



# **CAMPUS EURO-AFRICANO DE COOPERAÇÃO CULTURAL**

**22-26 de junho de 2009. Maputo, Moçambique**

## **WORKSHOP REPORT**

### **Culture and Media**

**Coordinators: Bjorn Maes, Africalia,  
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## **SUMMARY OF WORKSHOP CONTENT**

The workshop reflected on the current state of culture and media in Africa, identifying challenges, constraints and opportunities and how culture and media initiatives and networks of Africa can relate to support for the African cultural sector in Europe. The workshop explored exciting opportunities and innovations presented through traditional and new forms of media, from print, radio and television to internet, digital and mobile content, pinpointing new potential, highlighting collaboration and cooperation.

## **OVERVIEW OF ISSUES**

Peter Rorvik

Media is a powerful set of information tools - crucial to the representation of culture, production of cultural products, and the communication and promotion of culture generally. Media offers access through innovative media tools (eg books, films, cd's, dvd's, magazines, newspapers, radio, television, email, websites, cell phone technology). Culture provides content.

Restraining contexts in Africa include poverty, poor infra-structure, lack of skills, economic instability, volatile societies, and repressive environments which inhibit freedom of expression and precipitate censorship and self-censorship.

Space for culture in newspapers is diminishing. Syndication of articles is reducing space for local content. The disproportional presence of foreign cultural content in African media threatens development of local culture and exerts excessive external influence. The fact that cultural products - global entertainment industry 'branding' - have become the leading export of the USA, for example, should motivate the strengthening creative industries in Africa. Cultural diversity must be encouraged.

Digital technology is starting to level the playing field. Digital film production and distribution models are changing rapidly. Low budget filmmaking is opening up opportunity, making filmmaking accessible to those previously excluded, and accelerating dissemination of a wider range of films and other applications.

The proliferation of websites, social networks and mobile phone technology offers exciting opportunities. New practices offer new dimensions for cultural expression. Although both are growing at phenomenal rate, the spread of mobile phones far outstrips that of internet, which currently reaches only 5.6% of the continent's population. Radio remains the most consumed media in Africa.

## **DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **What Challenges can be identified in Media and Culture?**

1. The rapid pace of information globalization (through digital media) without corresponding intra-African information connection becomes negative and potentially disastrous for African cultural operators, as Africa becomes increasingly isolated from itself.
2. There is little systematic training for arts journalists in Africa (especially relative to other fields of journalism)
3. While newspapers remain the single most important source of information about culture, editorial practice by African print media in reporting African arts and culture is – on the whole - weak and of poor standard; editorial policies in print media are generally dismissive of 'serious' local arts coverage – there is a 'dumbing-down' of arts reporting into 'gossip and entertainment'.
4. There is rapidly increasing competition for space in African print media 'arts pages' from glossy high-tech global entertainment industry branding.
5. Linguistic diversity (multitude of languages) is a practical challenge in information systems to support African arts output.

### **What good practices exist? Relevant models? Euro-African and African**

1. New digital media as applied to short film, web-based film (podcasts etc) and fast growing African culture web-sites offers an excellent example of good practice: innovative, energetic, generally accurate. (The weakness is that they do not generally have 'reporters' on the ground).
2. Arterial, Marimba Media, AfricInfo (Dakar), Highway Africa (SA), Art Matters (Kenya) are examples of existing African networks of arts journalists that need to be strengthened.
3. Several innovative radio programs offer excellent (although not in-depth) coverage of African arts, through interviews, radio magazine programs and featured artist programs.

#### **Bad Practices**

1. Short-term ad hoc projects do not create stability and in many cases the results quickly dissipate
2. Duplication of projects (through lack of donor coordination in some cases) results in unnecessary tension and wastage of resources.

#### **Recommendations to Improve Policies**

1. There urgently needs to be increase in systematic training for arts journalists and a mechanism for linkage between current ad hoc training workshops
2. African Union draft Agreement on Cultural Renaissance from 2005 (Nairobi) must be implemented in full, especially those provisions relating to freedom from censorship for all media, and intra-African arts collaboration. The UNESCO Convention on Cultural Diversity, ratified by many African governments, needs to be substantively implemented in Africa.
3. In general all arts development agencies need to incorporate access to key research materials on the creative economy in Africa in such a way that this could be available to African arts journalists.
4. Data bases of African artists and arts operators need to be established and made accessible, user-friendly and easily inter-active.
5. 'Shared-knowledge' is a useful information instrument (alongside legal frameworks for protection of intellectual property rights).

#### **Opportunities between workshop participants - specific proposals**

1. There is immediate opportunity and proposal for systematic training of arts journalists – using arts festivals (as well as conferences and meetings of arts policy makers such as this) as the context and basis for 'real time' arts journalism training in actual newsroom conditions around arts festivals and such gatherings. The training methodology and logistics framework exists (African Synergy), the intra-African linkage is in place (Arterial Network), networks of arts journalists exist (Marimba Media and others) and finally the connection to festivals is structured (Centre for Creative Arts and others).
2. There is immediate opportunity to rapidly expand the network of African journalists. Between Marimba Media, Arterial network, AfricInfo and others there is already (practically speaking) a network of arts journalists in at least 16 countries to use as a platform.
3. Mechanisms are needed to increase practical linkage between African and European web sites dedicated to African arts. A forum to facilitate this connection already exists in the Arterial network.
4. A data bank on all African arts web-sites needs to be created for practical purposes of research and information gathering. We propose Arterial network take on this task.
5. Cross-media platforms (for example film on web; increased use of the new technology capacity in cell phones) needs to be broadly encouraged, and where possible inserted in existing programs.

#### **Other proposals**

1. Create a 'toolkit' of basic communications for arts operators – which would rapidly improve basics of information flow about arts. This includes the artist's portfolio, basic details, photos, contacts.

2. Increase the use of multi-language in African arts web-sites to begin to accommodate large numbers of non-English speakers.

## **PRESENTATIONS (abbreviated)**

### **Is it worth the paper it's printed on?**

#### **Reflections on the state of arts reporting in African print and web media**

Paul Brickhill

To an increasing extent African print media is plugged into the 'global entertainment' consumer industry, the output of which (glossy entertainment product branding) is competing with African arts and culture and literally removing space and focus from less resourced African arts coverage, inside Africa. Tellingly, there are virtually no reports in African print media of African arts outside the home-country – no 'cross-border' coverage of arts. This reflects the extremely low level (with a few exceptions) of intra-African trade and exchange in arts products. African arts are trapped within small domestic markets, and the small 'local' economy-of-scale is in itself the major contributor to impoverishment and marginalization of African arts and artists.

Exacerbating the problem is an almost total absence of systematic training for arts and culture journalism. Aside from occasional workshops, or ad hoc training around festivals (eg FESPACO, Cape Town jazz festival) – and in stark contrast to other areas of specialization in journalism (business, human rights, politics, legal, sports) there is little or no systematic training for the arts journalist professionals.

Censorship and repression of arts deemed 'subversive' and the triangle of relations between governments, media and the arts remains a problem, and problematically the print media has – on the whole - done relatively little to protect integrity and freedom of expression in the arts. Some serious arts journalists are fighting back, producing good copy, and obtaining more coverage. Mostly, arts journalists are transforming the landscape of arts coverage through web-sites on internet, many of which are excellent.

### **Impact of Digital Technology on the Tanzanian Film Scene**

Augustin Hatar

Film in Tanzania dates back to the colonial period when British Colonialists used film to indoctrinate their subjects. Attempts to produce 35 mm local films aimed at persuading youths to go back to rural areas, especially to work on plantations - lost steam in the late 50's, resulting in the retardation of the industry.

Independence resuscitated the industry. The Tanzania Film Company which had been formed to "manage" the film industry made several educational films and many newsreels about Presidential visits. By 1973, they had made only one feature film. Despite the paucity of film production, film exhibition was a roaring business. By the 70's, Dar es Salaam itself had 7 theatres, and the rest of the regions had 24 theatres. The active cinema going audience was an audience fed on western films, Kung Fu, war films, adventure, crime, Indian, Chinese, etc., none of which were Tanzanian, or used Swahili.

Digital technology changed the access to new ways of dealing with film: from exhibition, to production. As the video player and Television monitor increased in popularity, and people went to the neighbours to "see" television, clever entrepreneurs set up ramshackle booths, put in a video player and monitor and opened up a viewing business for a small fee. With new digital advantages a Swahili sound track by a local narrator was added to the films. In addition, there had been an outgrowth of videographers, for weddings, festivities, etc. These combinations started the Tanzanian Video film Industry that is now producing up to 20 films per month, built around entrepreneurs MAKING SWAHILI LANGUAGE FILMS!

These films are replicas of Nigerian films, Kung Fu, Cheap Action Films shot with cheap cameras, inadequate supporting equipment such as lights etc, the acting is at times terrible, the directing and camera sometimes just as bad, the editing equally bad, ... but the main unifying factor is the Swahili language

Some of the actors have now become household names, and are mobbed on the streets, and film releases are doing a roaring business. Tanzanian stories are being told in their own image. Apart from questions about the quality of these films, training, finance, equipment, studios, and distribution are still challenges.

### **Websites and Blogs:**

Olivier Barlet – Africultures/ Sud Planete

Interactivity using comments, forums, RSS, blogs, (Afriblog.com), ads etc

Newsletter has been the best means to get the work of Africultures known: 100,000 subscribers weekly.

Database is their obsession: aiming at improvements.

The issue: how to get the database to be a tool for the artistic community all over Africa. Build synergies with other projects in order to work together on a common tool, involving different networks, based on professional needs of the artists and organizations.

Visibility: easy updating of their information in the database.

- possibility of building up websites
- professional pages on internet with information, contacts, ads, training opportunities, calls for proposals, forums etc
- Strong involvement and cooperation of organizations would be welcomed, in order to benefit communication.

### **Information highways across Africa**

Chris Kabwato

Now in 13th year the Highway Africa conference (HA) has grown as the largest annual gathering of African journo's in the world. 735 delegates from 43 African countries in 2008.

Conference Programme Areas: Research (mapping the terrain) ; Education & Training (skills capacitation); Information (content creation); Conference (foregrounding)

Conference comprises a mix of keynote addresses, plenary sessions, debates, seminars, training workshops, exhibitions, technical demonstrations, with focus on new media, journalism and media and including Live televised New Media Awards.

HA Training Programme comprises 2 week courses: Introduction to Digital Journalism, Advanced Digital Journalism, Content: search; validating; blogs; social networking etc, Courses at conference, Daily workshops.

Highway Africa News Agency : <http://hana.ru.ac.za> comprises a permanent virtual news agency, a network of correspondents across Africa (KiSwahili, English, French), attendance of journalists at every significant ICT-related event in Africa and/or on Africa, reporting of all local and national processes, initiatives etc beyond events

### **Some Lessons**

- Training of journalists in a "beat" cannot be fully achieved in a one-off short workshop
- Need for long-term integrated investment in a nucleus of journalists
- Need to mix training in "classroom" with learning by doing (experiential learning)
- Multi-skilling of journalists is going to be key
- Need for mix of journalists (gender, culture, region, language)
- Forge vibrant networks of journalists along common interests (arts & culture; development; health; environment etc)
- encourage proliferation of publishing platforms
- Mentorship is critical
- Involve key stakeholders in training: editors, publishers, artists

### **Part Two: New Media – An Overview**

New Media defined

- What is new media?
- Fixed and mobile digital devices/applications that are powered by the Internet and allow users to create, share and interact with various audiences
- Blogs, social networking sites, SMS, MMS, VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol)
- Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, Skype, Blog TalkRadio

### **Traditional Media**

- Traditional news media are founded upon a top-down model in which their journalists are the authority in the newsgathering and dissemination processes (Beckett and Mansell, 2007).
- These journalists set the agenda for a primarily consuming public by defining what is worth reading about, listening to and watching.

### **The Internet & Democracy**

- Cyberspace is a relatively democratic space.

- Therefore, internet journalism, which is also known as citizen journalism, “challenges [this] notion of the [traditional] press as the exclusive, privileged, trusted, informed intermediary of the news” because of [its] “transparent and intimate nature” (Bowman and Willis, 2003:2).

### **Core characteristics of New Media**

- User-driven (the audience as producers); Interactive (shared knowledge & experiences) ; Fast/Speedy communication (Information access anytime, anywhere); Relatively low-cost. (NOTE: this is dependent upon accessibility of the technology, patterns of use and the intended purpose for communicating)

What does this all mean? ---one-way to multi-way communication; passive to interactive communication; mass to specialized media (niche publishing); few to many media and; from fixed to mobile media (Picard 2008).

### **The Technologies & Tools**

www.twitter.com – sms ;www.wordpress.com – blog; www.flickr.com – photos; www.facebook.com – networking; www.youtube.com – video; www.wikipedia.org – encyclopedia; RSS feeds; Bookmarking – diggit, del.icious

### **How I made 5 000 Twitter Friends in 10 days**

Nicky du Plessis

*Information is not neutral*

*All media is marketing*

*Relationships depend on communication*

*Partnerships are relationships (yes, even with donors)*

This is exactly 139 characters (including spaces) and thus technically is a Twitter – one of the forms of new media which currently is receiving attention. It is also a summary of Nicky du Plessis’s contribution to this workshop which intends to provoke thoughts about how crucial relationships are set up by organizations and cultural operators. The use of web-based interfaces (as the core of New Marketing practices) create a multiplicity of means for organizations to establish their identities and to develop their “brand”. In the same way as public diplomacy utilizes relationships and interactions outside of the formal traditional government – to government diplomatic channels, so can cultural practitioners begin to harness the benefits of relationships which are more direct, transparent and less regulated. Post-development theory critiques donor-recipient relationships founded on notions of cultural universality. The increased articulation of cultural specifics and frames for cultural activities through new media gives cultural operators additional ways in which to build and influence relationships.

We have to be clear about identifying and consolidating our own values that are the fundament from which we work, that shape our aspirations and objectives and project designs. We need to be creative in setting up new kinds of partnerships that service new eras, and being willing to engage with the results. It’s not about having 5 000 Twitter friends, but it is about taking responsibility for what we put out and cultivating a responsive capacity to negotiate from positions of increased confidence and credibility. In the words of a New Media Marketing expert who was talking about business but he might as well as have been talking about cultural co-operation:

“Avoid compromise.

In a world of choice, no one picks something that is not good enough.

In a world of networks, few pick the isolated.

In a transparent world, people avoid the deceitful.”

: Seth Godin

How New Marketing is Transforming the Business World and How to Thrive in It

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