantly contributed to the transformation of urban culture worldwide – in the West, but not less in cities like Johannesburg, Lagos or Douala. In particular the participation of migrants in everyday activities back home via cheap and fast communication technologies as the internet and the mobile phone has enabled them to retain a cultural practice and identity that at least parallels processes of integration or even competes with them (Sassen 1998). On the other hand, it is also obvious that the qualities of the media they use have as much effect as the information they transmit – again an early insight by McLuhan. Today, almost all Africans living in Europe maintain close ties to their relatives and friends in their home country by using new media (Jensen 2004). But sending an e-mail or a text message by phone or publishing a photo in an internet forum is something else than a visit and face-to-face communication. The media clearly affect the modes of social participation and thereby transform the culture that is negotiated by these new means (one of the few in-depth studies with regard to the internet is Miller/Slater 2000). In addition, the image of Europe that is transmitted by the migrants via these media may stimulate more migration or convince possible migrants to stay. Hence, an empirical analysis of how media frame the negotiation of culture in a transnational space and how this influences the imagination of far away societies is central to our basic understanding of processes of globalisation in general as well as migration in particular.

The case study concentrates on the African diaspora in the Upper Rhine valley. The triangle between Freiburg i.B. (D), Mulhouse (F) and Basel (CH), also known as Triregio Basiliensis, is a highly urbanised region with a long history of migration (foreign residents in Basel 28,9%, in Freiburg 15,4%). Partly because of the history of the former Basel Mission and their German partners, Africans in the region mainly originate from Cameroon, Nigeria and Ghana. The study thus focuses on Africans originating from these countries. The key questions are:

- How does the transition towards new media influence the relationships between the diaspora and relatives and friends in Africa?
- How and to what degree is the emergence and maintenance of a transnational space affected by this increasing medialisation?

- How is the imagination of African societies and culture by Africans in Europe and vice versa the imagination of Europe in African societies influenced by this medialisation of the transnational space?

The case study addresses two transversal themes, namely “Subjectivities and Identities” and “Transnational Spaces and the Public Sphere”. The case study is based on two twin PhD projects with an African and a European PhD candidate each. One PhD candidate is based in Africa, another in Europe, but both address the same questions and closely cooperate in their fieldwork: The African candidate will come to Freiburg and Basel while the German/Swiss candidate will also do fieldwork in Africa. The Universities of Freiburg and Basel will be endowed with two additional PhD grants. Both candidates will be advised by Prof.s Schlehe and Förster and one or two African advisors (Butake, Adamu). By this exchange, we hope to enhance the quality of the respective PhD theses and we also aim and fostering a sustainable exchange between the African and European universities and their professors (the model has been successfully developed by Judith Schlehe over the past six years). Supervision is also embedded in the EUCOR cooperation program of the two universities. The already existing project “Visual Culture in Urban Africa” (funded by the Swiss National Fund) will serve as a closely cooperating partner.

All PhD projects are linked by transversal topics and themes. We will do empirical research with regard to *topics* as art genres akin to each other, in particular performative genres such as rites, theatre, and acting in films. The medial shifts are all related to transforming audiences, in particular from live performance to a wider, often anonymous audience. The comparability of the findings is further enhanced by the transversal *themes* that had been identified on the basis of the PhD projects and the expertise of the participating scholars: a) changing modes of perception and the transformation of creativity, b) the transformation of subjectivities and identities, c) the emergence of transnational spaces and new public spheres, and d) the question of national imagination and the politics of globalisation. The entire project will lead to a comparison of the findings on an interdisciplinary basis.

The four case studies all contribute to and are linked by the transversal themes of the project with a special emphasis in each study (see scheme below):

	I. live performance to radio programs	II. Imaging and empowerment	III. Text, video, MP3	IV. New media and transnational space
perception and creativity	XX	XX	X	X
subjectivities and identities	XX	X	XX	XX
transnational spaces and public spheres	XX	XX	XX	XX
nat. imagination and politic of globalisation	X	XX	XX	X

X contributions; XX major activities; **XX** key activity

All case studies will be endowed with two PhD grants and with a small fund for local fieldwork and travel expenses of their advisors.

Implementation. The project does not only address empirical questions that are immediately relevant for the understanding of contemporary African societies and their relation to the world, it also aims at establishing a network of scholarly research and postgraduate teaching that bridges the gap between different parts of Africa and also between African and European universities.

To foster co-operation across the existing strands of thinking, each partner university responsible for a case study will organise a workshop (or a summer school) addressing the main issue of their research. All participating partners and PhD candidates are required to participate. Each workshop will be three days: The first day a senior scholar will be invited to give a general, introductory talk. Funds for workshops and other activities that involve all partners will be administered by the central administration of the project in Germany.

Summer School: How to analyse mediality in an African context?

(five days, Freiburg/Basel, starts with main project in 2008)

The summer school focuses on questions of methodology and will provide all participating PhD candidates with the necessary tools to engage in field work. The Universities of Freiburg and Basel are both experienced in organising bigger events such as summer schools (e.g. the next VAD/SGAS conference in May 2008). The two cities are also the right place with regard to resources as libraries as archives of which all PhD candidates from Africa will immediately profit.

The workshops are a central instrument to bring African and European scholars and PhD students together. Each workshop will be three days. The first day, a senior scholar will be invited to give a general, introductory talk. Further contributions are expected from all case studies. The other two days, PhD candidates will present reports on their ongoing projects, followed by intensive discussions with all participating scholars. They are also asked to relate to the questions raised during the first day. The advisors will then contribute short inputs from their disciplinary perspectives.

Workshop I: Live Performance, Mediation and Audience

(three days, Yaoundé, winter term 2008/09)

The workshop will focus on an issue that is an underlying current in all case studies. The main question is how medial change affects the relation of producers and consumers and between modes of production and modes of consumption.

Workshop II: Shifts in Media Technologies, Language and Literary Production

(three days, Kano, winter term 2009/10)

This workshop addresses questions that relate to the transformation of orality and textuality by new media. The main question is how the reading of a text changes when it is reproduced in another media, e.g. on the radio or on TV. It is also related to questions of visuality of language and text.

Workshop III: Emerging Spheres of Cultural Negotiations

(three days, Johannesburg, 2010/11)

The focus of this workshop lies on more general questions of societal change related to the increasing medialisation of African societies. It mainly addresses the question how and to what extent communities make use of media to negotiate their cultural as well as social and political identity.

Concluding Conference:**Encounters and Creativity: Negotiating Culture between the Local and the Global.**

(three days, Freiburg/Basel, 2011)

This international conference will be open to all scholars working in the field. Distinguished plenary speakers will be invited. The conference will be a joint conference of the two projects "Passages of Culture" and "Visual Culture in Urban Africa". For this concluding conference, we will apply for separate funding at the DFG (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft) and SAGW (Schweizerische Akademie der Geistes- und Sozialwissenschaften) and other donors.

Preliminary time schedule of main project

	2008		2009		2010		2011	
PhD activities		pre.	fieldwork			fw	writing	thesis
other activities								
	Selection of PhD cand.	Summer school	Workshop I	Workshop II		Workshop III		cl. conference

6. Involvement of Young Scholars and Development and Extension of Research Network

The project offers grants to eight PhD candidates from Africa and two from Germany. It establishes a scholarly network in which senior scholars and PhD candidates closely cooperate across regional as well as disciplinary borders. The project as a scholarly network thus aims at overcoming the still existing boundaries between different parts of Africa (West-, Central and Southern Africa) as well as between Africa and European scholars.

Review Process: All grants will be published in an open call for applications to which all students in the respective fields may respond. Applications must not exceed five pages (a sample application will be published with the call). The evaluation process is based on a joint examination of the applications by the members of the PhD Advisory Committee (AC, i.e. Abdalla Uba Adamu, Bole Butake, Till Förster, Liz Gunner, Judith Schlehe). After a preparatory stage of three months and the participation in the summer school on methodology, the PhD candidates must submit a research plan of about 20 pages which has to address theoretical and methodological questions and also contains a timetable and progress chart with specific dates for deliverables. Yearly reports will be submitted to the AC. They have to refer to these progress charts and have to state explicitly what has been achieved. The AC meets at least once a year on the occasion of the summer school and/or workshops. On the basis of these reports, the AC will then submit its yearly report to the Volkswagen Foundation.

Extension of the network: *Passages of Culture* aims at fostering centres of excellence in PhD training and research that will be attractive to other students and scholars in the participating countries. The summer school, workshops, and the conference described above serve as forums to foster research and teaching in all participating universities and countries. To enhance the outreach and the impact of the network, we plan to incorporate PhD candidates with grants from other sources from Africa and Europe that will then profit from the training and the exchange of ideas in the workshops and summer schools (some PhD candidates already stated their interest to join).

We also hope that other scholars will join the network once it will be established. They are explicitly invited to contribute to the workshops and other forums. Our aim is to establish a sustainable research and PhD training network in Africa that will continue to attract more funding over the years. In interdisciplinary terms, we hope to stimulate a still more intensive exchange beyond the limits of the thematic focus of the project.

As most African universities neither have good library resources nor offer free access to documentary institutions as JSTOR, a subscription to journals that are central to the entire project will be established at reduced fares at the universities of Yaoundé and Kano (JSTOR subscription already exists at the University of the Witwatersrand).

7. Annex

Publications by the Applicants [five recent publications from every applicant]

Abdalla Uba Adamu

- (ed.), 2004: *Hausa Home Video: Technology, Society and Economy*. Kano: Center for Hausa Cultural Studies.
- , 2006: Media Parenting and Construction of Media Identities in Northern Nigerian Muslim Hausa Video Films, in: Middleton, John / Kimani, Njogu (eds.), *The Media and the Construction of African Identities*. London: International African Institute/Twanzega Communications.
- , 2007a: *Global Media Flows and Hausa Popular Culture*. Kano: Visually Ethnographic Productions.
- , 2007b: Currying Favor: Eastern Media Influences and the Hausa Video Film, in: *Film International* 28.5, 4. September.
- , 2008: *Passage From India: Transcultural Media Flows and the Video Film in Northern Nigeria*. Kaduna, Informart Publishers [forthcoming].

Bole Butake

- , 1997a: Cameroon, in: Don Rubin (gen. ed.) *The World Encyclopedia of Contemporary Theatre*, vol. 3: Africa, London: Routledge, pp. 76–89.
- , 1999a: *Lake God and other Plays*. Yaoundé: Editions CLE.
- , 2004b: Kamerun – Reliving German Occupation through Theatre: Zintgraff and the Battle of Mankon, in: Anne Schröder (ed.), *Crossing Border: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Africa*. Münster: LIT, pp. 53–59.
- , 2005a: Cinema, CRTV and the Cable Television Syndrome, in: Alexie Tcheuyap (ed.), *Cinema and Social Change in Cameroon*. Bayreuth: Bayreuth African Studies, pp. 39–80.
- , 2005b: *Theater, das Bewusstsein schafft, oder: wie man die Kommunikation mit Basis erleichtert*, in: Susan Arndt / Katrin Berndt (eds.), *Kreatives Afrika: Schriftstellerinnen über Literatur, Theater und Gesellschaft*. Köln: Peter Hammer Verlag, pp. 165–179.

Förster, Till

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- , 2006d: Negotiating the Contemporary: artists in a globalizing art world, in: Cordula A. Grewe (ed.), *Exhibiting the Other*. Stuttgart: Steiner, pp. 341–360.
- , 2007b: The Act and Art of Seeing Visual Media in West Africa: TV and Video in Northern Côte d'Ivoire, in: *Film International* 28.
- , 2007d: Competing for attention: Painters, pictures and images in the visual culture of urban Africa, in: *Critical Interventions* (Special Issue on Visual Publics). [in print]

Gunner, Liz

- , 2000: Wrestling with the Present, Beckoning to the Past: Contemporary Zulu Radio Drama, in: *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 26.2: 223–237.
- , 2004: Africa and Orality, in: Abiola Irele / Simon Gikandi (eds.), *African and Caribbean Literature*, Vol. 1: 1–18.
- , 2006: Zulu Choral Music: Performing Identities in Post-apartheid South Africa, in: *Research in African Literatures* 37.2: 83–97.
- , 2007: The Unruly Power of Song: the Msholoji 'Umshini Wami' song in Context, in: *WISER in Brief* No. 5.
- Gunner, Liz / Gunner, Imogen, 2008: 'Where's it gone, Freedom?' Post-apartheid Autobiographies and the Genre of Isicathamiya, in: Ben Carton / John Laband / Jabulani Sithole (eds.), *Being Zulu: Zulu Identities Past and Present*. Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, Chapter 37 [forthcoming].

Judith Schlehe

- (ed.), 2000: *Zwischen den Kulturen – Zwischen den Geschlechtern. Kulturkontakte und Genderkonstrukte*. Münster, New York u.a.: Waxmann
- (ed.), 2001: *Interkulturelle Geschlechterforschung. Identitäten – Imaginationen – Repräsentationen*. Frankfurt: Campus.
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