

Call for Papers

for a workshop on

Media Appropriations and Mediascapes in Sub-Saharan Africa: new media entrepreneurs and changing technical and social configurations of public communication

Centre Point Sud, Bamako, Republic of Mali, 2-9/01/2011

The workshop addresses new tendencies of media engagements in Sub-Saharan Africa by focussing on how various kinds of actors and media entrepreneurs in particular appropriate these media technologies. Recent scholarship has tended to focus on the press and the video industry as important mass media in Sub-Saharan Africa. We especially invite papers that address how various kinds of actors have drawn on radio and TV to capitalize on the new spaces of entrepreneurship and cultural creativity that have emerged from the liberalization of media landscapes since the early 1990s. Many African countries have witnessed the establishment of many new and (state-) independent radio and TV stations, along with a broadening and diversification of the institutional field of media production. Among the entrepreneurs who benefit from these new opportunities are those who, although they received formal training that prepared them for a career in media production, have been enormously successful in establishing themselves as leading media figures in this field. Other “media entrepreneurs” are individuals who, thanks to their mass-mediated appearances and particular preaching formats, draw large groups of supporters in their role as religious or political brokers. Forms of entrepreneurship also include numerous independent media production outlets that work on the basis of public or private contracts and benefit from the new opportunities of, and needs for, advertising emerging from transnational structures of commerce and finance.

We especially invite ethnographically informed case studies of independent radio & TV stations and the forms and practices of creativity in which individuals engage who are affiliated with these stations (stations, journalists, presenters, technicians, those in charge of popular programs, etc.). Case studies should detail the everyday routines and media production strategies of these actors, as well as their interactions with media audiences on one side, and with public authorities on the other. Papers should address regionally or locally specific developments, or, alternatively, discuss what can be considered broader tendencies that reflect on transformations in media engagements throughout Sub-Saharan West Africa. Papers could also address methodological and conceptual challenges emerging for empirical research on radio- and television-mediated communication from recent transformations in national and transnational media landscapes in Africa.

The workshop intends to bring together scholars working in European, African and US American academic contexts so as to contribute to on-going scholarly debate on theoretical and methodological perspectives on changing mediascapes in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Participants are requested to send in draft versions of their paper (or extended abstracts of at least 6 pages) 4 weeks prior to the conference, to ensure a thorough preparation of the workshop discussion.

PhD students in early phases of their research may submit an extended project outline.

Papers may be written in English or French, but the oral presentations during the workshop (20-25 mins.) should be given in English. Scholars able to draw on substantial empirical research at the doctoral and post-doctoral level are particularly encouraged to apply. Costs for transport and accommodation for presenters and discussants will be covered (Program Point Sud/VW- foundation).

Paper abstracts of approximately 200 words and a short CV should be submitted by October 15, 2010, to the two organizers of the workshop:

PD phil. habil Tilo Grätz, Free University of Berlin: tilograetz@yahoo.de

Prof. Dorothea E. Schulz, University of Cologne: dschulz5@uni-koeln.de

Date of notification for accepted paper proposals: November 8, 2010.

