



Call for Papers

Cultural Dynamics in the African Cinemas of the 21st Century: Actors, Formats, Networks

Kulturelle Dynamiken im afrikanischen Kino des 21. Jahrhunderts. Akteure, Formate, Vernetzungen

Dynamiques culturelles dans le cinéma africain du XXI^e siècle. Acteurs, formats, réseaux

International Symposium, Saarbruecken, 27–28 November 2015

Organization, Contact:

Frankreichzentrum, Saarland University

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For a long time, research on the film industry in Africa has focused primarily on thematic approaches such as the representation of women, migration, critiques of neo-colonialism etc. Recently, attention has shifted toward film as an aesthetic practice, as well as the relationship between arthouse and commercial cinemas that highlight the contrast between the Nigerian 'Nollywood' and the continent's other cinemas, including francophone African cinema.

In this context, film theorist Olivier Barlet and the online magazine *Africultures* have drawn attention to a crisis in sub-Saharan cinema that ranges from issues of production and distribution to the ways in which these cinemas position themselves economically, aesthetically, and thematically both across and beyond Africa. In part because of the growing influence of filmmakers from North Africa, calls have already been issued that aim at a renewal of African cinema.

Organized on the occasion of the 15th anniversary of the Saarbruecken African Cinema Festival (www.afrikanische-filmtage.de), the conference invites reflection on the cultural dynamics of African cinema in the 21st century in the following areas:

1. individual and institutional **actors**,
2. **formats** and **genres**, and
3. **networks**.



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On the level of **actors**, the analysis of cultural dynamics could focus on directors and their works, exploring questions of cultural affiliation and attribution, of traditions and the development of new perspectives and positions in the history of cinema; other possible topics include analyses of individual works in relation to intercultural relations and mutual influences, or to the production, distribution and reception of the films in question.

The question of **formats** and **genres** focuses on the relationship between art/arthouse and popular cinemas, but also on intercultural forms of adaptation and appropriation of film genres in African cinema, as well as the emergence of new formats and contexts in relation to digital and mobile technologies, including video and animation.

The focus on **networks** acknowledges that cultural dynamics in African cinema are influenced and supported by multiple forms of networking. Topics include the relationship between diasporas and cinema production on the African continent, the networks related to reception and distribution (such as festivals), but also on the level of production and the professional training of filmmakers and other actors.

The focus on filmmaking as an aesthetic practice aims to introduce young filmmakers and film students in a series of artists talks/masterclasses to filmmakers interested in sharing how they have come to develop their own visual idioms and forms of narration, using excerpts from their own work and/or introducing the work of filmmakers that have influenced them.

The international conference aims to contribute to the search for new approaches that do justice to the wide diversity of filmmaking across the African continent and its diasporas. As much attention has already focused on 'Nollywood' and the cinemas of southern Africa, the conference particularly encourages contributions related to Francophone, especially sub-Saharan cinemas and its multiple interconnections, as well as comparative approaches.

Please submit proposals including title and abstract (150 words max.) to fz@mx.uni-saarland.de by **April 15th 2015**. We strongly encourage the participation of young/early-career researchers.