

**Workshop on**

# **Popular Culture in Africa- and Diaspora-related research Politics and Positionalities**

**24 May, 2017**

**1:00 – 6:00 pm**

Where:

**Seminarraum 4, Department of African Studies**

University of Vienna  
Spitalgasse 2-4, Hof 5.1.  
1090 Vienna

Has scholarly thinking about popular culture in Africa changed in the discipline of African Studies since Karin Barber (“ Popular Arts In Africa,” 1987) published her highly influential article on popular arts in Africa 30 years ago? If so, how might we tie these changes to new social and cultural ways of perceiving and narrating societies in Africa in the last twenty years or so? What, if anything, does the rise of the new media have to do with the way popular culture is produced, disseminated and consumed?

On the basis of some selected texts dealing with the issues raised above and drawing from insights from current research projects by Onookome Okome, who is visiting the Department of African Studies, and members of the research project “Popular Culture in Translocal Spaces” at the same department, this workshop revisits key issues raised in Barber’s essay as entry points into questions such as:

- Is the category of popular culture still useful in Africa- and diaspora-related research and in what sense?
- How does it relate to other categories such as popular arts or, more recently, social media?
- How can the relationship of popular culture and politics be thought through?
- How might we think through the politics of popular culture and the representations of politics in the age of the new media?
- What are the positions and what are the methods from which we can approach research on popular culture?

**All are welcome to join the discussion  
– especially also interested students and younger scholars!**

### **Preliminary Schedule:**

- 1:00 – 1:30 pm:           **Introduction** of the aims and format of the workshop, introduction of all participants
- 1:30 – 3:30 pm:           **Discussion of concepts and approaches on the basis of selected texts**
- 3:30 – 4:00 pm:           *Coffee break*
- 4:00 – 6:00 pm:           **Panel with short inputs and time for discussion, with contributions by**

- **Onookome Okome** (University of Alberta) on „Nollywood“
- **Birgit Englert** (University of Vienna) on film translation into Swahili in Tanzania
- **Katharina Fritsch** (University of Vienna) on popular culture in the context of ‘Franco-Comorian diaspora’ in Marseille
- **Hanna Stepanik** (University of Vienna) on ‘Cape Verdean’ popular cultural practices and ‘diaspora’ in Lisbon

### **Key texts as input for discussion:**

Englert, Birgit. 2008. Popular Music and Politics in Africa – Some Introductory Reflections. In: Englert, Birgit (ed.). Popular Music and Politics in Africa. Special Issue of Stichproben. Vienna Journal of African Studies, Nr. 14, 1-15.

Newell, Stephanie; Okome, Onookome. 2014. Introduction. Popular Culture in Africa: The Episteme of the Everyday. In: Newell, Stephanie; Okome, Onookome (eds.) Popular Culture in Africa: The Episteme of the Everyday. New York / London: Routledge, 1-23.

Willems, Wendy; Mano, Winston. 2017. Decolonizing and Provincializing Audience and Internet Studies. Contextual Approaches from African Vantage Points. In: Willems, Wendy; Mano, Winston (eds.). Everyday Media Culture in Africa. Audiences and Users. New York / London: Routledge, 1-26.

### **Further suggested reading:**

Barber, Karin. 1987. Popular Arts in Africa. African Studies Review 30(3): 1-78.

**Please register until **22 May 2017****  
**by sending an email to [birgit.englert@univie.ac.at](mailto:birgit.englert@univie.ac.at).**  
**The texts will then be sent to you via email.**

Organised by **Birgit Englert, Katharina Fritsch** and **Hanna Stepanik**  
of the research project „**Popular Culture in Translocal Spaces**“

[\(https://translocalculture.com/\)](https://translocalculture.com/)

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(University of Alberta).

In cooperation with the **Department of African Studies,**

University of Vienna

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